



## **Western Springs Little League - 2021 Season - Guidelines**

As a VOLUNTEER organization, we want to make sure every participant knows that our participation as members of the Board, as parents of players in this league, is completely voluntary. We also want to remind every parent and child that their participation is completely voluntary. At any time, if the safety of your child or your family is in question, we will place no pressure or judgment on you or your child choosing to not participate in anything that is not in line with what you believe to be safe.

**A CHILD'S SAFETY WITH RESPECT TO COVID 19 IS THE PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY OF EVERY PLAYER AND FAMILY, NOT THE RESPONSIBILITY OF WESTERN SPRINGS LITTLE LEAGUE.**

That being said, we have developed some safety plans and guidelines and encourage them to be considered by all participants and followed to the best of the ability of all members of Western Springs Little League. We do not have the ability to enforce nor monitor compliance with these guidelines. We all are still living through a global pandemic that has brought many questions and concerns to every household. We have chosen during this trying time to offer a hopefully enjoyable experience to our community through sport so that we can continue to support our children's desire to exercise, compete and play baseball. We feel with the introduction of vaccinations globally, the established presence prior infected immunity and the low risk nature of an outdoor sport like baseball, the global risk for our children with respect to COVID from their little league experience is minimal. To that end, as we embark on the 2021 season, we have outlined the following recommendations:

### **Teams**

- Teams are responsible for cleaning all trash from their dugout after each game.
- Teams should not enter the dugout until the other team completely exits.
- Teams are discouraged from handshakes/high fives (air high fives or hat tipping are recommended!)
- Warm-ups should ensure good social distancing using the outfield and infield, respectfully sharing time between both teams. If the field of play is occupied, please consider using nearby fielding at our parks to begin your warmups. Warming up is still encouraged to avoid other injuries that can occur in unprepared players.

- WSLI will provide hand sanitizer to the best of our ability in each Field Box to be used by the coaches and players. Hand sanitizer bottles (16 oz) can be found in the Field Box where the first aid kit is located. Please find one at the beginning of the game and keep in the dugout throughout the game for your teams use. If you have the last game of the evening, please return the sanitizer to the Field Box and lock it up as these items can be stolen. We encourage players and coaches to bring their own hand sanitizer as well in the event there is a shortage.

- No chewing gum, spitting or sunflower seeds allowed in the dugout.

- Spacing of players in the dugout at 6 feet apart is encouraged. Consider PPE (masks and gaiters) in the dugout when social distancing is not able to be achieved. Consider using the space immediately adjacent to the dugout behind the field fence for additional spacing. Coaches will NOT be responsible for a child's behavior. Please instruct your child on social distancing protocols, sanitizing protocols and masking/PPE protocols prior to participation. If your child fails to maintain PPE and social distancing recommendations, we encourage you to instruct them on what you desire for the safety of your family. We do not want this burden placed on our VOLUNTEER coaches as they are trying to coach the players. Players are also encouraged to sit with their family during the game at any time they are not on the field or at bat. Please keep them aware of when they are going to be up to bat.

- Bleachers adjacent to the fields we ask social distancing to be respected.

- Surgical Ear Loop face masks will be provided in the Field Box for PPE use if desired by players, umpires or coaches. WSLI strongly recommends you provide your own personal PPE so that it meets the specifications of your family's requirement. As a league, we encourage the use of PPE and recommend each member of our community is responsible for their own participation in the social protocols in place at the time of participation. If desired, please review these at [www.dph.illinois.gov](http://www.dph.illinois.gov), <https://www.illinoispolicy.org>, and/or <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/toolkits/youth-sports.html>,

**- Any individual who is running a temperature, sick, or not feeling well should not attend any games or practices. Fans, coaches, umpires and players included.**

## **Athletes**

- The use of PPE (masks, gaiters and cloth face coverings) are supported during the game. This is a "low risk" sport per the IDPH sports guidelines.

- If a player does not own a bat, consider purchasing one for the season with a USA notation indicating it is Little League approved. If you cannot purchase your own bat and plan to use the "team bat" please sanitize hands prior to use and wipe the bat down if able with sanitizing wipes. Use of batting gloves is also supported.

- Team huddles on the field during the game are discouraged. If grouped together, consider PPE covering of mouth and face and consider distancing of 6 feet.

- No sharing of equipment (helmet, glove, water bottles, and catching gear etc.) Additional catcher's masks have been purchased this year to reduce multiple users. We recommend trying to limit the role of catcher to two players each game if possible to limit sharing of equipment. If catching gear is to be used by several players, please wipe down thoroughly between innings and allow for it to adequately dry. Catchers who own their own equipment are strongly encouraged to use it.
- If your child anticipates playing catcher during the season and does not own their own equipment, we strongly encourage the player to have their own sterilizing wipes in their bag and clean the equipment prior to personal usage.
- All players must have their own water bottles (no sharing).
- If any athlete sustains an injury, we ask the parents of the child participate and help address the injury on the field, thus limiting the coach's exposure to your child.
- In addition to your usual baseball bag and uniform, our Suggested Players Checklist prior to coming to a practice or game:
  - Water Bottle with name on it
  - Mask, Gaiter or PPE facial covering
  - Personal supply of hand sanitizer
  - Personal supply of sanitary wipes
  - Use the bathroom prior to coming to the game if possible

## **Coaches**

- If a coach visits the pitcher, all other players are to stay at their positions. Coach to consider covering their mouth and face with PPE and/or maintain 6 feet apart.
- Only 3 coaches will be allowed in the dugout. Coaches will be allowed to stand outside the dugout during play to afford better opportunity for social distancing.
- Coaches expected to offer reinforcement to the league guidelines for social distancing and sanitary recommendations including PPE and hand sanitization.
- Consider practices breaking into small groups with each coach working with players in as socially distanced positions as possible.
- Practices at the batting cages should not allow multiple children standing around. Consider scheduling your athletes for time slots for hitting and rotate out and allow your players to leave once their session is complete.

- Coaches are asked to report any concern to the Board of any child who may exhibit signs or symptoms of COVID infection.

- Coaches, again, are volunteers in this organization. They are there to coach baseball and will not be tasked by the WSL to enforce the guidelines established for safe participation in sports as outlined by the CDC. We expect the coaches, as parents of children in this league, to do their best for their own children and yours to make this a safe environment to play baseball. The responsibility with respect to following current participation guidelines, however, falls upon the parents and the children participating in Little League. No one knows your child better than you do. We expect you as a parent to know whether your child will be able to successfully fulfill your family's expected behavior on the field of play. If you feel your child will need extensive direction on these guidelines and/or will not be able to comply with what your family expects in this current situation, you should consider not allowing the child's participation in Little League at this time.

**- Any individual who is running a temperature, sick, or not feeling well should not attend any games or practices. Fans, coaches, umpires and players included.**

## **Pre-Game Meeting**

- One coach is allowed from each team and must properly social distance or be covered.

- Reinforce safety guidelines of social distancing, sterility and use of PPE.

- No players allowed at the coaches' meeting.

- Umpires do not need to receive a lineup from each team.

- Each team's scorekeeper should consider exchanging line up cards electronically. Ex: Take a photo of your lineup and send it via text to the opposing team scorekeeper and umpire or use Gamechanger.

## **Game Balls**

- Consider using two sets of game balls for each game. Two new/gently used balls from each team should be provided for each game.

- One set for when the home team is in the field.

- One set for when the visiting team is in the field.

- Teams will manage their own game balls

- All game balls must be turned in to a coach post game.

- We will designate a player from each team to retrieve foul balls as we discourage fans from retrieving foul balls.

## Umpires

- Umpires will call balls and strikes 6 feet behind the pitcher.
- We support Umpires wearing PPE while calling the game in close proximity to players.
- Umpires will verbally confirm final score with both teams and then provide score sheet to HOME TEAM coach or Gamechanger scorekeeper.
- Pictures of scorecard or team score books should be made and can be saved and sent for official scorekeeping.

## Fans

- Seating is permitted in the outfield and deep along the foul lines. Standing at appropriate social distance and the use of individual folding chairs is encouraged.
- We request locations around the dugout and behind home plate not be used by spectators.
- Fans are encouraged not to congregate in the areas behind home plate or around the dugouts before and after games.
- Fans are asked to respect social distancing guidelines at all times while on site and to consider wearing PPE, especially when social distancing will be violated.
- If you are a spectator please do not enter the park until it is your teams' time to play. Please allow the other teams to clear out and open up space for you to get in.
- Once your game has ended, we ask the parents, players, and coaches to vacate the premises quickly to avoid large groups of people gathering. Only show up to the fields if your team is scheduled to play.
- Parents, please vacate the area where you were sitting at once your game has finished to allow the next teams' parents to come in and set up their seats.

**-Any individual who is running a temperature, sick, or not feeling well should not attend any games or practices. Fans, coaches, umpires and players included.**

## Post-Game

- Each team will line up along their respective foul line, then acknowledge the opposing team with a tip of the cap/round of applause.

- Following the tip of the cap/round of applause, teams are asked to immediately clean up and vacate their dugout.

- If you have a team meeting after a game, please take your team away from the dugouts and others and distance your group.

## Restrooms

Porto-Johns available per WS Park District. Please encourage all fans, players and coaches to use the bathroom prior to heading to the game or even consider going home and coming back if able. Use copious amounts of hand sanitizer.

## FAQ

- What happens if a WSLL participating child tests positive for COVID 19?
  - The board spent a significant amount of time discussing this issue. Invariably the COVID 19 virus is present in our state and in our community. As with many other communities and school systems dealing with how to handle this issue we feel they are all best managed on a case by case basis. We hope and expect the following:
  - Based upon the state established guidelines and the guidelines we have highlighted above which were generated through close review of the CDC recommendations on returning to play sports, we feel compliance with these guidelines should significantly mitigate the risk for transmission of coronavirus amongst players. We fully appreciate that children may not be able to perfectly comply at all times. We are setting out with the greatest desire to have an enjoyable season and we feel adherence to these guidelines, albeit uncomfortable at times, will offer us the safest environment to play baseball this season. Please keep in mind, the guidelines set forth for return to sports may differ from those held by your local school district or archdiocese. We intend to honor those guidelines established for sports in the state of Illinois. Your child's presence and participation at practices or games implies you as a parent are familiar with these guidelines and are in compliance with them. WSLL is not able to monitor all of the families in town and for privacy reasons does not feel mandated to do so. Again, we seek the decision making of a parent to govern the safe return to sports in compliance with IDPH guidelines.
  - If a child or family has concern they may have contracted COVID or could have come in close and persistent contact with a person infected with COVID, we ask that they consult their private physician and remove themselves from play until this is clarified and cleared by their physician.
  - We would appreciate, as it shows respect to the entire community and WSLL that the following recommendations be followed:
    - Any child with symptoms be kept out of participation whether being tested or not for COVID until cleared by their physician
    - Any child who has gone for COVID testing refrain from social activities while the test result is pending. Return to play can resume if a negative test is resulted in accordance with IDPH

guidelines.

- Any child who has tested positive for the COVID infection or has someone in their immediate family sharing the same household test positive, we ask, if the person is willing, that this information be shared with your coach and or the Board of WSLI so we can help prevent the further spread of infection. We are not a healthcare organization but with some knowledge of the presence of COVID in our community we may be able to help contain the spread of disease by seeking appropriate consultation on this matter.

- The Board discussed many scenarios that might arise with respect to COVID infection occurring during the season with any of its participants, parents, coaches and umpires. We take this health issue very seriously and still feel all of our child's safety is the highest priority this year. We will quickly review any societal, local or league concerns for transmission and spread of this virus in our community. We will utilize local infectious disease experts and health care officials if needed to mitigate the spread of disease in our community. We will meet periodically throughout the season to continue to address the concerns raised as the season develops.

## **RETURN TO PLAY Western Springs Little League Waiver Disclaimer**

PLEASE READ: In consideration of being allowed to participate in any way in baseball/ softball program involved in event and activities, the voluntary participant acknowledges, appreciates and agrees that:

1. The risk of injury and/or illness from the activities involved in the program is significant, including the potential for permanent paralysis and death, and while particular rules, equipment, and personal discipline may reduce the risk, the risk of serious sickness and injury does exist;

2. The risk to have direct or indirect contact with individuals who have been exposed to and/or diagnosed with one or more communicable diseases, including but not limited to COVID-19 or other medical conditions, diseases, or maladies, and/or any mutation or variation thereof does exist and it is impossible to eliminate the risk of becoming infected through contact with or close proximity to an individual with a communicable disease;

3. I KNOWINGLY AND FREELY ASSUME ALL SUCH RISKS, both known and unknown, EVEN IF ARISING FROM THE NEGLIGENCE OF THE RELEASES or others, and assume full responsibility for my participation; and,

4. I willingly agree to comply with the stated and customary terms/guidelines and conditions for participation. If, however, I observe any unusual, significant hazard during my presence or participation, I will remove myself from participation and bring such hazard to the attention of the nearest WSLI staff member.

5. I, for the player, participants, parents, myself and on behalf of my heirs, assigns, personal representatives and next of kin, HEREBY RELEASE, INDEMNIFY AND HOLD HARMLESS Western Springs Little League, its employees, agents, members, managers, officers, officials, representatives, contractors, other players, other participants, sponsoring agencies, directors, sponsors, advertisers, premises owners and lessors of the premises used to conduct the event (collectively "Releases") from and against any and all liabilities, damages, injuries, illnesses, disabilities, deaths, costs, expenses, fees and attorney fees incurred arising from or in any way negligent acts or omissions of Releases. By allowing your child to participate in this year's little league season, you certify you have read this document and assume all responsibility of your child.

Again, safety is the highest priority of the Western Springs Little League. We all have a part to play in this effort to have a safe year of Little League Baseball. Please endorse any personal safety protocols you feel are best for you and your family. We are not able to monitor all the players and families involved in our season and therefore have offered this as a structural guideline. Please feel free to contact us with any safety questions. Please take responsibility for your own safety measures as it truly takes all of us doing our own part to make this work.

Sincerely,

Western Springs Little League Board of Directors 2021