



A collaboration of statewide community-based baseball and softball organizations



2020 Back to the Diamond

COVID-19 Proposed Safety Guidelines

subject to change

The coronavirus pandemic is first and foremost a human tragedy, affecting hundreds of thousands of people. It is also having a growing impact on the child and parent activities as well as the youth baseball and softball industry, our employees, and the dedicated umpires who officiate games. The guidelines below are intended to provide legislators and decision makers with information about how we intend to alter youth baseball and softball in a joint effort to loosen restrictions, while implementing strict safe and healthy social distancing guidelines. Being mindful of the factors of public health, social distancing, and societal well-being will allow thousands of youth baseball and softball players the opportunity to establish some semblance of normalcy as we continue to move forward in safely adjusting the dials in Wisconsin.

The safety guidelines listed below are proposed additional measures to be taken before, during, and after a youth baseball and softball game. All other key prevention strategies by the CDC and Wisconsin Department of Health will be strictly followed, in order to promote safe and healthy social distancing.

PHASED APPROACH FOR RETURN TO PLAY

PHASE I

Groups of 10 will need to follow appropriate physical distancing. Baseball/Softball is an outdoor sport with our participants occupying natural positions that are greater than social distancing standards.

This will allow for youth baseball and softball teams to start practicing. Teams are encouraged to practice in small group settings that allow players to properly social distance from one another. It is highly recommended for organizations to provide sanitizing wipes for players and coaches. All equipment should be sanitized throughout the duration of practice. Players should have a designated area for personal equipment such as bat bags, gloves, batting gloves, helmets, etc.

PHASE II

The cap on the number of people at gatherings rises to 50, which would be enough for games to resume. Vulnerable populations should continue to follow stay home guidance.

This will allow for baseball and softball teams to begin conducting games.

PHASE III

There are no limits on group sizes. The sports go back to normal participation and operation. Vulnerable populations can resume public interactions, but should practice physical distancing, and continue to take precautionary measures.



GAMES PLAYED IN PHASE II

Entering or Exiting Parks: If possible, all players, coaches, and umpires will enter through one entrance and exit through another, observing state guidelines for social distancing. This scenario replicates the path of travel through grocery stores. In the event there is only one entrance to the park, teams will need to be cautious and courteous at the point of entry, observing all social distancing rules.

Social Distancing: Parents and spectators have separate seating away from the backstop or dugout. Spectators will not be allowed around the area of the backstop or dugouts. Only players, up to three coaches per team, and the umpire(s) are allowed on the field of play. Spectators are only permitted to view the game from the outfield. This means the game may be viewed along the foul lines starting at 1st/3rd base extending to the outfield and in the outfield area.

Proposed Spectator Options:

1. Parents/Guardians are highly encouraged to limit the amount of family members attending. Social distancing guidelines would apply (for example, must be 6 feet from the next group/spectator/family).
2. Only immediate families/households of the players will be allowed to spectate the game (for example, must be 6 feet from the next group/spectator/family).

Dugout (Team Personnel): The dugout will be extended to behind the dugout to the backstop for both teams. This is to allow rostered players and up to three coaches per team to practice social distancing throughout the game while their team is up to bat. Bleachers are designated for players and coaches only. Hand and equipment sanitizing between innings is recommended.

No more than 3-5 individuals are permitted in the dugout at any given time (this is dependent on the size of the dugout). These individuals (players, coaches or any combination) must maintain all social distancing guidelines throughout the game. All other team personnel must practice social distancing in the extended area of the dugout, as referenced above. It is recommended that players line up in their batting order behind the dugout/backstop with a social distance of 6 feet apart. Coaches should consider providing 6 feet visual markers on the ground for players.

Assistant coaches should be provided with a designated standing area (6 feet from players) when coaching the bases.

Game Protocol: At the pregame meeting and throughout the game, coaches and umpires will not be allowed to shake hands or have any physical contact with each other. All parties must maintain social distancing guidelines. No physical contact or touching is permitted.

Players and coaches are asked to refrain from high fives or any other physical gestures of celebration. All team personnel must always maintain social distancing guidelines.

At the conclusion of the game, players will be asked to forego the sportsmanship line at the end of the game. Instead we are asking for each team to line up on their respective foul line and “tip their cap” as a salute to the other team to promote sportsmanship.



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Equipment: It is highly recommended that team personnel carry hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes with you to be used before, during and after the games, whenever appropriate, such as if/when you come into contact with the ball or any other players, coaches, or shared equipment (bases).

Please wear your batting gloves as much as possible, especially when handling a bat.

Refrain from sharing equipment in general. This includes but is not limited to bats, helmets, and catcher's equipment. Players are highly encouraged to leave bat bags and any unnecessary equipment in a parent/guardians vehicle. All necessary equipment should be walked in to prevent cross contamination. It is suggested that each player has a designated area, away from other players, for their personal equipment.

Each team needs to provide their own baseballs/softballs for when they are in the field. Each team is responsible for switching out their baseballs/softballs each inning or sanitizing their baseballs/softballs as best as possible. Again, hand and equipment sanitizing between innings is recommended. Each team should have a designated coach responsible for sanitizing each ball used in order to prevent unnecessary cross contamination. Organizations are encouraged to communicate with spectators/fans/families to refrain from retrieving foul balls. The designated coach from each respective team will retrieve foul balls and sanitize before returning to the competition.

Face masks are recommended for everyone spectating as long as the CDC and state recommends them. This includes spectators, coaches, and field crew.

Umpires: Umpires will be asked to officiate the game from behind the pitcher's mound, while practicing social distancing with all fielders. This will limit the number of people around home plate and will still allow the umpire to call the game and see the whole field.

Umpires should not handle baseballs/softballs, and should remind players to retrieve extra baseballs/softballs from their designated coach.

Food/Beverage/Hydration: It is highly encouraged all players, coaches, and umpires have personal water bottles that are kept in their individual designated area. Sunflower seeds and all food should be eliminated from the park.

Authors:

- Wisconsin Sports Services (WSS)/ Minnesota Youth Athletic Services (MYAS)/Badgerland Softball/Greater Madison Metro Fastpitch League (GMMFL)/ Badgerland Baseball/Badgerland Teeners League/Badgerland Juniors League (Chelsey Rodenkirch, Patrick Cottrell, Dawson Blanck, Patrick Reese)
- Metro Baseball League/Minnesota Baseball Tournaments (Kim Eul & Jeff Eul)
- USA Softball Minnesota/Minnesota Softball (Dan Pfeffer & Tom Bye)



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Supporting Authors:

- Karl E. Fry, PT, DPT, OCS, CSCS, Sports Rehabilitation Physician, UW Health at The American Center
- David J. Jewison, MD CAQ, Sports Medicine Physician, University of Minnesota & M Health Fairview

M Health Fairview/Institute for Athletic Medicine is the official medical partner of the MYAS.

Resources

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/mass-gatherings-ready-for-covid-19.html>

Applicable Information/guidelines from the state of Montana:

https://406mtsports.com/baseball/legion/following-reopening-guidelines-montana-american-legion-baseball-teams-can-start-practicing/article_77549909-7349-538c-8547-a9062a0ecd28.html

