

Softball Guidance & FAQs

For release: May 26, 2020

Below is a series of Frequently Asked Questions from the Iowa High School Athletic Association and [Iowa Girls High School Athletic Union](#), developed to provide further direction from the Iowa Department of Education's guidance issued May 20 on baseball and softball.

This page will be updated as more information and guidance becomes available. Initial guidance was issued following [May 20 announcements approving the return](#) of summer baseball and softball for Iowa high schools, including "[Summer Sports](#)" and "[Use of Facilities](#)" from the Department of Education.

Contents

- I. Overview
- II. Eligibility
- III. Screening & Testing
- IV. Social Distancing
- V. Practice/Game Protocols
- VI. Facilities
- VII. Umpires
- VIII. Miscellaneous

I. Overview

It will be the decision of each local school district to determine if they can safely conduct a baseball and/or softball season. If it is determined that a season can be safely conducted, it will be the responsibility of the home team to provide proper administrative supervision (not the baseball coach) at contests to assure compliance with the guidelines set forth by the Governor's office, the Department of Education, the Department of Public Health, the Iowa Girls High School Athletic Union and the Iowa High School Athletic Association are being followed.

For questions related to baseball, please contact Todd Tharp at ttharp@iahsaa.org.

For questions related to softball, please contact Jean Berger at jeanberger@ighsau.org.

II. Eligibility

E1) What is the protocol if our school district determines not to sponsor a baseball program or a softball program this summer?

A1) For baseball, written correspondence from the superintendent of schools or his/her designee must be sent to executive director Tom Keating by June 8th. For softball, written correspondence from the superintendent of schools or his/her designee must be sent to executive director Jean Berger by June 8th.

E2) What is the protocol for baseball and softball student-athletes that have had their pre-participation physical expire during this time?

A2) All softball and baseball players would be granted a waiver for participation in softball and baseball after the Governor's emergency declaration has expired. Further guidance from the Department of Education will be forthcoming. Student-athletes will be allowed to practice and participate during the waiver time, even with an expired physical.

E3) What is the protocol for a student-athlete who failed a first semester grade and his/her eligibility?

A3) Based on Governor Reynolds' proclamation on May 6, all students are academically eligible to participate in competition. All other current rules regarding eligibility are maintained.

E4) With social distancing guidelines, how are student-athletes to be transported to away contests.

A4) Guidance will be upcoming from the Department of Education the week of May 25th.

III. Screening & Testing

ST1) What is the protocol if a player has a positive test to COVID-19?

A1) The local school district will need to contact the county's department of public health, which will provide guidelines regarding the next steps.

ST2) What is the protocol for providing information to opponents played if a positive test for COVID-19 is confirmed?

A2) The county and/or state department of public health will provide guidance to the school regarding communication to opposing schools.

ST3) Who will be responsible for cancelling our baseball/softball season, either from a school standpoint or a state standpoint?

AT3) The local school district can make the determination to cancel their season at any time. If concerns are raised regarding the number of COVID-19 cases, the respective county or state department of health can cancel the school's season or the entire baseball/softball season.

ST4) Should each athlete have their temperature taken before each practice/game?

A4) Per guidance from the Department of Education and the Department of Public Health, players and coaches should have their temperature checked at home before attending practices or games. If a student-athlete has a temperature of 100.4 or above, they should not attend practices or games.

ST5) Are school district responsible for checking temperatures of spectators upon arrive at the baseball/softball facility.

A5) No. Per guidance from the Department of Education and the Department of Public Health, spectators should have their temperature checked at home before attending practices or games. If a spectator has a temperature of 100.4 or above, they should not attend games.

ST6) How often should players and coaches wash their hands?

A6) Individuals should wash their hands for a minimum of 20 seconds with warm water and soap before touching any surfaces or participating in workouts. Players and coaches are encouraged to use sanitizing wipes after contact with any shared equipment. Players are encouraged to shower and wash their clothing immediately upon returning to home.

IV. Social Distancing

SD1) What should practices look like?

A1) Per guidelines from the Department of Education and the Department of Public Health, coaches are responsible for ensuring social distancing is maintained between players as much as possible. This means additional spacing between players while playing catch, changing drills so that players remain spaced out, and no congregating of players while waiting to bat. The NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Committee recommends that workouts should be conducted in "pods" of students, with the same 5-10 students always working out together. This ensures more limited exposure if someone develops an infection.

SD2) For social distancing guidelines, during games where should additional players be placed in the dugout?

A2) Per guidelines from the Department of Education and Department of Public Health, no dugouts are to be used during practice. Players' items should be lined up against a fence at least six feet apart.

Per guidelines from the Department of Education and the Department of Public Health, use of dugouts are permitted during games only. Players should spread out as much as possible unless they are actively participating in the game. NFHS rules allow for dugouts/media areas to be extended down the foul lines, outside of the playing area. Additionally, bleachers can be placed directly behind the dugouts for additional seating for team personnel.

SD3) Who will be allowed in the dugout during contests?

A3) Essential personnel only are permitted on the field of play. These are defined as players, coaches, trainers and umpires. All others, i.e., ball/bat boys, managers, statisticians, pitch count designees, media, photographers, etc., are considered non-essential personnel and are not to be in the dugout or extended dugout area. This is in effect for regular season and post season.

SD4) Are spectators permitted to watch practices from the bleachers or in a lawn chair?

A4) Per guidelines from the Department of Education and the Department of Public Health, parents must remain in their cars or drop off and pick up players after practice.

SD5) Are spectators permitted to attend games?

A5) Per guidelines from the Department of Education and the Department of Public Health, schools must limit the use of bleachers for fans. Schools should encourage fans to bring their own chairs or stand. Fans should practice social distancing between different household units and accept personal responsibility for public health guidelines.

SD6) Should schools permit concession stands to be opened?

A6) Per guidelines from the Department of Education and the Department of Public Health, no concession stands are permitted.

SD7) How should a coach interact with an umpire during a contest?

A7) Coaches should consider social distancing guidelines (6 feet) when interacting with an umpire or any other individual on the field. Substitutions and a general rules interpretation conversation can occur at any distance.

SD8) Will there be any limitations on roster size during the regular season and post season?

A8) No, the current policies from each organization regarding roster size will continue to be in effect. Note changes above regarding essential and non-essential personnel allowed in the dugout.

SD9) Who should be involved with a coach's trip to mound?

A9) Based on the guidance from the DE regarding players spreading out as much as possible and social distancing guidelines unless actively participating in the game, we would encourage to limit the number of individuals in a defensive and offensive conference to those who need to be close proximity for these discussions.

SD10) How should the pregame meeting take place?

A10) One coach from each team and 2 umpires at home plate meeting with the players remaining in the team dugout.

SD11) Should there be an exchange of line-up cards?

A11) Normal line-up exchange can take place.

SD12) Should teams exchange handshakes after the contest?

A12) Teams shall NOT exchange handshakes following the contest - teams can acknowledge opponent with a tip of hat or other appropriate non-contact measures.

SD13) How is a school district to determine the maximum capacity at its baseball/softball facility?

A13) As long as social distancing guidelines are being followed, the local school district will determine the maximum capacity of the facility.

SD14) What personnel should be in the press box?

A14) Local schools shall determine which personnel should be in the press box considering IDPH guidelines.

V. Practice & Game Protocols (Pre, During, Post)

P/G1) Are masks required to be worn by players? Coaches? Umpires? Spectators?

A1) Per guidance from the IDPH and DE, masks are not required to be worn by players, umpires, coaches or spectators. If an individual would like to wear a mask on the playing field, in the dugout, or in the stand, he/she may do so. It is recommended that if worn, players and coaches where a mask that is a solid color. There is no prohibition on the color of the mask. It is optional for spectators, workers, and others to wear masks, but they are expected to follow social distancing guidelines.

P/G2) Who is responsible for providing hand sanitizer and/or sanitizing wipes?

A2) Guidelines published by the Department of Education state players are encouraged to provide their own hand sanitizer and/or sanitizing wipes.

P/G3) Can a player wear a face shield?

A3) Per guidance from the NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Committee, plastic shields covering the entire face (or attached to the helmet) shall not be allowed during practices and contests. Their use during practices and contests increases the risk of unintended injury to the person wearing the shield or teammates.

P/G4) Does each player need his/her own batting helmet?

A4) Per guidelines from the Department of Education and the Department of Public Health, players should use their own batting helmet as much as possible.

P/G5) Does each player need his/her own baseball/softball bat?

A5) Per guidelines from the Department of Education and the Department of Public Health, players should use their own baseball/softball bat as much as possible.

P/G6) Does each catcher need his/her own catching equipment?

A6) Per guidelines from the Department of Education and the Department of Public Health, players should use their own catching equipment as much as possible.

P/G7) How often does the baseball/softball need to be sanitized?

A7) Per guidelines from the Department of Education and the Department of Public Health, coaches must sanitize shared equipment before and after each game.

P/G8) How often does the baseball/softball bat need to be sanitized?

A8) Per guidelines from the Department of Education and the Department of Public Health, coaches must sanitize shared equipment before and after each game.

P/G9) How often does the batting helmet need to be sanitized?

A9) Per guidelines from the Department of Education and the Department of Public Health, coaches must sanitize shared equipment before and after each game.

P/G10) How often does the catcher need to sanitize his/her equipment?

A10) Per guidelines from the Department of Education and the Department of Public Health, coaches must sanitize shared equipment before and after each game.

P/G11) How often should players, coaches, and umpires be using hand sanitizer?

A11) Per guidelines from the Department of Education and the Department of Public Health, sanitizers should be used as much as possible. The NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Committee recommends using hand sanitizer before and after each at bat and when going out to, and coming in from, the field. Additionally, it is emphasized to avoid touching of the face throughout the game.

P/G12) Should water cups be available, or each player have his/her own water bottle?

A12) Per guidelines from the Department of Education and the Department of Public Health, players must bring their own water/beverage to consume during and after games. No shared drinking fountains, water stations, or coolers may be used.

P/G13) How often should maintenance equipment (rakes, bases, paint sprayer, tractor to drag field, etc.)

A13) Per guidelines from the Department of Education and the Department of Public Health, daily sanitation would be recommended.

P/G14) How many people should be permitted in a public restroom at a time?

A14) Local facilities and policy would determine procedures.

P/G15) How often should the dugout be cleaned?

A15) Per guidelines from the Department of Education and the Department of Public Health, daily sanitation would be recommended.

P/G16) How should admission be taken?

A16) Ticket sellers/takers should follow similar guidelines to that of check-out personnel at retail stores. Where possible, stand behind a shield. Wear a mask.

VI. Facilities

F1) For softball and baseball players, is the weight room allowed to be used for part of their practices?

A1) No, the weight room is not available for any student-athletes currently. However, it is permissible for weight room equipment to be moved to the baseball/softball facility to be accessible to student-athletes.

F2) Can a gym be used for practice if it rains?

A2) Yes, if the baseball/softball field is unavailable due to inclement weather, practice can be moved into the gymnasium, with the understanding that social distancing guidelines need to be adhered to.

F3) Can our football field (turf) be used to prep for a game on turf and/or if it rains?

A3) Yes, practice can be moved to school outdoor facilities, with the understanding that social distancing guidelines need to be adhered to. These facilities can be used at any time, not just due to inclement weather.

F4) What is the protocol in case of inclement weather?

A1) Local policy dictates “Emergency Plan” recognizing guidelines and protocol from the Department of Education and IDPH. An indoor facility such as a gymnasium or auditorium may be used.

VII. Umpires

U1) What will the protocol be for baseball and softball umpires who have registered for baseball and softball, but decide not to umpire this season?

A1) Baseball umpires that have registered to work this summer but elect not to work as a result of COVID-19 need to contact Laura Brooker prior to June 15 regarding refunds. Softball umpires that have registered to work this summer but elect not to work as a result of COVID-19 need to contact Sherry Tegtmeier prior to June 15 regarding refunds.

VIII. Miscellaneous

M1) Can coaches have contact with pitchers/catchers before June 1?

A1) No, the first day of live contact practice is Monday, June 1. Virtual workouts can continue to be distributed up to that point.

M2) Will there be any adaptations to the pitch count rule in baseball?

A2) No, the pitch count rule will be the same as what was published in the 2020 IHSAA Baseball Manual.

M3) What is the postseason schedule?

A3) Softball: Regionals begins on July 13; state - July 27-July 31. Baseball: Postseason begins on July 9; state - July 24 - Aug. 1.

M4) What is the protocol regarding how schedules should be created?

A4) Athletic directors and conferences will determine their schedule with the beginning date of June 15th.

M5) Will there be any adaptations to the game limitation?

A5) No, the IHSAA baseball and IGHSAA softball policies regarding individual and game limitations will remain the same.

M6) What happens if a school doesn't want to play another school on their respective schedule as a result of a positive COVID-19 test?

A6) If the Department of Public Health advises either school that the game is not to be played, it is considered a "No Contest." If they choose on their own to not play the contest, the game will be considered a forfeit.

M7) Which levels are able to participate in softball and baseball this summer?

A7) Middle school softball and baseball are currently not allowed. Local and conference will make decisions on which levels at the high school will participate this summer. All current eligibility policies for 8th graders playing high school baseball continue to be in place.

M8) What is the first date in which intrasquad scrimmages may be allowed for softball and baseball? Are scrimmages against other schools allowed?

A8) Intrasquad scrimmages are allowed to begin on the first day of practice, June 1. They are considered practices and therefore no parents and/or fans can attend. Scrimmages against other schools are not allowed until after June 15.