

Sport-Specific Protocol: Softball - Practice

Last Updated: July 8, 2020

Special Olympics



This document is specific to the sport of softball and is supplemental to the general *Return to Activities Protocol*. It is imperative that softball hosts adhere to any protocol outlined below or in the general *Return to Activities Protocol*. If your facility has rules in place that are stricter than those provided by Special Olympics, those local rules are to be used.

BEFORE TEAM ARRIVAL

- Ensure venue is disinfected, especially restrooms, dugouts and any concessions area.
- Disinfect any tables & chairs used for scoring table, check-in and/or any other function.
- Distribute scoresheets, lineup cards and pencils (etc) to each score table, if applicable, to reduce contact. The person distributing scorecards and pencils should utilize proper PPE and sanitation measures.
- Only head coaches and umpires should approach the scorers table volunteers
- Collect *COVID-19 Code of Conduct* from all volunteer staff, management team etc

TEAM CHECK-IN

- Check-in area must be setup so that social distancing can be maintained.
- Check-in area should be setup outside to reduce bottlenecks and close-quarter interactions.
- *Athlete Medical Forms* must be checked as usual.
- Check that each participant has a *COVID-19 Code of Conduct* on-site.
- Hosts must follow the "Onsite Screening Protocol for COVID-19" as outlined in the *Return to Activities Protocol*.

BEFORE PRACTICE

- Meals are strongly discouraged. If a meal will be served, boxed or bagged meals are required. Food preparation and packaging must be done by the caterer. Food must be distributed by a caterer-provided person. Napkins and utensils must be provided by the caterer and distributed individually to each participant. No buffets or banquet style meals are permitted. Concession stands run by the facility are allowed to serve.
- Make regular announcements to reinforce the importance of PPE, hygiene, and social distancing.
- Grouping up should be discouraged. Direct participants to their assigned diamond for any team/rules meeting.
- All bats, balls and any other commonly used equipment used for practice should be thoroughly disinfected.

EQUIPMENT

- All players must have their own gloves (no sharing of gloves)
- All players must have their own batting helmet (labeled with identification, no sharing of helmets)
- If players use a batting glove, they must have their own (no sharing of batting gloves)
- All participants must have a water bottle or be provided with a sealed bottle of water
- All players should have their own bag/backpack for their water, gloves & personal items and a labeled container for their mask (ziplock bag) while on the field.

DURING THE PRACTICE

- Before practice begins, all players should sanitize their hands.
- While on the field, participants should remain 6 feet apart during all drills and exercises.
- Balls should be periodically disinfected (every half inning during a game type setting, or every 10-15 minutes during a practice setting).
- Bats should be disinfected between each batter.
- All Participants must wear a face mask when they are not on the field actively participating.
- All Participants must wear a face mask while in the dugout. (consider NOT using the dugouts during practice, so players can more easily stay socially distant.)
- Coaches (or designated Volunteer) should have a system to ensure all participants are safely and effectively putting on their masks before going into the dugout, and not taking off their mask until after they exit the dugout.
- Players should be reminded to refrain from touching their face. If a player is noticed doing so, they should be directed to re-sanitize their hands.
- Only team members should be in the dugout. If there is insufficient room in the dugout, a tent may be placed outside the dugout to increase room.
- You should have additional water to distribute as needed, provided:
 - The person distributing the water is utilizing PPE and following proper sanitation procedures
 - The water is in a sealed container.
 - One person is handling the water and participants are not permitted to reach into the water reservoir.
 - Community water coolers should be removed from the field.
- No high fives, handshakes, or other direct contact.

AFTER THE PRACTICE

- No congregating at the dugout.
- Participants should finish practice, put on their facemask, load up their equipment, and hit the road.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

- Social distancing guidelines will be followed at all times if inclement weather forces participants to move inside.
- If adequate indoor space is not available for social distancing, participants should return to their vehicles with facemasks on.

PENALTIES

- Hosts that do not adhere to these protocols will be suspended from hosting softball events for 1 year.
- Participants who do not adhere to these protocols may face punishment up to and including suspension from competition.
- Additional punishment may be given to County Management as warranted, on a case by case basis, according to the *Return to Activities Protocol*.