

# Thurmont Little League 2020 Return to Play Plan

*Phase I and Phase II Approved 6/16/2020*

*Phase III Approved 6/30/2020*

*Amended 7/27/2020*

*Amended 8/18/2020*

## **Overview**

The Return to Play Plan is developed to outline procedures that Thurmont Little League (TLL) will follow as it returns to activities following the COVID-19 suspension. TLL values the safety of its players, volunteers, and spectators. Throughout the phased process to return to play, safety guidelines will meet or exceed those required by state and local government. The plan will involve three phases, based on level of risk of league activities. The timeline of progression through phases is not defined, and the possibility exists that the plan may need to revert back to a previous phase at any given time. After initial activities, including informal sandlot games were conducted and further guidance and information became available, the Return to Play Plan was amended at the start of practices for the extended fall season.

## **Guidance**

The contents of the Return to Play Plan align with guidance from numerous resources including Little League Baseball, Maryland District 2 Little League, CDC, and state and local government officials.

## **Approval Process**

The TLL Return to Play Plan will be developed and approved by majority vote of the TLL Board of Directors prior to the start of any on-field league activities. The plan is subject to change, if needed, as determined by the TLL Board of Directors.

The Return to Play Plan may be amended by majority vote of the TLL Board of Directors at any time during Maryland's reopening plan, provided the amendments comply with local, county, state and Federal orders and guidelines.

## **Training and Communication**

All members of the TLL Board of Directors will be responsible for following the TLL Return to Play Plan. Specific members of the Board will be responsible for training groups of volunteers on the contents of the plan. Volunteers must provide a signature to acknowledge their understanding of the TLL Return to Play Plan prior to participating in any on-field activities.

1. Division Vice Presidents will be responsible for training all Managers and Coaches at their assigned division.
2. Umpire-in-Chief will be responsible for training all Umpires.
3. Team Mom Coordinator will be responsible for training all Team Moms.

In addition to training volunteers, the Return to Play Plan will be communicated to all groups with an interest in TLL, prior to the start of on-field activities.

1. The plan will be shared with parents through league-wide email, on the TLL website, and the TLL Facebook page.

- a. Prior to registering for any on-field activities, parents will sign/check that the child's parents, family, and caretakers understand the TLL Return to Play Plan.
2. The plan will be shared with Maryland District 2 Little League, and as needed, with other local leagues that TLL may collaborate with for games and activities.
3. The plan will be shared with the Town of Thurmont and Town of Emmitsburg, to keep those municipalities informed of precautions to be taken on their fields.

### **Enforcement**

All players, coaches, managers, volunteers, spectators, and visitors are required to follow the guidelines outlined in this plan. The TLL Board of Directors is responsible for ensuring compliance by all participants. Managers are responsible for compliance of team coaches, players, and spectators associated with his/her team. Any individual who fails to follow the safety expectations is putting him/herself as well as other participants in greater risk for spread of disease. That individual would be subject to the following disciplinary measures. Disciplinary measures 2, 3, and 4 below are subject to approval by a majority vote by the TLL Board of Directors.

1. First offense - Warning with expectation of immediately correcting the problem.
2. Second offense - Removal from the next team activity (practice, game, event).
3. Third offense - Removal from the next three (3) team activities.
4. Fourth offense - Removal from participation for the rest of the 2020 season.

### **Participants with Symptoms or Diagnosis**

Centers for Disease Control (CDC) lists the following common symptoms of COVID-19: Fever, chills, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, coughing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, loss of taste or smell, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea.

1. Any individual who is experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 is not permitted to be in attendance at any TLL activities. Parents must agree to honor this expectation prior to their child participating in any on-field activities.
2. Any player, coach, or other league volunteer who has tested positive for COVID-19 is not permitted to be in attendance at any TLL activity for the next 14 days (or until written clearance provided by a physician). If this individual has participated in any type of league activity within the past 14 days, he/she must notify the Player Agent of the positive test. The Player Agent will determine whether any other players or volunteers may have been in close contact with that individual during league activities and will notify those individuals. The Player Agent will keep the President informed when a report has been made.
  - a. Confidentiality will be maintained. Under no circumstances will the Player Agent or another volunteer with knowledge of a positive case, disclose the name or position of any individual who has reported a positive test to other individuals, unless required by law.
3. No player, coach, or other volunteer will be punished (i.e. benched, reprimanded, lose position) for exercising the precautions listed above.
4. If more than one player or coach from a team or activity experience symptoms or test positive for COVID-19, the Player Agent, Safety Officer, and President will strongly

consider the need to suspend league activities for that group for at least 14 days, in order to prevent an outbreak of illness.

- a. In the event that activities for a group/team are suspended as described above, TLL will make an effort to make-up any missed games or activities for that group/team, if possible.

### **Equipment Guidelines (All Phases)**

1. Players may not share equipment such as helmets, gloves, and batting gloves. Each player will store his/her equipment in a specified location where it will be separate from other players' equipment.
2. Players are encouraged to use their own catcher's gear, when possible. If a player needs to use team-supplied catcher's gear, the gear will be sanitized between uses by a Coach or Team Mom.
3. Players who do not own a batting helmet may borrow a helmet from the team-supplied equipment. The helmet will be sanitized between uses by a Coach or Team Mom.
4. Baseballs will be changed out and/or sanitized between activities to limit the number of players to come into contact with the ball. Baseballs that leave the field of play are to be retrieved by a player who is using the ball.
5. Hand sanitizer will be available to players and coaches to use during the on-field activities.

### **Facility Guidelines (All Phases)**

1. Hand sanitizer or hand washing stations (with soap and water) will be available for players and coaches.
  2. Gum, and sunflower seeds, and spitting are not permitted. Food is discouraged, and may not be shared.
  3. Restrooms at the TLL complex will each be single use (one person at a time).
  4. Restrooms at the TLL complex will be sanitized. The manager or volunteer leading the on-field activity will be responsible for designating an individual to sanitize the restrooms. Soap and/or hand sanitizer will remain available in the restrooms.
  5. In order to reduce the number of people in the area of the fields, coaches, players, and families are discouraged from waiting around before or after the activity.
  6. High fives, handshakes, group huddles, and other physical contact is prohibited.
  7. When visiting another league's facility, TLL players, volunteers, and spectators will follow all expectations required by that league.
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## **PHASE I**

This phase will be in effect when state and local guidelines restrict gatherings to 10 people or less. Many local parks may be closed, limiting any on-field activities to the TLL complex. Distancing and sanitizing measures will be in place.

### **Scheduling & Organization**

1. On-field activities are limited to a maximum of 90 minutes per group, with 30 minute transition periods between activities/practices to allow groups to exit and arrive without interaction. Individuals may not arrive early or stay late. The coach or organizer of the event may arrive early if necessary for the purposes of field preparation.
2. Precautions will be clearly communicated to parents and participants. Parents will sign-off to acknowledge their understanding and agreement before participation in activities.

### **Facilities**

1. The concession stand will remain closed. There will be no team water coolers. Players and coaches must supply their own drinks.

### **Players & Coaches**

1. Activities will be limited to no more than 10 individuals (players and coaches) on a field at a time.
2. Practice activities will be planned in order to maintain distancing. Working in small groups (i.e. some players on the field while others are at the batting cage) will be implemented as much as possible.
3. Coaches will wear face coverings or masks at all times. Team Moms who interact with players, coaches, or other parents will wear a face covering.
4. Players age 9 and older will wear a face covering or mask upon arrival and when in common areas outside the field. Players may remove the face covering during the on-field activity.
5. Dugouts will be off-limits. Players will place their equipment along the outside of the fence, spaced 8-10 feet apart. Players will remain in the area of their equipment bag when getting out/putting away/changing equipment.
6. No more than 10 people total can be in the area of the batting cages at a given time.

### **Spectators**

1. Spectators must maintain at least 6-foot social distancing from other spectators, players, and coaches, except immediate family members.
  2. Face coverings are required upon arrival. Spectators must wear face coverings in the common areas of field entrances, bleachers, restrooms, clubhouse, and concession area. Spectators may choose to remove face coverings if they are in the area of their vehicles, or outside of the common areas listed above, AND can maintain proper distancing from other spectators.
  3. Parents and spectators MAY NOT enter the playing area.
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## PHASE II

This phase will be in effect when state and local guidelines allow gatherings of at least 50 people, or when orders otherwise allow for resumption of normal on-field youth sports activities. Many local parks are open, but may have restrictions. TLL activities include full team practices, scrimmages, games, umpire or coaching clinics, team mom meetings, and other activities, with some limitations. Distancing and sanitizing measures will be in place. Modifications to game play procedures and rules may be required.

In addition to precautions listed under “All Phases,” the following will be required during Phase II.

### **Scheduling & Organization**

1. On-field activities are limited to a maximum of 2 hours per group, with a recommended 30 minute transition period between activities/practices to allow groups to exit and arrive without interaction. Individuals may not arrive early or stay late. The coach or organizer of the event may arrive early if necessary for the purposes of field preparation.
2. Precautions will be clearly communicated to parents and participants. Parents will sign-off to acknowledge their agreement before participation in activities.

### **Facilities**

1. The concession stand may open to sell pre-packaged food and drinks only. Volunteers in the concession stand will wear a face covering at all times. The volunteer(s) working in the concession stand will sanitize the work area before opening the stand, ongoing during the use of the stand, and at closing of the concession stand.
2. Dugouts are restricted to a maximum of three individuals during a game, practice, or league activity.

### **Players & Coaches**

1. Practice drills and scrimmage activities will be conducted in a way to limit contact and close proximity of players. (Consider reducing tag plays, holding the runner on, etc.).
2. Managers, coaches, and team Moms will wear a face covering when in proximity to others.
3. During games and scrimmages, the “plate” umpire may position him/herself in the standard position behind home plate, provided he/she has a face covering under the umpire mask.
  - a. If the umpire is uncomfortable with the proximity to the catcher or with wearing a face covering, he/she may elect to take position behind the pitcher’s mound to call balls and strikes.

### **Spectators**

1. Spectators must maintain at least 6-foot social distancing from other spectators, players, and coaches, except immediate family members.
  2. Parents and spectators MAY NOT enter the playing area.
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## **PHASE III**

This phase will be in effect when state and local restrictions on gatherings have been lifted, or allow gatherings of at least 250 people. TLL activities include team practices, games, and other events. Restrictions may remain on large-scale events. Sanitizing measures will be in place. Modifications to game play may be in effect.

In addition to precautions listed under “All Phases,” the following will be required during Phase III.

### **Scheduling & Organization**

1. On-field activities have a recommended transition period between games/practices to allow groups to exit and arrive without interaction.
2. Indoor activities are permitted.

### **Facilities**

1. Dugouts will be available for use during games, but distancing is recommended. Players may also be in an assigned area outside the playing field during the game. Hand sanitizer or hand washing station will be made available to players and coaches in the area of the dugout.
2. The concession stand may open to sell pre-packaged food and drinks only. Volunteers in the concession stand will wear a face covering at all times. The volunteer(s) working in the concession stand will sanitize the work area before opening the stand, ongoing during the use of the stand, and at closing of the concession stand.

### **Players & Coaches**

1. Practice drills and scrimmage activities will be conducted in a way to limit contact and close proximity of players. (Consider reducing tag plays, holding the runner on, etc.).
2. Managers, coaches and team moms are recommended to wear a face covering, when in close proximity to others. Umpires may wear a face covering at their individual discretion.
3. The plate umpire may position him/herself behind the catcher, if comfortable.

### **Spectators**

1. Face coverings are recommended if distancing is not observed.
  2. Parents and spectators MAY NOT enter the playing area.
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