

## Nevada Interscholastic Activities Association

1188 Victorian Plaza Circle · Sparks, Nevada 89431 · (775) 453-1012 · Fax (775) 453-1016

### **BASEBALL - SOFTBALL, 202One**

**Updated as of Monday, March 8, 2021 ... February 15 & March 15 (spectators), 2021**

⇒ This document now includes changes from the original, in gray-shade. These updates are due to revised guidance from the C.D.C. and the Nevada Department of Health and Human Services.

*The Nevada Interscholastic Activities Association's "Update 15 – Move to Phase 3 with Modifications in NIAA Guidance" was issued October 23, 2020. It provides guidance in conjunction with Gubernatorial Emergency Directive 034. This document incorporates that guidance and is in line with it. Because the situation is fluid and changes by way of Emergency Directive and/or guidance, this Baseball - Softball 202One document is subject to amendment and re-issuance at any time. Please assure this is the latest guidance issued. The effective date is listed above. Links to the latest, most updated version appear on the NIAA website on both the [Covid-19 Updates](#) and [Baseball - Softball](#) pages.*

As preparations continue for a 2021 Baseball - Softball season in the midst of a worldwide pandemic, it is noted that at this time, per State of Nevada in Emergency Directive 034, competition in minimal-contact, moderate-risk sports is allowed so long as social distancing and other requirements can be met. The gubernatorial directive has determined that Baseball & Softball are Minimal-Contact sports with a Moderate Risk level. While not comprehensive, this document attempts to provide guidance to schools in conducting the sports of Baseball & Softball during the 2021 competitive season. Please refer to Directive 034 when applicable.

This guidance has been developed in consultation with the Nevada Department of Health and Human Services Division of Public and Behavioral Health. It reflects the guidance associated with pertinent gubernatorial emergency directives and the guidance issued in [NIAA Update 15](#), which should be reviewed carefully. It considers recommendations from the National Federation of State High School Associations' (NFHS) sports rules and sports medicine advisory committees. Strict adherence to the guidelines is critical to competition taking place. Additional guidelines, directives, policies, etc. issued by local health authorities, local governments, school districts and/or schools that are more restrictive may be issued and compliance with them is to be assured by NIAA member schools.

## **General Guidance:**

### **TESTING & SCREENING**

Any person, including players, at risk for severe illness or with serious underlying medical conditions should be discouraged from attending any sporting activities.

#### **Testing**

- Coaches, managers<sup>1</sup>, officials/referees/umpires, and team staff are required to take a COVID-19 test prior to the start of the season or resumption of athletic activity. Tests should be completed as close to the beginning of the start of the season as possible. It is strongly encouraged that such testing takes place every other week during a season.  
*Those who are fully vaccinated are exempt from the testing requirement. Please note, however, that districts and schools may choose to be more restrictive.*
- It is strongly recommended, but not mandatory, that all players/student-athletes test for COVID-19 prior to the start of the season.

#### **Screenings**

- Contactless temperature screenings MUST be provided for all players/student-athletes, coaches, managers, team personnel, referees/officials/umpires, league officials, staff, and student managers before each practice, game or other team event. Contactless temperature screenings are strongly encouraged for spectators and attendees.
  - Please ensure that the thermometer (touchless temperature scanners are recommended) has been thoroughly cleaned in between each check.
- All participants (coaches, managers, team personnel, players/student-athletes, student managers, referees/officials/umpires, league officials, spectators/attendees, staff, etc.) MUST respond to COVID-19 screening-survey questions upon arrival and check-in at each practice, game, or other team event. See [NV COVID-19 Health Screening Guide](#)
- A record should be kept of all individuals present. [COVID-19 Screening for Sports](#)
- Regular symptom checks and exposure assessments must be conducted for all participants including players/student-athletes, coaches, managers, team personnel, student managers, officials/referees/umpires, event staff, etc. Daily symptom assessments should include monitoring for fever, cough, trouble breathing, and also whether individuals have been exposed through household members or others.
- Parents are encouraged to be on the alert for signs of illness in their children and themselves and stay home when sick.

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<sup>1</sup> The word “manager” as used in this reference refers to non-student team personnel such as a baseball team’s manager. Any reference to a student will use the term “student manager”. “Student manager” refers collectively to non-player team personnel who are students but not players for a competition or practice. Examples of a “student manager” would include without limitation, equipment managers, water boys/girls, assistant trainers, score and/or statistics keepers, players who for whatever reason (injury, suspension, etc.) won’t be participating in the competition and are not in uniform but are in the team bench area, etc. Student managers are to be dealt with, for the purposes of this guidance, the same as players.

## If Someone Displays Symptoms

- If a player/student-athlete, coach, official, staff member, volunteer or spectator displays symptoms of COVID-19 (confirmed temperature of 100.4° Fahrenheit or higher or if they say “yes” to any of the COVID-19 screening-survey questions), or if there is any suspicion that they are sick or symptomatic, they must be declined admittance and will not be allowed to participate or watch a sporting practice, game or competition. If they arrived with other people (parents/guardians, teammates, etc.), everyone in the group must also be declined admittance and they are to leave immediately.
  - Please advise them to go home, stay away from other people and contact their primary care provider or local health authority for further instructions, including where and when to access a test.
  - Assigned staff or volunteers should provide the individual with a face covering and help the individual minimize their contact with others before leaving the facility. All areas used by the individual should be disinfected immediately.

## Positive Test Protocols

- If a coach, manager or player/student-athlete of the same team tests positive for COVID-19, the entire team (if they had been in close contact with the positive individual) MUST quarantine for 10 days. All team activities and practices must be canceled for 10 days during the quarantine period. The 10-day quarantine may be reduced to 7 if all who had been in close contact test negative starting on day 5 from the most recent exposure.  
NOTE: the number of days for quarantine listed here are from guidance issued by the CDC and Nevada Department of Health and Human Services. Please check with local health authorities as there may be more stringent requirements in place locally.
- If a household member of a coach, manager or player/student-athlete of the same team tests positive for COVID-19, that coach, manager, or player/athlete must notify the school administration and/or NIAA and must cease all activities with the team for 10 days, or 7 days if they test negative starting on day 5 from the most recent exposure. A negative test prior to day 5 from the most recent exposure does not allow earlier return.  
NOTE: the number of days for quarantine listed here are from guidance issued by the CDC and Nevada Department of Health and Human Services. Please check with local health authorities as there may be more stringent requirements in place locally.
- If a coach, manager, player/student-athlete, student manager or team personnel becomes sick with or tests positive for COVID-19, they are to notify the school administration and/or NIAA. They MUST cease all athletic activity and participation and MUST be suspended until 10 days of home isolation are completed and symptoms have resolved for at least 24 hours after that. Cases which continue to be symptomatic cannot return to participation even if test results are negative.
  - CDC: "youth sports organizations should notify local health officials, youth sports program staff, referees/umpires/officials, and families immediately of anyone with COVID-19 while maintaining that person's confidentiality in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)." Event staff should also be notified. As used here, for NIAA sports, the "youth sports organizations" are the school and NIAA; "youth sports program staff" is athletic directors, school coaches and all game administrators.

- School officials are to immediately notify local health authorities and the NIAA in addition to those mentioned above in the case of an individual with COVID-19. A person's confidentiality is to be maintained in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- School officials are to work with local health authorities in determining close contact of team members, coaches and other team personnel with an individual diagnosed with COVID-19.
- Schools are to assure that anyone within their authority who previously tested positive for COVID-19 receive medical clearance<sup>2</sup> before returning to play or activity.
- Official/referee/umpire organizations are to assure that officials/referees/umpires within their authority who previously tested positive for COVID-19 receive medical clearance<sup>3</sup> before returning to officiating/refereeing.
- An official/referee/umpire who becomes ill with or tests positive for COVID-19 is to immediately notify their respective sport commissioner and/or the NIAA. The individual MUST cease all officiating/refereeing/umpiring and in-person participation and MUST be suspended until 10 days of home isolation are completed and symptoms have resolved for at least 24 hours after that. Cases which continue to be symptomatic cannot return to participation even if test results are negative.

### **Contact Tracing**

- Cooperation with Local Health Authorities on contact tracing is expected. School and school district staff, including but not limited to administrators, athletic directors, school nurses, school safety specialists, counselors, athletic trainers, coaches and any other staff deemed appropriate by the school and/or school district, shall collaborate and assist Local Health Districts with contact tracing in the event of illness of a player, coach, referee, athletic trainer, and/or anyone else involved with a sports team/group and/or event.

### **FACE COVERING**

- Decreasing potential exposure to respiratory droplets is the guiding principle behind distancing and the use of face coverings. The use of cloth face coverings is meant to decrease the spread of respiratory droplets. Any student who prefers to wear a cloth face covering during a contest should be allowed to do so.
- Emergency Directive 028 requires that all students and school staff must wear a cloth face covering while on school buses, in school buildings, or on school campuses unless approved for an exemption.
- The guidance issued in conjunction with Emergency Directive 034 spells out the requirement for face coverings for players in athletic contests. It states, "Players and athletes must wear face coverings indoors and outdoors, except when:
  - actively eating or drinking (it is noted that social distancing must be maintained);
  - if an exemption can be applied under Directive 024; or

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<sup>2</sup> Medical clearance is to be provided by a medical professional functioning within their legal scope of practice.

<sup>3</sup> Medical clearance is to be provided by a medical professional functioning within their legal scope of practice.

- when actively exercising or participating in practices or competitions. If social distancing cannot be maintained during activity, players are strongly encouraged to wear face coverings to the extent practicable.”
- Emergency Directive 028 also states, “Parents, vendors, volunteers, visitors, and guests who are unable or unwilling to wear cloth face coverings under any circumstances or exemptions should not be allowed on school buses, in school buildings, or on school campuses.”
- The guidance issued with Directive 034 states, “Face coverings should be worn by coaches, managers, sports staff, officials, parents/guardians, and allowed attendees and spectators.” Student managers are to wear face coverings as well.
- Schools are to assure compliance with the face covering requirements at NIAA athletic events in which that school is involved. Schools are encouraged to notify potential spectators that face covering will be required.

## **SOCIAL DISTANCING**

- Create physical distance of at least six (6) feet between players when instructing, explaining drills, or the rules of the game, etc.
- Provide physical guides and post signs or visual cues on the ground or walls to indicate appropriate spacing distance.
- If locker rooms or meeting rooms are used, there must be a minimum distance of six (6) feet between individuals at all times. Efforts should be made to encourage students and coaches to limit the use of locker rooms when at all possible by arriving ready for workouts and showering at private residences.
- Space players at least six (6) feet apart on the court/field, when possible, while participating in the sport (such as during warmup, skill building activities and simulation drills).
- When not directly participating in practices or contests, care should be taken to maintain distancing between each individual. Ensure social distancing by increasing space between coaches, players and other team personnel on the sideline, dugout, or bench. Additionally, coaches can encourage athletes to use downtime for individual skill-building work or cardiovascular conditioning, rather than staying clustered together.
- Encourage social distancing through increased spacing during warm-ups, small groups with limited mixing between groups and, when feasible, stagger schedule - arrival – departure times.
- Ensure everyone at the sports facility, when not directly participating in the competition, including all players/student-athletes, coaches, referees, volunteers, media, and independent contractors, keep a physical distance of at least six (6) feet from individuals not residing in the same household, especially in common areas.
- If keeping physical distance is difficult with players in competition or group practice, consider relying on individual skill work and drills.
- Limit contact with other teams. Scrimmages with another school are discouraged.
- Discourage unnecessary physical contact, such as high fives, handshakes, fist bumps, or hugs. Traditional post and pre-game handshakes will not take place.

- If a school allows for travel other than on school transportation, players are strongly encouraged not to travel with other members of the team and only members of their immediate households.
- Schools are responsible to monitor and make sure that spectators from different households keep six (6) feet of physical distance, including at entrances, exits, restrooms and any other area where people may gather.
- Develop and implement a plan to limit the number of spectators admitted into the premises so that all staff, volunteers, contractors, and spectators can keep six (6) feet of physical distance.

## **FACILITY CLEANING**

- Adequate, frequent cleaning schedules should be created and implemented for all athletic facilities to mitigate any communicable diseases. Use disinfectants that are included on the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved list for the SARS-CoV- 2 virus that causes COVID-19.
- Prior to an individual or groups of individuals entering a facility, hard surfaces within that facility should be wiped down and sanitized (chairs, furniture in meeting rooms, locker rooms, weight room equipment, bathrooms, athletic training room tables, gate handles, door knobs, light switches, sink handles, countertops, benches, etc.).
- Weight equipment should be wiped down thoroughly before and after an individual's use of equipment.
- Any equipment such as weight benches, athletic pads, etc. having holes with exposed foam should be covered.
- No spitting of sunflower seeds or similar products is to be allowed. Spitting is strongly discouraged.

## **PERSONAL & CLOTHES/EQUIPMENT HYGIENE**

- Individuals should wash their hands for a minimum of 20 seconds with warm water and soap before touching any surfaces or participating in workouts. If hands become visibly soiled, they should be washed with soap and water prior to using hand sanitizer.
- Hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol, should be plentiful and available to individuals throughout practices/workouts/games. Availability applies to all participants including but not limited to players, coaches, team personnel, athletic trainers, game administration and support staff, security and medical personnel, media, spectators, etc. Staff and players must practice healthy hygiene.
- Personal items and equipment temporarily stored in a team area or workout area should be spaced at least six (6) feet apart.
- Appropriate clothing/shoes should be worn at all times in the weight room to minimize sweat transmission onto equipment/surfaces.
- Students should be encouraged to shower and wash their workout clothing/uniforms immediately upon returning home.
- There should be no sharing of towels, clothing or shoes between players/student-athletes.
- Students should wear their own appropriate workout clothing and uniforms, and individual clothing/towels/uniforms should be washed and cleaned after every use.

- All athletic equipment, including bats, gloves, balls, etc., should be cleaned and disinfected frequently during practices and contests as appropriate to the sport.
  - Clean all equipment that directly contacts the head, face and hands with extra attention and detail.
- Equipment to be cleaned and disinfected prior to subsequent use is to be kept separate from cleaned, disinfected equipment.

## **PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

- Non-contact and minimal-contact sports practices and competitions may be held within the requirements and restrictions listed here.
- Where possible, workouts should be conducted in “pods” of students with the same group of students always working out together. Smaller pods can be utilized for weight training. This ensures limited exposure if an individual develops an infection.
- Maximum lifts should be limited, and power cages should be used for squats and bench presses. Spotters should stand at each end of the bar.

## **HYDRATION**

- All students shall bring their own water bottle. Water bottles must not be shared.
- No shared drinking fountains or hydration stations (water cows, water troughs, water coolers, etc.) may be utilized. Close water fountains, except for those designed to refill water bottles without contact between the bottle and fountain. Encourage players to bring prefilled water bottles.

## **LIMITATIONS ON GATHERINGS, MANAGING EVENTS**

### **Capacity Limits**

In compliance with Emergency Directive 037, county school districts, charter schools, and private schools that re-open school buildings or facilities must ensure that occupancy shall not exceed the lesser of 50% of the listed fire code capacity of a single space within a school site or 250 persons in an appropriately sized space that enables all social distancing requirements to be satisfied. These limits apply to outdoor fields and facilities as well as indoor facilities. All distancing requirements must be met. If distancing requirements cannot be satisfied, the capacity limit is to be reduced to the point where they are.

Per Directive 040 and its associated guidance, [Nevada Guidance for Safe Gatherings, Updated March 5, 2021](#), there MUST be a distance of at least:

\* 6 feet maintained between the participants and or participant area (e.g., court, field, pitch, course, etc. including team areas) and any spectators ONLY IF the participants wear a mask or face covering at all times throughout the event; or

\* 12 feet maintained between the participants or participant area (e.g., court, field, pitch, course, etc. including team areas) and any spectators when the participants are unmasked or when they temporarily or intermittently remove their masks or face coverings during events.

**So long as competitors, coaches or players always maintain at least 6 / 12 feet of distance from spectators, they are not required to be included in the occupant capacity limit. Should they join spectator spaces, they must be included in the occupant capacity limit. Event staff that interacts with spectators as part of their duties during an event should not be counted against the occupancy limit. Prior to hosting any athletic event, be sure to carefully review and assure compliance with [Emergency Directive 033](#), particularly section 11, and its accompanying guidance, [Nevada Guidance for Safe Gatherings, Celebrations, Ceremonies and Events](#).**

## **Spectators**

Under the Governor's Directive 033 related to gatherings, spectators may be allowed at sporting events covered under this guidance pursuant to the capacity restrictions set forth in the directive. However, it is still recommended that fans at sporting events be additionally limited and restricted to minimize the congregation of fans, parents/guardians, household members, and other spectators during this pandemic. Schools may consider limiting spectators to immediate household members or guardians of participants. Schools are responsible to enforce capacity limits as well as distancing and face covering requirements at events in which a school is involved. Plans should be developed by schools, if spectators are to be allowed, to assure compliance with capacity limits as well as distancing and face covering requirements in addition to all the other expectations normally associated with a high school contest. Careful review of and compliance with [Nevada Guidance for Safe Gatherings, Celebrations, Ceremonies and Events](#) is essential if spectators are to be allowed.

## **Support Groups**

The restrictions and requirements listed here and including those in Directive 033 and the associated guidance [Nevada Guidance for Safe Gatherings, Celebrations, Ceremonies and Events](#) apply to support groups such as cheerleaders, bands, pep clubs, etc. Limiting those who attend competitions reduces risk of the spread of the disease. Bands, pep clubs, etc. are discouraged at athletic competitions during the pandemic. If cheerleaders are allowed at a non-cheer sports competition, per Directive 033 and the associated guidance, a distance of at least 25 feet must be maintained between any cheerleader and any spectator. Individual cheerleaders must, at all times, maintain distancing of at least six (6) feet from any other individual including without limitation other cheerleaders including those on the same squad, game officials and members of either team including coaches and team personnel.

The number of cheerleaders allowed in the cheerleader area is to be reduced when necessary to preserve required distancing of a minimum of six (6) feet between individuals. Cheerleaders who join the spectator space would count toward the capacity limit of the venue. Cheerleaders who are in the cheerleader area are not required to be included in the capacity limit. Stunts that require physical contact with another person are not allowed. Face covering is required at all times.

## **Manage the Flow of People to Avoid Congestion and Crowding**

- When games and/or practices are held one after the other at the same facility, they MUST be scheduled to allow ample time between the finish and start of subsequent contests/practice sessions, to allow for departure and arrival without congestion.

- Teams and spectators are required to depart the facility immediately upon completion of the game or practice in a manner that minimizes congregating.
- Provision should be made for players to remain properly distanced while waiting for the beginning of practice, warm-up, or game, instead of forming a group.
- Strategies which prevent the congregation of people at practice and competition, especially spectators both before and after practices and competitions, should be devised and implemented. These strategies should allow people to leave the premises before next groups enter and should minimize gathering.
- To follow required physical distancing requirements, stagger arrival and departure times for staff, players and spectators to minimize congregating at entrances, exits and restrooms. To the extent practicable, separate entrances/exits for staff, players and spectators.
- Consider assigning staff to monitor the number of individuals in a restroom at one time to prevent congestion.
- When multiple sporting events occur at the same sports complex or venue at the same time, site administration is required to:
  - Ensure players and spectators for sporting events do not share space, including but not limited to restrooms, hallways, concession stands.
  - Ensure that high-traffic areas such as entrances, exits, check-in tables, restrooms, and concession areas, are cleaned and sanitized between subsequent events.

## **Signage**

- Post signage at practice and contest venue entrances outlining established protocols. Consider utilizing signage with easy to interpret graphics in commonly used languages reminding everyone to maintain six (6) feet of distance, properly wear face coverings, wash hands, etc.
- Mark directional flow patterns between seating areas, restrooms and other venue locations while posting signage to such effect.
- Post instructions for individuals throughout the practice and competition venue at entrances, and inform individuals of:
  - Capacity limits (see above) and social distancing instructions;
  - Prohibitions on entering a gathering if they are experiencing symptoms;
  - and Hygiene and Face Covering requirements.

## **CONSIDERATIONS IN PLANNING**

While the opportunity to participate in Baseball – Softball under this guidance is provided, this is not a return to “normal”. Doing all that can be done to limit the spread while conducting practices and competitions is imperative. No guidance can cover every situation. Please consider the following when planning practice, competition, and any other team activities.

- Face covering, proper hygiene and social distancing effectively prevent the spread.
- Outdoor locations are safer than indoor.
- Smaller groups are safer than larger.
- Limit the amount of contact to help prevent the spread.
- Practice activities that allow for distancing of participants are safer than those with closer contact.
- Shorter duration is safer than longer.
- Teams or individuals in quarantine cannot compete.

## **Baseball – Softball Specific Guidance:**

### **CONDUCT OF CONTESTS/PRACTICES**

- The NIAA is **recommending** that sanctioned Baseball – Softball contests take place on school campuses (in high school stadiums / on high school fields) and NOT in other facilities such as community recreation areas, county/city parks or private facilities. This recommendation is to help the Association’s membership maintain control over the event’s overall environment and spectator engagement per State of Nevada directives addressing gatherings.
- Please supply sufficient staff to ensure compliance with all guidance.
- It has been determined that schools having two fields that can be managed separate and apart from each other may designate each field as its own event facility. That means the event gathering guidance and maximum capacity limits would be treated independently from one field to the other. The two fields must be completely separate and the games must be managed separately to comply. Such a set-up would include the preventing of those participating or spectating at one field from freely moving to the other. However, if there is spectator/participant flow from one to another, the fields would have to be treated as one and subject to the gathering limits for one facility.
- Players/student-athletes, coaches, officials, team personnel and game administrators should sanitize their hands before, during and after each practice and game. Individuals are encouraged to bring their own hand sanitizer in addition to the site making it readily available.
- Coaches are to:
  - communicate all such sport guidelines listed herein in a clear manner to student-athletes; and
  - keep accurate records of those student-athletes and coaches who attend each practice or competition in case contact tracing is necessary.
- The NIAA is hereby encouraging schools to have a public address announcer / PA system in place for baseball and softball games. Schools are asked to read a Public Address Announcement at the start of each game to encourage social distancing and to remind those in attendance to wear face coverings.

# RULE MODIFICATIONS FOR BASEBALL – SOFTBALL GAMES

## **On Field Procedures**

- Games should be scheduled with enhanced, staggered start times (between levels) in order to minimize the contact flow of teams/support groups in and out of a facility.
- The NIAA encourages teams (players and coaches) to avoid contact by prohibiting handshakes, celebratory high-fives, fist-bumps, etc.
- Teams on defense and/or offence are hereby instructed to not make physical contact or otherwise encroach on social distancing guidelines after an out (a softball “tradition”) / home run or at any other time.
- Additionally, handshake lines between teams are hereby prohibited.

### ***Player Equipment:***

- Players and coaches should avoid sharing, among many other things, bats, gloves, helmets and other practice/game equipment. Players and coaches are encouraged to clean their own equipment at the conclusion of each practice and/or game.
- Players should not bring each other’s equipment on to the field, even in times of transition for warm-ups, changeouts between innings, etc.
- Players and coaches are permitted to wear face coverings, neck gaiters and/or personal protective equipment even on the field of play so long as such items do not compromise the safety of any other participant.

### ***Dugouts:***

- If appropriate to the situation, teams must not enter a dugout until a previous team has exited and the area has been cleaned by the site administrator / game director.
- Coaches should disinfect / sanitize the dugout prior to entry (even if following actions taken by a site administrator / game director prior to their team’s entry).
- The number of participants allowed in the dugout will be contingent upon space available to adhere to 6-feet social distancing between all coaches and players.
- Additional team area(s) should include space outside of /behind the field-proper fences, down the foul lines, in the bleachers, etc.
- The same social distancing mandates apply also to bullpens.
- Personal equipment should be kept to a minimum and stored in such a manner that reinforces the act(s) of social distancing. Hand sanitizer should be readily available.

### ***Communal food & beverage:***

- Water coolers, snack vending and/or any other food + beverage sources that would be available generally to a group should not be provided / made available. Teams (coaches and players) should have their own supplements and hydration available on an individual-use basis.
- Sunflower seeds and gum are hereby restricted from any common team and/or public areas including, but not limited to, dugouts, bullpens and batting cages. Coaches and players are to refrain from spitting, in any form, at all times.

### ***Pre-game & Warm-up:***

- Coaches and players should not enter the facility until proper spacing inside specific areas is free and clear from non-team personnel.
- The pre-game meeting will include only the plate umpire and one coach from each team.
- The pre-game meeting should be conducted at home plate but with the plate umpire and two coaches (one from each team) spread out beyond the batters boxes (at least six feet apart). Face coverings must be worn and personal contact (handshakes, fist bumps, etc.) must be avoided.
- Introductions should space those taking the field (6 feet) socially distanced on the foul lines.

### ***During the game:***

- Multiple game balls should be used. Said game balls should be sanitized as often as is deemed necessary by the umpires in communicating with the host school / home team.
- A different set of (cleaned) balls should be used each game in the case of doubleheaders. Softballs should be supplied in their original wrapper / box.
- Backup (used) game balls must be sanitized before being brought back into the game's rotation.
- Verbal exchanges, including lineup changes between coach/umpire/scorer, should be done from social distancing.
- The non-plate umpire(s) will, as best as is feasible, maintain 6 feet of social distancing between position players when set and rotated at any time.
- Umpires will not handle equipment on the field during play other than keeping a ball bag. When replacing in the ball bag, balls should be placed in a chute for the home plate umpire to access when necessary.
- Umpire and coach interactions will adhere to social distancing guidelines.
- Coaches entering the field of play to protest a call must not cross the baseline. A coach crossing said line after being asked to stop (warned) by an umpire is subject to ejection. It is therefore recommended that protests be made from no further than just in front of the dugout.
- “Outside the lines” huddles between coaches and players should adhere to social distancing guidelines.

### ***On-field conferences:***

- Mound visits, pitcher-catcher conferences and challenges **should** be conducted displaying (6 feet) social distancing.
- Mound visits are limited to pitcher, catcher and coach. The coach must wear a face covering during said visit.
- Any conferences, defensively and/or offensively, must maintain social distancing amongst all participants.

## **Teams**

- An adult or non-playing team manager should be solely responsible for picking up the bat after it is used if the batter her/himself is not able to do so. Said person may wish to wear (disposable) gloves and is the person responsible for cleaning the bat after each use.
- Specific players should be solely responsible for cleaning balls that are taken / returned from out of play. Balls returned to the field should go to the designated shagger(s) for sanitizing.

- Warm-ups should take place outside of the field of play until the field crew has fully prepared the playing surface in that area. This recommendation is also dependent upon space available for warm-ups outside the field proper. If such space is not available, warm-ups could be delayed or mandate to space well away from those preparing the field.
- Teams waiting to take the field for warm-ups should keep socially distanced, whether that be in the stands (if available) or in another open space set apart from interactions with any spectators, game workers, etc.
- The home team will furnish the game balls in a clean, ready-for-use bag. The bag should contain a rag and a cleaning agent (Lysol, for example). The bag may then be stored in a special container for umpires to retrieve the balls. A person from the home team is responsible for replenishing the supply and cleaning of game balls.

## **Coaches**

- Coaches **must** wear face coverings at all times.
- Coaches should stay outside the width of the batter's box (example of 6-feet social distancing) at the home plate conference. This conference is restricted to one coach per team.
- Lineup cards may be handed to the umpire, but additional verbal dialog must adhere to social distancing guidelines. One idea is to have a clip (for the home and visiting teams equally) containing the lineup card on the fence easily accessible by the umpires.
- The coach **should** social distance (6 feet) when conducting visits to the pitcher (even if with catcher). The coach must wear a face covering when conducting visits.
- Base coaches (other than the head coach) must not cross the foul line except in the case to attend to an injured player. A coach may not otherwise visit a player during a dead ball who is at second base. The player, however, may visit the base coach so long as social distancing (6 feet) guidelines are kept.
- A base coach crossing said line after being asked (warned) to stop by an umpire is subject to ejection.

## **Student-Athletes**

- Any equipment that is shared (catcher's gear, batting helmets, etc.) must be sanitized before the shared use.
- Players **must** wear face coverings when not actively warming-up or playing directly in the game.
- Players are permitted to wear face coverings during games. Face coverings are not required for players when actively warming up or playing directly in the game. If worn by the pitcher, the face covering must be of one solid color OTHER THAN WHITE - GRAY (baseball) / YELLOW - GOLD (softball) AND be unadorned (not distracting). Face coverings may be worn by some players and not others. Face coverings are not part of the "team uniform" and therefore do not have to all match in color.
- Face coverings worn by players other than the pitcher may be of any color so long as they are one solid color and unadorned.
- Players that "huddle" at the pitcher's circle or at any other area on the field during a stoppage/conference/etc. **must** maintain social distancing.

## **Pitchers**

- Pitchers are prohibited from going to their mouth (to lick fingers or blow on hands). If done, the game ball will be removed from play immediately and must be cleaned.
- Pitchers are permitted to have a damp cloth to wet fingers in a similar use scenario as a rosin bag. The pitcher may carry said cloth on person (back pocket, not allowed to be left on the playing surface).

## **Umpires**

- Umpires should arrive at the game site “geared up” / already dressed in the proper attire.
- Umpires should bring their own beverage.
- Umpires **must** wear a face covering at all times while on the school campus and/or in the stadium / at the park (if a non-school venue). The face covering must be of a solid color and unadorned (not distracting). Gators, masks, cloth shields, etc. are permissible. It is recommended that said face covering match the umpire’s uniform color.
- Umpires should display social distancing in all phases of the contest (pre-game, in-game and post-game). In-game social distancing includes plate meetings, mound visits, pitcher/catcher conference breakups and other challenges.
- Umpires are not responsible for the enforcement of COVID protocols in team bench areas.
- If available / provided by the host school, the umpires’ room should be set up to accommodate social distancing guidelines (6 feet of separation between chairs/seats/lockers). Only umpires changing for the next game should be in the room. Said umpires should have exited the room prior to a previous game crew / next game crew entering the room. Umpires must bring their own towels and personal supplies. Umpires should carry along disinfectant and sanitizer to assist in the cleaning of their personal space.
- Umpires may wear gloves.
- Umpires should provide their own sanitizer.
- Umpires are not to enter a dugout.
- Umpires should report perceived COVID violations to their Association’s/chapter’s commissioner. Umpires are not to address perceived violations with coaches/administrators.

## **MEDIA ACCOMMODATION**

- The following are in accordance with [\*\*State of Nevada Emergency Directive 033\*\*](#).
- NIAA-credentialed media will be permitted at baseball-softball games.
- Only those individuals with a 2020-2021 NIAA Press Pass – which have been assigned to individuals specifically – will be permitted as a member of the media.
- Members of the media are encouraged strongly to communicate 24 hours in advance with the host school’s athletic director and apprise said individual of his/her planned attendance and get an understanding of that (specific) field’s media accommodations. Host schools may wish to reserve/assign a seat for a member of media providing advance notification.

- Schools should set up a media-specific area which includes at least six (6) feet of perimeter separation to the next adjoining group (team bench areas, spectators, etc.).
- The media area should be located away from team bench areas specifically.
- Seats in the media area must have six feet of distancing per seat.
- Members of the media may choose to work from spectator areas but must keep at least six feet of social distancing from the nearest spectator and/or at least six (6) feet from either the field boundaries or team bench areas.
- **Baseball / Softball fields will not include a designated photography area. The (updated, March 8) 6 / 12 foot rule applies to all media.**
- Members of the media may transverse around the field to other areas so long as they keep as far away from the team bench areas as possible.
- Post-game and all coach / student-athlete interviews must take place on the field or in an area that is open, devoid of other “match” traffic and provides for proper social distancing.
- The NIAA encourages all media – coach / student-athlete “practice time” interviews take place via a Zoom, Google or similar virtual platform.
- The NFHS Network holds the broadcast rights for all NIAA-sanctioned contests. Any transmission of an NIAA-sanctioned contest without the written consent of the NIAA is prohibited.