

Westborough Little League & Softball, Inc:

COVID-19 Policies and Procedures for Summer Baseball and Softball

Westborough Little League and Softball, Inc. (WLL&S) has been working with local, state, and national organizations to identify if and when it might be appropriate to begin playing baseball and softball at the various age levels here in our community. It is our hope that players, spectators, and volunteers will be allowed to return to the playing fields and compete in a game we all love so much.

WLL&S's highest priority remains the health, well-being, and safety of all our participants and families. To help our league collectively navigate the start of play in our community, we've reviewed guidance offered by the Little League and Babe Ruth national organizations, reviewed ideas and been part of discussions with surrounding communities, spoken with doctors and other experts in the field of health and safety, and are guided by both the state and local officials who have provided input into how our activities might be restarted.

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From this research and through careful consideration, WLL&S have created a series of protocols and guidelines that will help to form the basis of a new summer season. These protocols and guidelines are not intended to replace or override local or state health official guidelines, but rather give additional instruction and guidance to all as we resume our collective efforts to open back up our games and practices. This plan has not been medically reviewed or approved, but is based on “best practices” from guidance we’ve received.

These guidelines are rooted in the clear and obvious observation that if WLL&S is to host events, we all need to acknowledge that COVID-19 is a real health concern that requires additional levels of protection for those participating in our activities.

We thank you for your patience, understanding, and support as we navigate and balance the need for creating a safe environment with nature of the sports of baseball and softball. As always, if you have any questions, you’re encouraged to reach out to any of our board members.

The following is intended to be a living and breathing document that adjusts as guidance and science evolves. Changes will be regularly pushed out to all participants as the season advances and will also be guided by the effectiveness of our players, volunteers, and spectators to follow these concepts consistently.

Timing

To be clear, Baseball and Softball activities will be largely guided by the recommendations provided by the Governor's taskforce on reopening the Commonwealth. These plans are in addition to (not in lieu of) other requirements that the Commonwealth and the Town may mandate.

- JUNE 15th - small group practices are currently allowed to start under the following conditions:
 - Coaching staff has completed the CORI process and has been notified by commissioner that they are approved; and
 - No more than 10 players & coaches practice at any one time (multiple groups can practice if 20' or more apart)
- July 6th - the earliest possible opening of Phase 3 elements.

As a program, we are targeting the opening of baseball and softball operations at the start of Phase 3, subject to the Town of Westborough's approval.

Should the Commonwealth or Town delay these dates, our program will follow suit and make any necessary adjustments.

Expectations of Adults (Coaches & Volunteers)

- Coaches and adult volunteers are strongly encouraged to wear facial coverings the entire time while they are at the fields.
- They are required to wear facial coverings when they cannot maintain at least a 6 foot buffer from others.
- Coaches will be responsible for ensuring their players are following their guidelines to the best of their ability
- Fields should be prepared prior to spectators and players arriving, if at all possible, and should be cleaned up after the game by those who were present.
- Coaches should make a best effort to sanitize high contact points in a dugout before and after every game/practice:
 - Gates to / from the field
 - Bench areas
 - Rakes
 - Anywhere else you notice people are regularly touching
- Coaches will be responsible to take attendance of their team at each event

Expectations of Adults (Coaches & Volunteers)

In games:

- If a player reaches base, a designated bench coach should retrieve the bat and wipe down before returning it to the player's equipment area.
- All balls put in play and touched by players are tossed to a designated coach who is wearing PPE and wipes down ball before putting back in play.
- At least one coach/designated adult should be focused on making sure players stay socially distanced from one another while on the sidelines.
- Coaches should make sure that the team's community hand sanitizer is conveniently located where players and coaches can easily access it.
- *Reminder: WLL&S has a zero tolerance policy for questioning umpire's calls. Coaches should NOT question safe/out/fair/foul/strike/ball calls. If you have a rules clarification, please call time and approach the umpire in a socially distanced and calm fashion and request an explanation.*

Expectations of Adults (Coaches & Volunteers)

In Practices:

- Coaches should make sure that the team's community hand sanitizer is conveniently located where players and coaches can easily access it as they come on/off the field.
- Coaches should constantly remind players to sanitize their hands *every time they come off the field* and to keep themselves and their equipment socially distanced.
- All balls used in practice should come out of the same bucket of balls and wiped down at the conclusion of practice.

Expectations of Players & Their Parents

- Parents are responsible for checking the health status of their son/daughter prior to bringing them to a WLL&S event (game or practice).
- Players and Parents should not attend ANY WLL&S event (i.e. – practice, game, etc.) if they are feeling sick or exhibiting any symptoms of illness.
- Any positive diagnosis of COVID-19 should be reported to the coach and/or League President immediately (who will then confidentially let families know that their son/daughter may have been exposed to the virus).
- Players wishing to return after a positive diagnosis should provide a note from their primary care physician clearing them to play to the League President.
- Players are required to wear facial coverings unless they are in the field of play. This includes from the time of arrival to departure and during the game when not actively in the field of play (as a fielder, batter, or runner).
 - If a player wishes to use additional PPE, they may do so as long as it does not compromise the safety of other players.
 - PPE gloves are not permitted for pitchers or catchers on their throwing hand.

Expectations of Players & Their Parents

- Players shall avoid sharing of playing equipment (bats, gloves, fielders masks, catchers gear, helmets, water bottles, etc.).
- Players are to bring their own source of hand sanitizer to each game. Coaches will also be provided extra sanitizer for themselves and in case a player runs out (or forgets).
- Hands are expected to be sanitized between every inning in games and whenever they come off the field or when they take a break during practices
- Players will be required to bring their own water bottle or sports drink. Names should be on the container in LARGE print.
- No food to be consumed on playing field or dugout area, including sunflower seeds, gum, etc.
- No handshakes, fist bumps, or chest bumps, etc.
- All parent/guardians will need to acknowledge that they've read and will abide by these protocols in order for their child to participate.

Expectations of Spectators

- Spectators should not attend WLL&S events if they are feeling ill or have an elevated temperature
- Spectators will be encouraged to stay in a predetermined area while watching the game and leave the park as soon as possible once the game ends
- Spectators should not be allowed in or around the dugout or playing area where they might bump into kids or other attendees
- Spectators should be minimized and, where possible, limited to household members only
- Spectators must maintain social distancing if not family members
- Outside food and drinks are not permitted
- Spectators will be permitted to watch from the outfield at Haskell, Rogers, and Greg's field if out of play

Expectations of Umpires

- Umpires will be required to wear face coverings when they are unable to maintain their social distance
- Umpires will minimize their contact with the baseballs when at all possible (coaches should handle game balls)
- Field umpires for Little League games are directed to remain in the outfield grass, not infield, as is the recommended practice for smaller diamonds.
- WLL&S will work with our student and patched umpires to identify locations from which to observe and call the games. This may include locations behind the pitcher's mound.
- Pregame plate meetings will be conducted in accordance with social distance guidelines
- Umpires will have the final say in determining how and where they will conduct their observations and call the game

Facilities

- WLL&S will work with the Town and others to maintain sanitary and well maintained conditions throughout the parks, where possible
- High touch areas will be disinfected frequently with a CDC approved solution weekly (in addition to coaches doing their part)
- Bleachers will be removed from the Target Field area
- Open air dugouts will be roped off along the 1st and 3rd base foul lines and will be used by players and coaches ONLY. They will be constructed in a way that allows players and coaches to maintain social distance.

Equipment

- Game baseballs will be kept in their individual wrapper until needed
- Secured storage areas at the fields will include a supply of balls that is set aside to allow for a 3-day rotation. Baseballs should sit for a minimum of 48 hours before reusing in a game or practice.
- Baseballs will be swapped out and disinfected throughout the course of the game or at the conclusion of practices
- Contact with baseballs should be limited to players where possible
- The league concession stand and sale of any food or snacks will be discontinued at our fields until further notice.
- Foul balls that land outside the playing area should be retrieved by the players or coaches, not by spectators. Assistance in locating where the ball lands is appreciated.
- Volunteers/coaches are asked to spray down Porta potties before and after games; WLL&S will provide spray bottle and sanitizer in Porta potties to be used to sanitize after each use.
- Each team will have designated adult volunteer(s) whose role it is will be to work with the players and make sure they are doing their best to maintain sanitary conditions and socially distance. This will allow for the coaches to focus on coaching (although they will be asked to also watch and address issues as they see them occur).
- Coaches and players should space their equipment 6' apart either in the dugout or outside dugout along the fence. If no fence, coaches should identify where equipment should be stored for each player so that it is out of play and spaced apart from others.

Acknowledgment Form

After reviewing this document, all parents/guardians should click on the below link and complete the acknowledgement form:

<https://forms.gle/hEJF8X9Ruhz2MTZAA>

FAQ

What do I do if I'm uncomfortable with my child playing under these conditions? *First and foremost, the decision to play is up to the player and their parent/guardian – if you are uncomfortable with playing under the threat of COVID-19 or the protocols we're asking everyone to follow, do not play. However, in order to participate in WLL&S activities and events during these times, we expect all participants, volunteers, and spectators to follow these protocols at a minimum. Please contact WLL&S who can discuss your options, including a full refund.*

What if I witness someone not following these guidelines? *We're all in this together. Everyone at the field should feel empowered to approach anyone not following the guidelines and request them to adhere to them. If you are uncomfortable with doing this, please bring it to the attention of a coach, board member, or other league official and we will approach them confidentially and ask that they address the issue or leave the premises.*

What do I do if my player or a member of their immediate household tests positive for COVID-19? *Sick coaches, staff members, umpires/officials, or players should not return until they have met CDC's [criteria to discontinue home isolation](#). As soon as practical, please reach out to your coach and/or league president (president@westborolittleleague.org) to inform them of the diagnosis. WLL&S will confidentially inform all players on the team (and others who might have been in close contact with the individual) that they may have been exposed and allow parents to decide how they want to proceed.*

Can my player return if they've been diagnosed with COVID-19? *Yes, once they've been tested and have been cleared by a medical doctor, please provide documented information to the League President who will inform your coach that your child may return.*

Do I *really* have to wear a facial covering? *Yes. Spectators and adult volunteers need to wear facial coverings when they are at the field and in close proximity to others. Players should wear them whenever practical, but don't need to wear them while in the field of play.*

I forgot my bat, can I borrow someone else's? *While we would prefer that all players have their own equipment, kids do tend to forget every now and then. So, yes, you can share a bat. But the bat needs to be wiped down after use with an approved cleansing solution before between uses by a coach.*