



Softball NB COVID-19 Operational Plan Return-to-Play Guidelines (June, 2021)

Preamble

The purpose of this document is to outline the Softball NB COVID-19 Operational Plan. The plan will be used as a guiding principle for Softball NB and all its member clubs, associations, and leagues to return to operations during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. This plan is put in place in order to adhere to all regulations put in place by the Province of New Brunswick in the recovery stage. Please keep in mind, Softball NB is the governing organization for all amateur Softball in this province. Creating these guidelines was done so in the best interest of all SNB members. It is the responsibility of SNB to provide the safest possible procedure for participation.

These Return to Play Guidelines are required to be in place and executed in full in order to start up any organized softball activities by order of the Province of New Brunswick and must be followed as outlined. Non-compliance can lead to removal of facility access through the municipality in which you offer softball programming, by-law fines or even provincial health officer order to cease activity.

This plan was approved by the Board of Directors of Softball New Brunswick as of **April, 2021**. The plan was amended on Monday, June 14th, 2021.

Disclaimer

The return to play information in this document is designed for Softball New Brunswick's membership - which includes players, coaches, managers, officials, and volunteers. With respect to not only local public health guidelines, but provincial/territorial and federal guidelines as well to return to the diamond.

These best practices do not supersede any protocols, guidelines, or restrictions outlined by Provincial and/or Federal Health Authorities. All Softball NB stakeholders must continue to follow those guidelines outlined by Provincial and/or Federal Health Authorities. All participants, volunteers, and parents must always adhere as well to all municipal COVID-19 Operational plans when using fields and facilities operated by the municipality. Guidelines are subject to change due to order of the Provincial Department of Health, Sport and Recreation Branch, Sport New Brunswick, and other provincial or federal agencies.

As areas begin to open and return to play resumes, we strongly urge any Softball NB stakeholder to share with us details of any and all challenges that may arise and which may not be addressed in this document. Once an issue is identified, those assigned by the President and Executive Director will work on how to address the issue and then share that information with all involved within Softball NB.

The items listed in this document are suggestions of recommended safeguards for restarting Softball activities in New Brunswick. Should there be any discrepancies between this protocol and the outlined restrictions / requirements of the Federal, Provincial and Local Governmental guidelines, the governmental restrictions / requirements shall take precedence. Softball NB reserves the right to suspend sanctioned activities further, should we feel the safety of our members is not being exercised.



Personal Hygiene Guidelines/Cleaning and Disinfection

Personal Health and Hygiene

FOUNDATIONAL

- All requirements will be applied to all age categories and playing divisions (Minor/Major).
- No activities will be sanctioned unless the province allows for the participation of sport within the current framework.
- Prior to arriving at the facility, all participants must answer all pre-screening questions in *Appendix B: Screening Questionnaire for COVID-19*.
- Upon arrival at the facility, all participants must answer any questions or self-monitoring procedures as provided by the municipality prior to their activity.
- No sharing of water bottles.
- No sharing of food of any kind.
- No spitting.
- No chewing gum.
- No sunflower seeds.
- No sharing of personal helmets.
- No sharing of catcher's masks or other equipment unless fully disinfected between personal uses.
- No sharing of any other equipment unless fully disinfected between personal uses (i.e. helmets.)
- No high fives or physical contact between players.
- If possible, hand sanitizer should be available for all players and coaches during practice/games by the club and/or team. Otherwise players, coaches should be prepared to bring their own
- Players and Coaches should sanitize hands at all reasonable opportunities. (During water breaks, between innings)
- Recommended that all participants disinfect their equipment after each event.
- Recommended that all uniforms or clothing be washed after each event.
- Recommended that all participants shower at first opportunity after each event.
- No sharing of personal items like phones, wallets, etc.
- Carpooling is permitted, but to be discouraged whenever possible. **Click here** to consult provincial guidelines for carpooling.



Facility Guidelines

- Indoor events will be permitted as per the provincial guidelines. Groups must work within the facility operator COVID-19 guidelines and those of the provincial governing body.
- Outdoor formal gatherings: Maximum capacity possible but occupiers of venues that host a formal event must take all reasonable steps to ensure adequate screening and distancing occurs and must have an operational plan.
- Washrooms use is to be in conjunction with the operational plan of the facility operator.
- Dugout Use
 - Full dugout use is permitted.
 - Mask use by players and coaches in the dugout is strongly recommended. Any participant not in frequent substitution should wear a mask.
 - Please consult the facility/municipal operational plan(s) for alternative dugout use protocols (Ex. Dugouts closed, Reduced Capacities). If the facility/municipal operational plan(s) differs from this, teams must follow their guidelines
 - Dugouts use will not be permitted during the ORANGE PHASE.
 - Players, coaches, and managers must spread out along the exterior fence with their equipment while social distancing
- Field allotments will need to be modified to allow for all events to stay within the facility capacity limits (Please see current GNB FAQs). It is suggested that you move to 1.5 times the traditional allotment window to limit the contact with other field users.
- Bleachers - Parents/Guardians wishing to sit and watch are permitted to use the bleachers while physically distancing (unless municipal guidelines do not permit). It is recommended to instead bring your own chair and have it placed a minimum of 6 feet from other spectators.
- In order to limit contact of field users between scheduled field times, please do not gather or loiter around the field before or after allotted practice/game times.

Practice and Training Guidelines

- **All Foundational and Facility requirements to be met as outlined above.**



- Team huddles must be conducted using physical distancing. Players and coaches must not come within 6 feet of each other during huddles.
- It is recommended that all drills are implemented to ensure physical distancing requirements are met.
- Dugout Use
 - Full dugout use is permitted.
 - Mask use by players and coaches in the dugout is strongly recommended. Any participant not in frequent substitution should wear a mask.
 - Please consult the facility/municipal operational plan(s) for alternative dugout use protocols (Ex. Dugouts closed, Reduced Capacities). If the facility/municipal operational plan(s) differs from this, teams must follow their guidelines
 - Dugouts use will not be permitted during the ORANGE PHASE.
 - Players, coaches, and managers must spread out along the exterior fence with their equipment while social distancing

General Recommendations

- Attendance must be taken at every event for all people in attendance including parents (As per GNB FAQs). A minimum of 1 person's contact information (name, phone number or email address) per group is required. Attendance should be kept for a period of 1 month before being discarded.
- Food/Beverage is limited to pre existing structures (canteens), and are to follow the GNB guidelines on food safety
 - Temporary canteens (Ex. BBQs, Fundraisers) are strongly discouraged
- Please see game rules below for mask requirements

Parents/Guardians

- Complete screening questionnaire prior to leaving home for participation (Appendix B)
- Parents are asked to constantly remind players of the importance of physical distancing, no spitting, no face touching, and no contact between athletes such as high fives or handshakes
- Parents are to arrive at the field with the athletes at the designated start time and wait for the field to be clear before allowing the athlete to leave the car
- Carpooling should be discouraged whenever possible. If required, please consult provincial guidelines (***Click here***)



- For outdoor venues, masks are not required where 2m physical distancing is maintained; however, venue operators and organizers must consider people's movement and the potential for congested areas (parking lots, entrances/exits, etc) where masks would be recommended.

Coaches/Managers

- Masks are strongly recommended for coaches and managers. Any participant not in frequent substitution should wear a mask.
- Make sure all players have completed the screening questionnaire prior to participation each day
- Ensure all procedures as set in place by the municipality are followed
- Always maintain physical distance from players and remind players to adhere to physical distancing guidelines
- Conduct team huddles and teaching moments in a setting that adheres to physical distancing
- Remind players not to spit, chew gum, eat seeds
- Remind players to make all reasonable efforts to respect physical distancing measures except brief contact on the field of play
- Coaches must keep a record of all people at the field within their softball group, as per workplace NB Guidelines
- Responsible for game balls
- Retrieve bats and sanitize grips

Umpires

- Plate Umpire – Original positioning (behind catcher). Mask use is strongly recommended
- Base Umpire – Mask use is strongly recommended. Physical distancing from defensive players required
 - Mask use is strongly recommended when consulting with a coach, player and/or plate umpire.
- Remind coaches to make pitching changes using physical distancing
 - Preferably directly from the bench
- Work with coaches to ensure they cover all above requirements
- Pregame equipment checks – Equipment must be setup outside the dugout along the fence by the teams for umpire visual inspections
- Umpires are not responsible to police physical distancing of players, coaches, or spectators. It is the responsibility of the teams to ensure all protocols are being met.



- Umpires will be required to provide information for contact tracing to the home team.
- Umpires will not be responsible to touch or handle a softball at any point during the game. See point below.

Gameplay Guidelines

- **All Foundational and Facility requirements to be met as outlined above.**
- It is recommended that athletes should arrive fully dressed in their uniforms.
- Plate meetings (lineup exchange) are permitted by all parties (Coaches, Players, Umpires).
 - Recommended to limit a plate meeting to one (1) person per team
 - Physical distancing is required
- Physical distancing must be maintained during mound visits by catcher and/or coach.
- A coach will not be required to go to the mound to make a pitching change.
 - Change can be made by calling time and signaling a pitching change to the umpire.
- When leaving the dugout to question a call or ruling by an umpire, coaches are strongly encouraged to wear a mask and practice physical distancing with the umpire at all times.
- No post game handshakes.
- Plate Umpire – Original positioning (behind catcher). Mask use is strongly recommended
 - Plate umpire may opt to stand 1-2 steps back for physical distancing
- Base Umpire – Mask use is strongly recommended. Physical distancing from defensive players required. Mask use is strongly recommended when consulting with a coach, player and/or plate ump
- Umpires will not be responsible to touch or handle a softball at any point during the game. See point below.
- Each team will provide 3-5 game balls and be responsible for their own softballs during the game. The team in the field will provide one coach who will be responsible to throw a ball into the pitcher if a ball is hit out of play. The team in the field will be responsible for sending someone to retrieve the ball that was hit out of play. Spectators are to be discouraged from touching the softball when it is out of play. The ball should only be retrieved by designated player or team personnel from the team on defence.
- It is recommended that teams minimize the touches of a softball when possible. (i.e., do not throw the ball around the infield (horn) after an out is recorded).
- Dugout Use – Full dugout use is permitted with players, coaches, and managers being strongly encouraged to wear masks. Please consult the facilities operational plan for alternative dugout use (Ex. Dugouts closed).
- All coaches are strongly recommended to wear masks while on the field or in dugouts
- It is strongly recommended for players to wear a mask while on the field



Indoor Guidelines

- Masks must be worn in accordance with facility guidelines and the department of health.
- Participants **may** be able to participate without a mask if physical distancing standards can be met and if permitted by the facility operator.
- Coaches are encouraged to wear masks at all times indoors.

Appendix A

Government of New Brunswick Guiding Documents

Safer Sport Participation

https://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/h-s/pdf/sports_EN.pdf

Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health:

<https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/ocmoh.html>

Worksafe NB:

<https://www.worksafenb.ca/>

<https://www.worksafenb.ca/safety-topics/COVID-19/new-COVID-19-prevention-tool-for-workplaces/>

NB's Recovery Plan:

<https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/corporate/promo/COVID-19/recovery.html>

Guidance Document of General Public Health Measures During COVID-19 Recovery:

<https://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/eco-bce/Promo/COVID-19/guidance-ph-measures.pdf>

Personal Hand Hygiene:

https://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/h-s/pdf/WASH_LAVEZ.pdf

Cleaning and Disinfection:

https://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/h-s/pdf/Cleaning_DisinfectingE.pdf

Community Mask:

Masks (gnb.ca)

Appendix B

Screening Questionnaire

All participants must complete the screening questionnaire in the link below prior to attending any Softball NB sanctioned event. Furthermore,

www.softballnb.ca



COVID-19_screeningEN.pdf (gnb.ca)

- Have you had close contact within the last 14 days with a confirmed case of COVID-19?
- Have you been diagnosed with COVID-19?
- Have you returned from travel outside of New Brunswick within the last 14 days?
- Have you been told by public health that you may have been exposed to COVID-19?
- Follow public health advice if you are waiting for testing results for COVID-19?