



**Firebirds Fastpitch
Fairfax, VA**

COVID-19 Return to Play Policy

May 28, 2020

amended June 16, 2020



To Our Firebirds Family:

We have missed you! The last few months have been incredibly difficult for us all in so many ways. To those of you who have been sick, or had close family or friends who have been sick, we hope you are better or on the path to a quick and full recovery. If you've lost a loved one, you have our deepest sympathy. Even if we cannot be there in person to mourn with you, please know we are thinking of you and your family. If you or your family have had to deal with the secondary effects of the pandemic such as job loss, we are there for you. We will work with you to ensure as minimal an impact as possible on your ability to play softball, and we can help connect you to community resources if you need them. Please do not hesitate to reach out; all requests will be kept confidential.

Softball pales in importance next to the health and well-being of you and your family. That is why we had to take such extraordinary steps to stop our season. But it doesn't mean softball isn't important. We regularly hear how the Firebirds are more than a softball team to you. We're family. Getting back on the field isn't just about getting to play softball, it's about being together.

Because getting back together is so important to our collective well-being, we want to ensure we make the experience as safe as possible. The policy presented here lays out how we will do that. It is important that everyone – players, coaches, parents, next-door neighbors who come to watch you play – does their part to keep us all safe and healthy. Please read carefully through this policy, and let your coach know if you have any questions or concerns.

Also, be certain that **there is no policy or procedure we could put in place that would allow us to return to softball free of risk.** Only fully quarantining yourself would eliminate risk. We are confident that this policy, which draws on best practices from across the country, minimizes risk to the point that it is unlikely coronavirus would spread through softball activities. But we cannot guarantee that it won't happen. So, it is essential that we included a guiding principle in the policy: no player can be disciplined (e.g., get cut from the team, lose playing time) for opting not to participate due to covid-19-related concerns. We recognize that you may be more vulnerable to the disease, or have close family members who are more vulnerable, or have other legitimate reasons to be extra-cautious. We respect that and ask only that you keep the lines of communication with your coach wide open.

Again, we've missed you. We've missed softball. And we can't wait to be back on the field with you soon.

Go Firebirds!

Your Coaches and NVGSA/Firebirds Leadership

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This policy draws upon the following resources:

- Responsible Restart Ohio: Baseball, Softball, and Batting Cages, coronavirus.ohio.gov/static/responsible/Baseball-Softball.pdf
- CDC: Considerations for Youth Sports, www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/youth-sports.html
CDC: Schools, Workplaces & Community Locations, <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/schools-workplaces-community-locations/>
- CDC: Symptom-Based Strategy to Discontinue Isolation for Persons with COVID-19, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/strategy-discontinue-isolation.html>
- Minnesota Department of Health: COVID-19 Exclusion Guidance: Decision Tree for Symptomatic People in Schools & Child Care Programs, <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/exguide.pdf>
- Sadler Sports and Recreation Insurance: Applying Risk Management to Address Coronavirus Risk to Allow Your Organization to Re-Open and Return to Play, <https://www.sadlersports.com/coronavirus-risk-management-in-sports/>
- National Federation of State High School Associations: Guidance for Opening Up High School Athletics and Activities, https://www.nfhs.org/media/3812287/2020-nfhs-guidance-for-opening-up-high-school-athletics-and-activities-nfhs-smac-may-15_2020-final.pdf
- United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee: Return to Training and Sport Event Planning, <https://www.teamusa.org/coronavirus>

June 16 revisions:

- To align with Virginia Phase 2 guidelines for sports, the six-foot social distancing has been changed to ten feet, except for spectators.
- More detail was provided on mask use.
- Definition of fever (temperature of 100.4 or higher) was added to the symptom assessment.

Firebirds Return to Play Policy Guidelines

1. Everything in this policy is subject to federal, state, and local regulations and restrictions.
2. All players and (signed by parent and player for players under 18, signed by player for players 18 and older) and coaches must have a hard copy signed waiver. The waiver shall include acknowledgement of awareness of risk, a copy of the Firebirds policy, and materials describing risk reduction strategies and symptoms. All original waivers will be submitted to the NVGSA Vice President-Travel and will remain on file with NVGSA for 7 years.
3. Coaches may not discipline players for not attending team events due to fears related to covid-19.
4. Returning to practice:
 - a. Practices are ALLOWED, under state/local guidelines and the rules in this policy, once Fairfax County is in Phase 1, as declared by the governor of Virginia.
 - b. Practices are EXPECTED, under state/local guidelines and the rules in this policy, once Fairfax County is in Phase 2, as declared by the governor of Virginia.
5. Returning to play:
 - a. The decision to play in games, including scrimmages and tournaments, shall be made by each team. The decision-making process shall be collaborative, including coaches, parents, and players.
 - b. Double headers and round-robins with other local (Northern Virginia or DMV area) teams are acceptable if Fairfax County is in Phase 2 AND all participating teams are from jurisdictions in Phase 2 or equivalent.
 - c. Tournament play is acceptable if:
 - i. Fairfax County AND the hosting jurisdiction are in Phase 2 (or similar) or later; AND
 - ii. There is no recommendation from the governor against travelling outside of Northern Virginia (notice "recommendation," as opposed to "requirement"); AND
 - iii. The tournament uses adequate safety rules (similar to below preferred); AND
 - iv. The tournament does not allow teams from jurisdictions that remain under stay-at-home orders.
6. This policy will be updated when Fairfax County moves to Phase 3, or when enough information is known about Phase 3 to allow for an update.

Mandatory and Recommended Safety Practices and Procedures

Arrival to Venue

- *Mandatory Practices*
 - All participants, spectators, and employees must adhere to ten-foot physical distancing while at the facility/course.
 - Must conduct daily symptom assessments by coaches and players (self-evaluation). Anyone experiencing symptoms must stay home.*
 - No team water coolers or shared drinking stations.
 - Compliant game balls must be designated to each team for use while that team is playing defense.
 - Prior to competitive tournaments, event owners must alert the local health department of the event.
 - These requirements must be shared prior to the event with all players, coaches, spectators, officials, and employees prior to their arrival at the venue.
 - The coach, or a designated adult, shall ensure hard surfaces regularly touched (bench, gates, bat racks) have been disinfected by wiping them with an EPA-approved product. Players should not enter the dugout area until the coach confirms it has been disinfected.
- *Recommended Practices*
 - Digital check-in and registration for all events that require check-in and registration.
 - Lineups should be entered online or by spoken word and recorded by officials/umpires without exchanging any physical documents with coaches or players.
 - Athletes are strongly recommended to travel to the venue alone or with a member of their immediate household.

Leaving the Venue

- *Mandatory Practices*
 - Individuals should not congregate in common areas or parking lot following the event or practice
 - Umpires should adhere to social distancing practices when interacting with players, coaches, and spectators off the field of play.
 - Individuals should not exchange items.
 - The coach, or a designated adult, shall ensure hard surfaces (bench, gates, bat racks) and hard-surfaced equipment (balls, tees, nets) regularly touched have been disinfected by wiping them with an [EPA-approved product](#).
- *Recommended Practices*
 - Team meetings should occur virtually or over the phone rather than in a team huddle.
 - Athletes are strongly recommended to travel to the venue alone or with a member(s) of their immediate household, if possible.
 - Face coverings are strongly recommended for individuals traveling to and from the venue.
 - Team meals should only occur in compliance with the guidelines issued for restaurants in the applicable locality.

Team Practices

- *Mandatory Practices*
 - Coaches and players must adhere to physical ten-foot distancing except when the ball is in play.
 - Must conduct daily symptom assessments by coaches and players (self-evaluation).* Anyone experiencing symptoms must stay home.
 - No team water coolers or shared drinking stations.
- *Recommended Practices*
 - Coaches should wear face coverings at all times.
 - Athletes should wear face coverings at all times while not actively participating in the field of play.
 - Face coverings are strongly recommended for any spectators. It is strongly recommended that parents drop their kids off, wait in the car, or otherwise remain away from the field during practice.
 - For each practice session, it is recommended that coaches divide players into groups and establish rotating shifts when possible.
 - Athletes should bring individual water containers.
 - Virtual meetings should be considered when possible.
 - Athletes are strongly recommended to travel to the venue alone or with a member(s) of their immediate household, if possible. Face coverings are strongly recommended for individuals traveling to and from the venue.
 - Whenever possible, equipment and personal items should have proper separation and should not be shared. If equipment must be shared, proper sanitation should be administered between users.

Athletes

- *Mandatory Practices*
 - Must adhere to ten-foot social distancing practices off the field of play.
 - Must conduct daily symptom assessments by coaches and players (self-evaluation). Anyone experiencing symptoms must stay home.*
 - Must not share water or equipment. Belongings should be used only by the individual owner or operator including, but not limited to water bottles, gloves, bats, hats, and other on- and off-field gear.
 - No touch rule – players should refrain from high fives, handshake lines, and other physical contact with teammates, opposing players, coaches, umpires, and fans. A “tip the cap” can be used following the game in lieu of the handshake line.
 - Spitting, eating seeds, gum, or other similar products is prohibited in the dugout and immediate field area.
- *Recommended Practices*
 - Should wear face coverings at all times when not actively participating in the field of play.
 - Hand washing or hand sanitizing, in the absence of soap and water, are strongly recommended for athletes during the games.
 - Whenever possible, equipment and personal items should have proper separation and should not be shared. If equipment must be shared, proper sanitation should be administered between users.

Spectators

- *Mandatory Practices*
 - Must adhere to six-foot social distancing practices. This includes in and around bleachers for anyone not in the same family.
 - Must not enter player areas (on the field of play or bench areas).
 - Must keep six-feet or more distance from the backstop.
- *Recommended Practices*
 - Strongly recommended to wear face coverings at all times.
 - Hand washing or hand sanitizing, in the absence of soap and water, is recommended strongly during the games.
 - Conduct daily symptom assessments (self-evaluation). Anyone experiencing symptoms should stay home.*

Coaches

- *Mandatory Practices*
 - Must adhere to ten-foot social distancing practices.
 - Must conduct daily symptom assessments by coaches and players (self-evaluation). Anyone experiencing symptoms must stay home.*
 - Must maintain the hard copy symptom assessments for at least one year. (They may be given to the NVGSA Vice President-Travel for keeping.)
 - No touch rule – coaches should refrain from high fives, handshake lines, and other physical contact with teammates, opposing players, coaches, umpires, and fans. A “tip the cap” can be used following the game in lieu of the handshake line.
 - Must ensure that players are following COVID-19 -related prevention measures included herein.
 - Spitting, eating seeds, gum, or other similar products is prohibited in the dugout and immediate field area.
- *Recommended Practices*
 - Should wear face coverings at all times.
 - Coaches should ensure the players are adhering to social distancing in dugouts and other seating areas and wearing face coverings while not actively participating on the field of play.
 - Whenever possible, equipment and personal items should have proper separation and should not be shared. If equipment must be shared, proper sanitation should be administered between users.
 - Consider prohibiting
 - Designate a parent to enforce these rules and recommendations for the players. That parent should also complete a daily symptom assessment (self-evaluation) and stay home if experiencing symptoms. *

Umpires/Officials

- *Mandatory Practices*
 - Must adhere to ten-foot social distancing practices when interacting with players, coaches, and spectators off the field of play.
 - Must conduct daily symptom assessments (self-evaluation). Anyone experiencing symptoms must stay home.*
 - Must avoid exchanging documents or equipment with players, coaches, or spectators.
- *Recommended Practices*
 - Should wear face coverings at all times.
 - Digital check-in and registration for all events.
 - Umpires calling balls and strikes should allow adequate distance behind the catcher while still able to perform their duty.

Confirmed Cases

- **Mandatory Practices**
 - Immediately isolate and seek medical care for any individual who develops symptoms.*
 - Contact the local health district about suspected cases or exposure.
 - Organizer must maintain a complete list of coaches, players, and employees present at each event to include the date, beginning and ending time of the event, plus name, address, and phone contact to be made available upon request from local health district.
 - See “If Someone is Sick or Symptomatic” (next section) for additional details.
- **Recommended Practices**
 - Work with local health department to identify potentially infected or exposed individuals to help facilitate effective contact tracing/notifications.
 - Once testing is readily available, test all suspected infections or exposures.
 - Following testing, contact local health department to initiate appropriate care and tracing.

A note about face coverings: Masks or face coverings are strongly recommended for use other than by players while on the field of play. To be clear, wearing a mask while exercising is not recommended. Anyone with a health condition that makes wearing a mask risky, or who is experiencing trouble breathing, should not wear a mask. Wearing a mask, combined with being outside and social distancing, makes softball a relatively low-risk activity. But because people are always moving around at a softball event, it is really important to wear masks as much as possible to limit the potential for virus transmission.

*List of symptoms, per CDC (as of 5/25/20; check <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html> for regular updates):

- | | |
|---|------------------------------|
| • Fever (100.4 degrees or higher) or chills | • Headache |
| • Cough | • New loss of taste or smell |
| • Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing | • Sore throat |
| • Fatigue | • Congestion or runny nose |
| • Muscle or body aches | • Nausea or vomiting |
| | • Diarrhea |

If Someone is Sick or Symptomatic

Experiencing Symptoms

- Ideally, individuals will identify symptoms during their self-assessment. Anyone experiencing symptoms must remain home and contact their health care provider.
- If an individual arrives at a game or practice with a self-assessment indicating the presence of a symptom, they shall be directed to leave immediately and contact their health care provider.
- If an individual develops symptoms at an event, they shall immediately leave and contact their health care provider.
- Symptomatic individuals must follow the guidance of their health care provider regarding testing, treatment, and isolation. That guidance should be regularly shared with the coach.

Testing Positive

- If an individual tests positive, the test result must be communicated to the coach within 24 hours (ideally immediately).
- Individuals who test positive must follow the guidance of their health care provider regarding treatment and isolation. That guidance should be regularly shared with the coach.
- Working with their health care provider, individuals who test positive must notify their local health department to engage in contact tracing, if recommended. If applicable, the coach can provide lists of names and contact information for players and coaches present at team activities on given dates.

Exposure to Infected or Symptomatic Individuals

- Exposure to symptomatic individuals does not require players or coaches to refrain from activity. They should, however, closely monitor their health for the presence of symptoms at least daily, using the CDC's [Self-Checker Guide](#).
- Exposure to an individual who has tested positive is defined as contact lasting greater than 15 minutes in proximity of less than 6 feet, beginning 48 hours prior to the onset of symptoms. Anyone exposed in such a manner to an individual who has tested positive must self-isolate and monitor their symptoms for 14 days before they can return to activity. This may require teams to withdraw from play, even potentially in the midst of a tournament.

Returning After Illness

- Individuals recovered from COVID-19 illness may not return to activity for at least 10 days after illness onset and at least 3 days (72 hours) after recovery. Their health care provider should also recommend a return to activity.
- "Illness onset" is defined as the date symptoms begin.
- "Recovery" is defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications with progressive improvement or resolution of other symptoms.

Coronavirus Screening: Symptom Self-Assessment

Name: _____

Date: _____

Parent Name: _____

Parent Signature:
(Player Signature if 18+) _____

In the past 10 days have you had (check all that apply):

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fever (100.4 or higher) or chills | <input type="checkbox"/> Cough | <input type="checkbox"/> New onset headache |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sore throat | <input type="checkbox"/> Unexplained muscle ache | <input type="checkbox"/> New loss of taste or smell |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nausea or vomiting | <input type="checkbox"/> Diarrhea | <input type="checkbox"/> None of these |

Do you have severe shortness of breath or difficulty breathing?

- Yes No

Have you been diagnosed with coronavirus (COVID-19) within the past 10 days?

- Yes No

In the past 14 days, have you been within 6 feet for more than 15 minutes of someone with suspected or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19)?

- Yes No

This form must be completed and submitted to your coach before each practice and game day, or you will be ineligible to play.

NVGSA Firebirds

Waiver/Release for Communicable Diseases Including COVID-19

ASSUMPTION OF RISK / WAIVER OF LIABILITY / INDEMNIFICATION AGREEMENT

In consideration of being allowed to participate on behalf of the Northern Virginia Girls Softball Association/Firebirds (NVGSA) athletic program and related events and activities, the undersigned acknowledges, appreciates, and agrees that:

1. Participation includes possible exposure to and illness from infectious diseases including but not limited to MRSA, influenza, and COVID-19. While particular rules and personal discipline may reduce this risk, the risk of serious illness and death does exist; and,
2. I knowingly and freely assume all such risks, both known and unknown, even if arising from the negligence of the releasees or others, and assume full responsibility for my participation; and,
3. I willingly agree to comply with the stated and customary terms and conditions for participation as regards protection against infectious diseases, as identified in the Firebirds Return to Play Policy. If, however, I observe any unusual or significant hazard during my presence or participation, I will remove myself from participation and bring such to the attention of the nearest official immediately; and,
4. I, for myself and on behalf of my heirs, assigns, personal representatives and next of kin, hereby release and hold harmless NVGSA, their officers, officials, agents, and/or employees, other participants, sponsoring agencies, sponsors, advertisers, and if applicable, owners and lessors of premises used to conduct the event ("RELEASEES"), with respect to any and all illness, disability, death, or loss or damage to person or property, whether arising from the negligence of releasees or otherwise, to the fullest extent permitted by law.

I have read this release of liability and assumption of risk agreement, fully understand its terms, understand that I have given up substantial rights by signing it, and sign if freely and voluntarily without any inducement.

Name of Participant: _____

Date: _____

Participant Signature: _____

FOR PARTICIPANTS OF MINORITY AGE (UNDER AGE 18 AT THE TIME OF REGISTRATION)

This is to certify that I, as parent/guardian, with legal responsibility for this participant, have read and explained the provisions in this waiver/release to my child/ward including the risks of presence and participation and his/her personal responsibilities for adhering to the rules and regulations for protection against communicable diseases. Furthermore, my child/ward understands and accepts these risks and responsibilities. I for myself, my spouse, and child/ward do consent and agree to his/her release provided above for all the Releasees and myself, my spouse, and child/ward do release and agree to indemnify and hold harmless the Releasees for any and all liabilities incident to my minor child's/ward's presence or participation in these activities as provided above, EVEN IF ARISING FROM THEIR NEGLIGENCE, to the fullest extent provided by law.

Name of Parent: _____

Date: _____

Parent Signature: _____

How to Protect Yourself and Others

Know how it spreads



- There is currently no vaccine to prevent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).
- **The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus.**
- The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person.
 - » Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
 - » Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks.
 - » These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.
 - » Some recent studies have suggested that COVID-19 may be spread by people who are not showing symptoms.

Everyone should

Clean your hands often



- **Wash your hands** often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, **use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.** Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth** with unwashed hands.

Avoid close contact



- **Stay home if you are sick.**
- **Avoid close contact** with people who are sick.
- **Put distance between yourself and other people.**
 - » Remember that some people without symptoms may be able to spread virus.
 - » This is especially important for **people who are at higher risk of getting very sick.** www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-higher-risk.html



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Cover your mouth and nose with a cloth face cover when around others



- **You could spread COVID-19 to others** even if you do not feel sick.
- **Everyone should wear a cloth face cover when they have to go out in public**, for example to the grocery store or to pick up other necessities.
 - » Cloth face coverings should not be placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.
- **The cloth face cover is meant to protect other people** in case you are infected.
- Do **NOT** use a facemask meant for a healthcare worker.
- Continue to **keep about 6 feet between yourself and others**. The cloth face cover is not a substitute for social distancing.

Cover coughs and sneezes



- **If you are in a private setting and do not have on your cloth face covering, remember to always cover your mouth and nose** with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow.
- **Throw used tissues** in the trash.
- Immediately **wash your hands** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, clean your hands with a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

Clean and disinfect



- **Clean AND disinfect frequently touched surfaces** daily. This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks. www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/disinfecting-your-home.html
- **If surfaces are dirty, clean them:** Use detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.
- **Then, use a household disinfectant.** You can see a list of [EPA-registered household disinfectants here](#).

[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)

Recommended Social Distancing Set-Up

