

## Read the complete COVID-19 Safe Return to Play Plan

**Dear Coaches, Parents and Players,**

When this journey started for all us when I shut down sports on March 14, we had no idea it could ever last this long. But during that time we chose to work as hard as we possibly could to get you all back out onto the fields safely. Through tireless and often frustrating efforts and collaborations with softball colleagues from around the nation, health experts and the local and state governments, we were finally able to achieve our goal of re-opening to serve our customers.

This collaborative process brought subject matter experts from many sports together with the state to advise and help craft the [regulations](#). Below are the details of our **Updated Safe Return to Play Plan**. Everyone shares in the victory of returning to play, but it will take everyone's cooperation to ensure that we open safely and that we operate safely throughout the summer, so eventually we can return to pre-pandemic days of "free-range" softball. But for now softball will look very different this season. Let's all just treasure the opportunity to be back out on the field competing and enjoying the game we all love.

What was once a shared pain when we started this journey will now be a shared sacrifice of convenience to be able to play? However, it was what we all wanted; to once again take the field just to play ball. We are supremely happy to have been able to weather this storm, represent our sport with the state and to lead the effort back out onto our collective fields of dreams.

As we are about 4 weeks away from the first event, in the next few days team managers will get information from there League and Tournament directors:

- *The game schedule would start no earlier than July 13th*
- *An email with instructions for rosters and waivers will go out all teams.*

Sincerely Yours in Softball,

**Gary Godden**  
**USSSA Executiv New York Director**

**THERE IS MUCH INFORMATION TO SHARE WITH YOU. PLEASE READ THROUGH ALL OF THIS IN ITS ENTIRETY AND SHARE WITH ALL YOUR PLAYERS AND PARENTS.**

**We have used an FAQ format as so many of you have the same questions.**

**The following info is covered below:**

- Restrictions on teams and spectators.
  - Game play and rules modifications.
  - New roster and waiver requirements.
  - Additional USSSA info can be found at [USSSA.COM](http://USSSA.COM) – Covid 19 Update.
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## Restrictions on Teams and Spectators

### What will the restrictions be on teams and spectators?

**WE CANNOT STRESS ENOUGH YOUR COMPLETE COOPERATION WILL BE REQUIRED TO NOT ONLY GET BACK ON THE FIELD BUT TO REMAIN THERE FOR THE REST OF THE SEASON.** This season will be like no other and we all must remember what it has taken to get back playing again. All of our actions will dictate how successful we all are playing softball

**Below is our “Safe Return to Play” plan.**

1. **Only uniformed players playing that day and coaches will be permitted in the Playing Area.** Spectators will be allowed based on the possibility for the 6 foot social distancing and only 2 spectators per player are allowed.
2. **Current state regulations call for masks or cloth face coverings in public when close contact is unavoidable.** All spectators will be required to maintain 6’ social distances.
3. **“NEW” No of spectators will be allowed behind the backstops.**
4. Once a team has completed play, they will need to leave the park immediately. There will be no lingering to watch or scout other teams.
5. Each field area (benches, dugouts, gates, etc.) will be cleaned/cleared after each game.

### How long will these restrictions last?

- It’s unknown for how long we will need to enforce these highly restrictive measures.
- Once games begin and we understand any issues we find during actual play, we can begin to evaluate any amendments. Our approach is to take baby steps before we walk or run. We need to make sure we can manage all the social distance and other requirements perfectly before we start to increase the amount of people at the park.
- Our hope to be able to allow spectators but this limitation will be set by State and Local guidelines.
- However, we cannot predict how the government will continue to restrict us. It’s unrealistic and perhaps also unwise to think in a matter of weeks we can go from maximum restrictions to pre-pandemic behavior.

### How will restrictions be enforced and what happens if people do not comply?

- *For everyone's safety all must understand we will have to maintain safety for everyone*
- *Coaches must ensure their team adheres to the rules and on-field social distance rules.*
- *Spectators are required to obey all social distance and park policies. Spectators who refuse to obey can be ejected from the park.*
- *If anyone, players or spectators are feeling sick, have a cold, coughing etc., STAY HOME!*

## **Masks for Coaches, Players and Spectators**

### **Do I have to wear a mask?**

- *Current state regulations call for masks or cloth face coverings (not face shields) in public when close contact is unavoidable. While the regulations are in place, we will require masks or cloth face coverings for added safety in all areas they feel they cannot maintain social distance. All spectators will be required to maintain 6' social distances.*
- *Players, coaches and umpires engaged on the field do not need to wear a mask.*
- *Outside the field if social distance cannot be maintained then a mask is required.*
- *Face shields DO NOT meet the requirement for masks.*

## **Game Play and Rules Modifications**

### **Will the rules of the game be any different this summer?**

- *The play adaptations are mainly in terms of social distance. We have tried to preserve the game as we know it as much as possible. These are the on-field protocols all will need to follow.*
- *On the field and around the field, we will follow strict social distancing. Slow pitch softball is a non-contact sport and is ideally suited for such a thing since the players are so far apart for nearly the entire time.*
- *Umpires will manage the game and help with social distance and safety rules on the field. However, we need the coaches to be an equally important part of the safety team.*
- *Umpires will warn coaches if a team is not abiding by the social distance restrictions. Teams will have a maximum of 2 warnings. If a third infraction of social distance rules occurs, the game will end and be recorded as a forfeit.*
- *Teams will warmup in the outfield and edges of the infield only. Since at any time the teams in the park will be the ones playing no warmups are needed in other areas.*
- *At the conclusion of a team's game they are to immediately pack up their gear and exit the park. They are not permitted to linger in the park. It's important the teams exit quickly so the next block of teams can enter the park.*
- *Teams are required to completely clean out the dugouts and leave nothing behind that others must touch to clean or discard.*
- *The umpire will be in a new position to call balls and strikes. We are experimenting on the field now to determine the best view of the ball and plate while maintaining social distance. Umpires will not call balls and strikes from behind the pitcher due to*

*safety reasons to protect the umpire from batted and thrown balls and to avoid colliding with a player and restricting play.*

- There will be no shaking of hands, high fives, fist bumps or even elbow bumps. At the game's conclusion teams will just exit the field.*
- There will be no players at the homeplate meeting prior to the game and social distance will be maintained by the two managers and umpire.*

- Lineup cards will be optional and only exchanged between scorekeepers. If one team does not wish to exchange physical lineup cards that will be permitted. If you can exchange lineups via text that will be ideal. No physical lineup cards will be given to the umpire. We ask teams use the honor system and any lineup card disputes will need to be resolved between scorekeepers.*
- Mound visits will be limited to the pitcher, catcher and manager at a proper social distances.*
- No team huddles, pre or post game meetings will be permitted.*
- No seeds or any food that encourages spitting will be permitted.*
- No sharing of equipment will be permitted.*
- New balls in fresh packaging are used at the start of each game.*

## **How do we manage the Bench Area and social distancing?**

- Our Bench Areas are different at each field and are not an enclosed space at most fields. However, we will limit the number of players in the area at any one time. For players on defense usually the whole team is on the field with one or two players and the coaches on the bench. Coaches and umpires will keep watch to maintain strict social distancing. No more than 5 people maintaining 6' social distances are allowed in the Bench at one time.*
- For the team on offense the 4 players in the batting order due up that inning and 1 coach will be in the Bench Area with other 2 coaches/players will be at the 1st and 3rd base coaching positions.*
- The remaining players will be outside the bench area down the baseline.*
- Players will need to bring chairs if they want to have seating in this area and teams can place pop-up tents to cover the players*
- Each team will be required to have a coach/player delegated to monitor the players for social distancing and to monitor and maintain the flow into and out of the field.*