Softball Saskatchewan

Return to Play Protocols

and Guidelines

June 2020

Version 3.0

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### Please note, the information contained in this document is subject to change at any time based on requirements from the Sask Health Authority and Government of Saskatchewan.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Softball Sask Return to Play Protocol (RTPP) and Guidelines is based on an overriding objective of providing an opportunity for as many participants to engage in softball activities as possible. The protocols are designed to permit Timbits activity, through adult Fastpitch, regardless of the competitive level, whether it be Association/League, Community, Team or Provincial.

We would like to acknowledge and thank both Softball BC and Softball Canada for providing and granting us permission to utilize information from their Return to Play documents. Our RTPP is intended to help our members minimize the risk of transmission of COVID-19 while engaged in softball activities.

The return to play will be a graduated process, with a plan to ensure participants are able to comply with each phase before being sanctioned to move to the next phase. As well, Ministry of Health requirements will always take precedence over Softball Sask requirements.

**Phase one** will consist of controlled practices and skill development exercises for individual teams only.

**Phase two** will incorporate league, exhibition games, etc (Date TBA)

**Phase three** will consist ofTournaments andProvincial Championships. (Date TBA)

**NOTE:** In no instance will a sanctioned Association/League or Team be permitted to move to the next phase until they have demonstrated the ability to meet the requirements of all lower phases.

In reaching these criteria we have followed the need for safe protocols under the COVID-19 requirements, without sacrificing safety within the sport and maintaining, as much as possible, the spirit and intent of playing the game of softball.

Our protocols go beyond the playing rules, to ensure we are doing all we can to minimize risk, to include pre activity set up, spectator management and post activity cleanup. Plans have been designed to consider what needs to be done, and wherever possible minimizing costs to participants.

Our guiding principles include the following:

* gatherings of no more than 30 people
* physical distancing of 2 meters shall be in place wherever possible
* when physical distancing is not possible, alternative safety measures are in place
* minimal shared use of equipment
* when shared use of equipment cannot be avoided, sanitary measures are in place
* plans in place to record and report outbreaks and community transmissions of the virus.
* **Please see Appendix #1 and #2 for duties of Sanitation Champions and Health & Safety Manager**

**PRE -ACTIVITY SCREENING**

Sanitation champions will ask every participant attending a sanctioned softball activity the following questions

1. are you exhibiting any symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, dry cough, chest, or respiratory pain)?
2. Has any member of your household exhibited any symptoms?
3. Have you or any member of your household travelled outside Canada in the past 14 days?
4. Have you experienced any other health issues or symptoms in the past 24 hours?
5. Have you been diagnosed with or waiting on test results of Covid-19?

If the participant answers yes to any of the above questions they will not be allowed to take part in the team activities and will be sent home. If a person is denied entry because of pre-screening, ensure there is a procedure in place to encourage that person to visit a medical facility or hospital immediately and ensure that persons contact information is maintained.

Associations/leagues to ensure that every participant, coaches, sanitation champions, players, officials have signed the updated Softball Sask waiver and that the Association/league has a signed or acknowledged copy before activities start up again

**BEST PRACTICES** (these are highly recommended, but NOT mandatory)

1. Associations/leagues to either ensure their municipality has provided adequate signage warning of physical distancing and sanitary requirements, or the Association must do so
2. Associations/leagues to ensure their municipality is servicing and monitoring washrooms. If not, the associations/league must either do so themselves to current standards or ensure the facilities remain closed and notify all participants. Associations/leagues should ensure concession stands have been permitted to open and are meeting all local health authority requirements for their sanctioned activities, or they remain closed.
3. These Return to Play Protocols and Guidelines are required to be in place prior to the start of any organized activities by order of Softball Saskatchewan and must be followed as outlined. Noncompliance can lead to removal of facility access through the municipality in which you offer softball programming, by law fines or even provincial health officer order to cease activity.

### RETURN TO PLAY AUTHORITIES

This section identifies the assumptions considered in the drafting of these protocols and guidelines as they relate to the current Government of Saskatchewan orders on physical distancing and Municipal authority on access to facilities.

* + It is assumed that municipalities and local parks and recreation departments will have the authority to grant access to re- open their facilities to the general public and local Associations/Leagues. All Softball Associations/Leagues will need to receive approval from them first in order to resume play locally.
	+ It is assumed that Insurance providers have permitted the return to play protocols and guidelines and that liability exposure is not a concern for anyone involved. By point of reminder, no insurance coverage is provided for any claim related to COVID-19 at present as outlined by the Softball Saskatchewan Insurer AON Reed Stenhouse and their underwriter, Markel Canada.
	+ It is assumed that the relevant health authorities will take the lead on any future confirmed or presumptive cases of COVID-19 and no additional work would be needed by local Associations/Leagues.
	+ It is assumed that compliance policing will be performed by local and provincial health authorities, local association/league personal, athletes and parents, along with all relevant stakeholders.

**PERSONAL HEALTH AND HYGIENE FOUNDATIONAL REQUIREMENTS**

These activities shall not be permitted:

* No sharing of water bottles or food of any kind
* No spitting, chewing gum or sunflower seeds
* No sharing of personal helmets
	+ All requirements in place for outdoor team sports, as dictated by the Sask Health Authority and the Government of Saskatchewan, in regard to the maximum number of people permitted in outdoor gatherings, physical distancing and other protective rules, shall be observed by Softball Saskatchewan and its members.
	+ Anyone taking part in softball programs shall observe proper hygienic practices while participating in any sanctioned events.
	+ Ride Sharing to be discouraged whenever possible.
	+ Softballs are to be disinfected prior to each scheduled event**.**
	+ All participants to disinfect their equipment after each event.
	+ All uniforms or clothing to be washed after each event.
	+ All participants to shower/bath at first opportunity after each event.
	+ All commonly touched surfaces at the ballfield – benches, hooks on the back of the dugout, gates that are touched shall be disinfected prior to each game/practice by the team using that area.
	+ For any facilities that have bathrooms and/or canteens, both areas shall be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before each evening in use. If these areas are being used for an entire day, these areas also should be cleaned and disinfected throughout the day as well.
	+ Physical distancing must take place in and outside the dugout, including players and coaches. Therefore, there can only be as many people in a dugout at one time as is permitted by physical distancing.
	+ If possible, hand sanitizer should be available to all players and coaches to use throughout the practice.
	+ All gear should be sanitized after each practice.
	+ All team meetings before, during or after the practice for coaching or teaching purposes shall respect physical distancing requirements.
	+ At any facility with more than one field, each player, coach, official or person involved at a field must stay at the field their practice is taking place. They cannot go over to the other field(s) and watch as they may contribute to the breaking of the maximum number of people permitted in an outdoor gathering. Each field is considered one outdoor gathering, so long as people do not cross over into other fields.

**FACILITY ADAPTATIONS**

* + Indoor Events (practice, cage, meeting, other) are permitted. However, it is mandatory to follow current Phase guidelines for number of people indoors as per the Re-Open Saskatchewan Plan. Physical distancing must also be maintained. Outdoor hitting facilities can be used permitting providing physical distancing requirements are adhered to.
	+ Signage advising and educating on physicals distancing measures in place should be present at every field and facility utilized.
	+ All field prep equipment to be disinfected and cleaned after every use.
	+ All fan seating to be configured with physical distancing requirements adhered to.
	+ Number of parents or fans attending (Including teams on the field) must not go above the current maximum outdoor physical gathering limit.
	+ No gathering around the park until your scheduled start time (please wait in your car). Athletes must leave the park immediately after the practice.

### GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

* + Attendance should be taken at every event for all players, coaches, umpires and parents in attendance. (See Appendix #1 for duties of Sanitation Champion and Health and Safety Manager.)
	+ Protocols to disinfect, after every use, team and personal gear (catchers and umpires) need to be in place.
	+ All discussion or coaching through any means to include reminders to players regarding physical distancing, no spitting, no face touching, no contact between the athletes.

### ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

* + Every Association/League should convene a return to play committee.
	+ Every Association/League and Team should implement Sanitation Champion/Health and Safety Manager roles.
	+ Associations must ensure appropriate signage is in place to caution participants and spectators about the risks of COVID-19.
	+ All Players and Coaches must be affiliated, and a waiver will be needed for EVERY participant to Return to Play
	+ Associations/Leagues should source Sanitizer, wipes and gloves and face masks (if needed) given stock issues related to the products. (this would be eligible for MAP Funding)
	+ Every Association/League must complete the Return to Play Sanction Request Form
	+ Each Association/League should perform a risk analysis on their ability to execute this protocol prior to committing to starting up programming.

**The following make up our return to train and play plan implementation Phases:**

 Phase 1 – Return to Train (Practices)

* + Build Foundational Plan around safety and personal hygiene
	+ Build Return to Train protocols for athletes within a PRACTICE environment
	+ All teams are encouraged to have multiple practices prior to playing any games.

Local Associations/Leagues will determine when they transition to games as in phase 2

 Phase 2 – Return to Play (Local & League Competitions)

* + Build Foundational Plan around safety and personal hygiene
	+ Build Return to Play protocols for athletes within GAME play

 Phase 3 – Return to Play (Return to Play Tournaments & Provincial Championships)

# Phase 1 – Return to Train (Practices)

## Phase 1 – Return to Train to be opened on June 22nd, 2020

***All Levels – Timbits (U10), U12, U14, U16, U19, U23 and Adult***

**PRACTICES**

* + **All Foundational requirements to be met as outlined above.**
	+ All team meetings before, during or after the practice for coaching or teaching purposes shall respect physical distancing requirements.
	+ All drills to be created and implemented ensuring physical distancing requirements are met.
	+ Only 1 team to practice at a time. No joint practices.

### GAMES

* + **There will be no games played during the Return to Train Phase.**

# Phase 2 – Return to Play (Local & League Competitions)

## Dates to be Determined by Government of Saskatchewan “Re-Open Saskatchewan Plan”

***All Levels – Timbits (U10), U12, U14, U16, U19, U23 and adult***

**PRACTICES**

* + **All Foundational requirements to be met as outlined above.**
	+ No team gatherings before, during or after the practice for coaching or teaching purposes
	+ All drills to be created and implemented ensuring physical distancing requirements are met.
	+ Only 1 team to practice at a time. No joint practices.

### GAMES

* + **All Foundational requirements to be met as outlined above.**
	+ **Teams will be allowed a pre-game warm-up if allowed by local Associations.**
	+ No plate meetings pre-game for lineup exchanges.
	+ No team gatherings before or after the game at the diamond.
	+ Conferences are permitted between the coach, pitcher, and catcher. Physical distancing must be adhered to between all three individuals.
	+ Spectators will maintain physical distancing, along the sides of the diamond, behind the backstop or in the outfield as appropriate to the layout of the ballpark.
	+ At the conclusion of a play at a base or bases, the batter/runner and defensive player should separate and establish appropriate distancing again as soon as possible. Umpire may assist in this by verbal reminder.
	+ On deck batter may only have one bat for warm-up.
	+ Softballs will be the responsibility of each defensive team to sanitize every half inning or as needed.
	+ Where possible physical distancing should be observed with a minimum of 2 meters of space between individuals.
	+ When an at-bat has finished, if the batter struck out or was put out prior to reaching first base, the batter will pick up their own bat and carry it back to the dugout, where it is sanitized or returned to their personal equipment bag. If the batter reaches base, their bat will be picked up by the barrel by the on-deck batter and sanitized prior to next use.
	+ No arguing with umpires within physical distancing minimum requirements will be tolerated. Any instances are to be reported to your Association/League or Softball Saskatchewan.
	+ No postgame handshakes.
	+ All players are to sanitize their hands as required.

**Phase 3 – Return to Play (Tournaments & Provincial Championships)**

## Dates to be Determined by Government of Saskatchewan “Re-Open Saskatchewan Plan”

***All Levels – U12, U14, U16, U19, U23 and adult***

### GAMES

* + **All Foundational requirements to be met as outlined above.**
	+ **Teams will be allowed a pre-game warm-up if time allows.**
	+ No plate meetings pre-game for lineup exchanges.
	+ No team gatherings before or after the game at the diamond.
	+ Conferences are permitted between the coach, pitcher, and catcher. Physical distancing must be adhered to between all three individuals.
	+ Teams are to maintain physical distancing while off the field of play, with players in designated spots as appropriate in the ballpark. Spectators will maintain physical distancing, along the sides of the diamond, behind the backstop or in the outfield as appropriate to the layout of the ballpark.
	+ At the conclusion of a play at a base or bases, the batter/runner and defensive player should separate and establish appropriate distancing again as soon as possible. Umpire may assist in this by verbal reminder.
	+ On deck batter may only have one bat for warm-up.
	+ When an at-bat has finished, if the batter struck out or was put out prior to reaching first base, the batter will pick up their own bat and carry it back to the dugout, where they either hand it to a Sanitizing Champion or return it to their personal equipment bag. If the batter reaches base, their bat will be picked up by the barrel by the on-deck batter and handed to a Sanitizing Champion for either sanitizing or return to the original batter’s equipment space.
	+ No arguing with umpires within physical distancing minimum requirements will be tolerated. Any instances are to be reported to your Association/League or Softball Saskatchewan.
	+ No postgame handshakes.
	+ All players are to sanitize their hands as required.
	+ Game times for competitions and tournaments may be adjusted to allow for Physical distancing and sanitation protocols

### UMPIRE CONSIDERATIONS

* + Bring your own water and hand sanitizer.
	+ Recommended to wear a facial covering and properly use hand sanitizer as required.
	+ Plate Umpire is permitted to work behind catcher, avoiding any contact with the catcher. However, should they feel more comfortable physical distancing, they can choose to call balls and strikes from behind the pitcher.

### GROUNDSKEEPING & MAINTENANCE

* + Minimize the number of maintenance personnel working on the field at one time. Consider splitting the crew into two teams that do not work at the same time.
	+ Always maintain physical distancing guidelines.
	+ Assign staff equipment to avoid sharing between employees.
	+ Stagger work hours and break hours and limit access to lunchrooms or workstations.
	+ Place hand sanitizer throughout maintenance area and access to hand washing stations
	+ Regularly sanitize any surface that is contacted – common areas
	+ If equipment (including mowers) must be shared, they must be sanitized before being used by another employee.
	+ Practice handwashing and standard hygiene practices.

### CONCLUSION

Our safe return to the sport of softball requires everyone involved to do their part to follow all Return to Play Protocols and Guidelines and Membership requirements with Softball Saskatchewan. Please note that additional information and dates are yet to be provided regarding Phase 4 of the Re-Open Saskatchewan Plan. Therefore, all Associations and Leagues must ensure they affiliate all players and coaches that register with them and that all players and coaches have signed and returned to them the appropriate signed Waiver form and or Assumption of Risk form.

APPENDIX #1

Sanitation Champions

 3-5 designated people on the team (should be same people all season)

 Responsible for cleaning and sanitizing everything including:

* + - Team equipment
		- Field Prep equipment
		- Surfaces and structures

 Teams to provide all required cleaning and sanitation supplies (including disposable masks and hand sanitizer)

 Volunteers encouraged to bring their own personal safety kit (i.e. own mask, gloves, hand sanitizer, etc.)

APPENDIX #2

Health and Safety (HS) Manager

 Designate 1 or 2 people from team who:

 Take attendance at start of EVERY event (e.g. practice, game, etc.) and submits to Association

 Ask Screening questions of participants before they are allowed to participate

 Conducts “safety meeting” to remind everyone of protocols before the start of every event

 Monitors social distancing, population numbers and making sure people are following protocols

 Should have some kind of visible ID (e.g. safety vest)

 Must always have at least ONE present otherwise activity is CANCELLED

 Should be the same people every time

 Need to do necessary training and may need to train others on the team

 HS Manager also responsible for Team Safety Kit (including hand sanitizer, gloves, spare masks, etc.) and Sanitation Kit (disinfectant, gloves, masks, paper towel, garbage bags, etc.)

 Responsible for replenishing Team Safety and Sanitation Kits from team supply

 Completes the Health & Safety Sign in Sheet and submits to club at the end of each “event” detailing:

* + - Attendees, any extra supplies/equipment needed
		- Any medical or safety concerns
		- Feedback on protocols and their implementation