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House Leagues -- Return to Play Guidelines

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) outlines the relative risk for various play below.

- a. **Lowest Risk:** Performing skill-building drills or conditioning at home, alone or with family members.
- b. **Increasing Risk:** Team-based practice.
- c. **More Risk:** Within-team competition.
- d. **Even More Risk:** Full competition between teams from the same local geographic area.
- e. **Highest Risk:** Full competition between teams from different geographic areas.

The following AGSA guidelines are meant to supersede the “AGSA- Return to Play Practice Guidelines” that were developed for Phase 2. The “Arlington House League -- Return to Play Guidelines” incorporate the Phase 3 Virginia State guidelines and apply to all Arlington House (Recreational League) teams regarding games played on Arlington County fields and all practices. Our AGSA Clinics are also bound by these guidelines.

AGSA expects our teams to follow these guidelines as closely as possible and note any exceptions by bringing them to the attention of the AGSA President. AGSA also expects any teams visiting from outside the County for interleague play to follow our guidelines (or stricter rules) when playing in Arlington.

AGSA also understands that our jurisdiction ends at the County line and we cannot enforce our guidelines at venues outside the County. This effects our older leagues (Ponytail, Diamond and High School) that may play teams outside of AGSA. AGSA’s position is that our teams will follow our guidelines at non-County venues insomuch as the host venue permits. We cannot impose our guidelines but will refuse to play when the guideline they have put in place are deemed either inadequate, unsafe or poorly enforced to the point where safety of our players is at risk. This determination will be made by a consensus of the team coaches.

The AGSA guidelines were developed after careful review and in accordance with all stipulations provided in the Arlington County, Dept. of Parks and Recreation document; “Return to Play Youth Sports Guidelines”, June 2020. They are also intended to comply with “Forward Virginia Phase 3 guidelines as pertaining to Recreational Sports.

The AGSA guidelines go further than the County recommendations in a conscious effort to provide a more conservative approach. These guidelines are separate from AGSA’s Travel Team Guidelines, which apply to Impact, Sage and Spirit teams that are playing in scrimmages, games and tournaments both inside and outside of Arlington County.

In addition to Arlington County and Virginia State guidelines, this document was developed using, in part, USSSA Return to Play guidelines, best practices from Arlington youth baseball leagues, AGSA rules, CDC guidelines, input from players, coaches, parents and AGSA board members.

They were developed solely to protect players, coaches and families during the COVID-19 health emergency and can in no way guarantee anyone's complete safety; they can only help to minimize risk and will only be effective with the compliance of coaches, players, parents and volunteers.

Every player and their guardian must read, understand, agree to comply and sign a copy of these guidelines. They must agree to follow these guidelines always, during travel to, participation in, and travel from any and all games, regardless of location. Failure to adhere to these guidelines can result in removal from the game venue.

General Guidelines:

- No carpooling to or from practices or games will be allowed except with the prior approval of a head coach **and** guardian for each child.
- No **team** meals or off-site team gatherings allowed prior to or after events unless social distancing can be maintained.
- During practices, at least one parent or guardian for each player should remain at the practice location or be able to return to the site within minutes in case of emergency.
- Parents are encouraged to assist with practices to reduce ratio of players per coach/parent and to encourage and enforce social distancing. Any parent who is assisting with practice must wear a face covering when in close proximity to players or coaches and must avoid any touching of players or coaches.
- Practice drills should be designed to allow for social distancing, and players should do their best at all times to maintain six feet of distance from each other, both on and off the field.
- While Phase 3 regulations allow groups up to 250 people, AGSA is taking a more rigorous approach by limiting the confines of one field to no more than 80 individuals. The "field confines" includes the playing surface, dugouts, batting cages, bullpens, bleachers, and press box. It will be the responsibility of the team coaches and managers to limit their team's footprint at the field to no more than 40 people on and around the field who could be considered part of the "team group."

For example, with a 12-player roster:

- 12 players
- 3 coaches
- 24 non-coach parents

This leaves room for the other team to also have 37 participants, totaling 74 and leaving a margin of 6 for umpires, League officials, etc.

- Two parents or guardians are allowed per player while overall gatherings are limited by state or local regulation to 250 people or less. If a parent or guardian must bring a player's sibling because of child-care concerns, they might have to remain far enough from the game so as not to be considered part of the "group" attending the game.
- Every player will be required to bring their own water and hand sanitizer, each clearly labeled with the player's name and stored in their equipment bag to avoid cross-contamination.

At Arlington County Fields

1. Every player, guardian and coach must always abide by all local regulations while at the venue, whether or not those regulations are stricter than the AGSA guidelines. Any guideline in this document that conflicts with a local regulation will be overridden by the local regulation unless a

head coach deems the local guideline to be unsafe for any reason. Coaches may impose their own guidelines for the team that are more strict than local guidelines.

2. A designated Team Safety (Covid) Manager must keep a daily attendance log at practices and games to record eligibility for participation of coaches, parents and volunteers in the activity by answering COVID-19 screening questions. Data does not need to be kept on each player and coach, but teams will be required to report overall compliance. (See section on “Pre-Game/Practice Screening”)
3. No sunflower seeds, chewing gum or spitting allowed.
4. No physical contact with any other players or with coaches, managers, umpires or opposing team members, except during game play (see below). No high-fives, no fist bumps, no hugging, no horseplay.
5. Players and Coaches must have facemasks, gaiters or other face coverings on their person at all times, and must wear them during team meetings, conversations and anytime players and coaches will be in close proximity. Base Coaches should wear masks at all times when on the field of play, as they are often close to players and instructing them with a projected voice.
6. No sharing of any player equipment. Each player should have their own glove, protective mask (if desired), batting gloves, bat, helmet, sunglasses and uniform. If a player does not have their own equipment, please notify the head coach and equipment will be provided by the team for the duration of the season. Any AGSA batting helmets distributed by the team should be kept in the player’s possession for the season and should not be shared with any other players. Catchers should have their own equipment, whether personally owned or on loan from the team. All efforts should be made to plan for any shared team catching equipment to be used by only one player per outing – it must be disinfected after the games before it is shared with another player at the next outing. If necessary, teams should designate one catcher per day.
7. Players will utilize the bleachers on each side of the field as an extended dugout – unless that is not possible due to the layout of the field. Extended dugouts are intended to allow social distancing of 6 feet per person and provide space for splitting team members as needed between bleachers and the dugout to maintain proper spacing. If players must be in dugouts, every attempt must be made to socially distance from other players, and it is possible players will be asked to sit along the foul lines against the fence to socially distance. When sitting on bleachers, players will have a designated area on the bleachers that is six feet from other players. They will keep all of their equipment in that area and will keep water bottles secured in their bags so as to prevent any water bottle mix-ups.
8. Players will be provided with an AGSA neck gaiter and must wear it, or another facemask, at all times when in the bench areas. They may, but are not required to wear face coverings while in the field of play.
9. A coach, team manager or parent will be designated to be in charge of the bench area and will monitor social distancing and ensure all guidelines and regulations are followed. That designated monitor also will oversee disinfecting foul balls that leave the playing area. The monitor will take corrective action when rules are not being followed and will inform the head coach of violations.
10. Parents must space themselves out along the outside fences that line the field, maintaining social distancing at all times. Parents might need to sit in the outfield areas to allow for appropriate distancing. Coaches may employ parent assistance at practices with the understanding that social distancing is required.
11. Parents may not approach the player benches at any time, nor confer with their children while they are on the benches. If a parent must speak with their child, they should approach a team manager or a coach to arrange for the child to come to them at an appropriate break.

12. No food or eating of food is allowed on the player benches or in the dugout. No team snacks or communal sources of food or water are allowed before, during or after games.
13. All warmups will be conducted with social distancing, as during practices.
14. Coaches and managers cannot apply sunscreen or bug spray to players other than their own children.
15. Pre-Game plate meetings at home plate shall consist of no more than 1 coach from each team and the umpire and be socially distanced. No handshakes. No players will be present for conversations between coaches or umpires. All such conversations will be at a safe six-foot distance.
16. Base coaches shall stand at least six feet from the field of play and shall wear a face covering at all times. Use of signs and signals are encouraged to maintain social distancing.
17. Coaches and other team officials must wear a face covering anytime they must be within six feet of another coach, player or umpire.
18. Players and coaches should avoid any form of touching.
19. When on offense, players must stay in the bleachers in their designated spots (use of taped "x's" on the benches can be helpful.) The on-deck hitter will be in the on-deck circle, the player in the hole and deep hole may utilize the dugout and must be properly socially distanced or be further down the base line if allowed by the umpire.
20. No offensive player should ever touch a softball for any reason. No player retrieval of foul balls.
21. No loud team cheers, singing, excessive shouting, or team celebrations without wearing a face covering.
22. When on defense, use only "team marked" softballs. Each team will bring no fewer than four game-playable balls to each game. These balls will be in the control of a team coach – the umpire will not hold them.
23. Game balls shall be disinfected between innings or when retrieved from out-of-play areas.
24. When on defense, no contact with offensive players except when executing tag-outs during game play.
25. Players, especially those at first and third base, should aim to keep a six-foot distance from the bag when a runner is on base.
26. When exiting the field, players should line up and maintain at least 10 feet between them so they can pass through the gate with enough distance.
27. Use of hand sanitizer is highly encouraged between innings.
28. If any player coughs on, sneezes on or otherwise gets bodily fluids on a ball that is in gameplay, that ball will be removed immediately and sanitized. Players must notify coaches if such an occasion arises.
29. At the end of the game, there will be no traditional handshake line. We will salute the other teams in creative and positive ways, but it will not include contact. Instead of high fives, implement "foot-shakes" or tipping of caps after games to show appreciation for the other team. Players may assemble along the baselines to conduct that salute.
30. AGSA will build in extra time between games to ensure that teams can leave the field before the next set of teams arrive. Teams should not attempt to enter the dugout or bench areas on any field before the previous teams have completely vacated the space, and coaches should disinfect the benches before their teams move in. Teams and their families should leave the field as soon as possible after games are completed to avoid overlap.
31. Any player who is uncomfortable at any time should notify a head coach. All reasonable concerns will be addressed immediately. Any parent/guardian has the prerogative to opt out of any team activity if they believe it to be unsafe and absolutely no penalty of any kind will ever be considered.

Pre-game/practice Screening (See log example)

Each day prior to a practice or game, all participants, coaches and volunteers should report to the Team Health Safety (Covid) Manager and answer the screening questions. Answers to the individual questions will not be logged, the team Covid manager will only log if the parent/guardian and player has “passed” screening or is a “scratch” based on the answers to the screening.

Note: If either a parent/guardian or player does not “pass” the screening, both will be considered a “scratch”. Passing the screening requires a “no” answer to all questions. If a parent/guardian or player **does not** pass the screening (“scratches”), then both will be asked to return home, without any penalty of any kind to either. Any “scratches” must be reported to the President of AGSA.

Screening Questions: *Team Manager- Upon their arrival, stand at least 6 feet away from the parent/guardian and player.*

1. Has your child (player) exhibited any indication of a fever in the last 24 hours?
2. Do you or your child (player) have a cough, shortness of breath or difficulty in breathing that cannot be attributed to another health condition?
3. Do you or your child (player) have chills, sore throat or muscle aches that cannot be attributed to another health condition or specific physical exercise?
4. Do you or your child (player) have a “new” loss of taste or smell?
5. Have you or your child (player) been exposed in the last 14 days to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19?
6. Have you, the player or anyone in your family tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 14 days?

I have read, understand, and agree to comply with the guidelines presented by this document:

Parent/Guardian: _____ Date: _____

Player Name: _____ Date: _____

