



Department of SD VFW Baseball Smart Play

COVID-19 Proposed Safety Guidelines to Play SD VFW Baseball



Objective: The coronavirus pandemic has affected over a thousand people in the state of South Dakota and it has caused a lot of uncertainty and unfortunate tragedy. When it comes to youth sports it is our job to follow the advice from local, state, and national level health advisors. Baseball is a sport that provides physical and mental wellness. **Bottom Line: Teams must abide by Local, State and National COVID-19 Policies, have insurance and have permission from City officials to play.**

The "SD Smart Play" guidelines below are intended to provide information on how SD VFW Baseball recommends youth baseball organizations plan to implement safe practices and to ensure we have a summer baseball season. Teams, leagues and associations should develop and approve local rules for playing baseball. It is recommended SD VFW Baseball Rules be used to play. Each player(s) will need to have a copy of Assumption of Risk and Liability Waiver (signed by a parent) as part of the Coach's folder that will be checked at VFW Region and State Tournaments with team insurance certificate and player birth certificates.

These guidelines are recommended to ensure safe and healthy physical distancing. The guidelines are broken up by three phases that allow the gradual phasing-in of baseball.

South Dakota VFW baseball recommends entering each phase with an abundance of caution and understanding that a spike in South Dakota COVID-19 cases may limit baseball activity. Teams, leagues and associations shouldn't enter any phase without the approval from local/municipal commissions.

Phase I — If current trends hold will be entered around May 15

Steady or declining active South Dakota COVID-19 cases for at least 14 days. The current social distancing rules of gathering of no more than 10 people that are currently in place will be followed. Baseball is an outdoor sport with our participants occupying natural positions that are greater than social distancing standards.

Organizations should consider keeping the same group of 10 (coaches and players) together through this phase. If coaches' coach multiple teams, it is recommended that said coach properly sanitizes prior to their practice and/or game.

Phase 1 allows for youth baseball to start practicing as long as the current guidelines set forth by the CDC and South Dakota Department of Health are followed.

Phase II — If current trend holds will be entered around June 1.

Steady or declining active South Dakota Cases for at least 28 days. The cap on the total number of people at gatherings should be as directed by local, state, and national (CDC) guidance. For programs that have a higher volume of spectators at their facilities, certain guidelines would take place and adhere to the social distancing guidelines.

Phase III — Date TBD (approximately July 1)

Steady or declining active South Dakota cases for at least 42 days, there are no limits on group sizes (unless established by local authorities). However, family groups should maintain 6 foot physical spacing in an abundance of caution.

Phase IV-- Sports go back to normal participation and operation.

Games played in Phase II

Proposed Spectator options & Social Distancing:

For fields that have enclosed fencing:

- Only immediate families/households of the players will be allowed to spectate the game. Each household must adhere to 6 feet of social distancing from the next household.
- Spectators will not be allowed around the area of the backstop or dugouts. Parents and spectators have separate seating away from the backstop or dugout area.
- Spectators are only permitted to view the game from the outfield. This means that games may be viewed along the foul lines starting at the 1st and 3rd - bases extending to the outfield and the outfield area while maintaining social distancing guidelines.
- Only players, up to three coaches per team, and the umpire(s) are allowed on the field of play.

For fields that have an open outfield:

- One parent/guardian is permitted/allowed to spectate the game. Each parent/guardian must adhere to 6 feet of social distancing from the next household.
- Spectators have separate seating away from the backstop or dugout area. Spectators will not be allowed around the area of the backstop or dugouts.
- Only players, up to three coaches per team, and the umpire(s) are allowed on the field of play.
- Spectators are only permitted to view the game from the outfield, 10 feet away from the foul line in foul territory. Please note some fields will have an "out of play" line painted in the grass. The same guidelines of 10 feet away from the line are in effect.

Dugout (Team Personnel): The dugout will be extended to behind the enclosed dugout, if applicable, to the backstop for both teams. This is to allow rostered players and up to three coaches per team to practice social distancing, throughout the game, while their team is up to bat. Hand and equipment sanitizing between innings is recommended.

No more than 3-5 individuals are permitted in the dugout at any given time (this is dependent on the size of the dugout). These individuals must maintain all social distancing guidelines throughout the game. All other team personnel must practice social distancing in the extended area of the dugout, as referenced above.

Game Protocol: At the pregame meeting and throughout the game, coaches and umpires will not be allowed to shake hands or have any physical contact with each other. All parties must maintain social distancing guidelines.

No physical contact or touching is permitted! This includes such cases as pre- and post-game breakdowns, high fives or fist bumps, or any other physical gestures of celebration. All team personnel must always maintain social distancing guidelines.

At the conclusion of the games, it is important that all teams promote good sportsmanship!

Example: (Instead of a post-game handshake, teams may go to their respective foul line and with a form of respective gesture, such as, but not limited to: **tipping** of your cap or a round of applause to the opposing team).

Equipment: It is highly recommended that team personnel carry hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes to be used before, during, and after the games whenever appropriate.

Players should consider wearing batting gloves when handling a bat.

Each organized program must properly sanitize all team equipment. Team equipment includes helmets, catcher's equipment, and "team bats". It is highly recommended that each player provides their own equipment and refrain from sharing equipment.

Coaches should consider wearing approved CDC face masks to ensure the safety of their players.

Umpires: Umpires will be asked to officiate the game from behind the pitcher's mound, while practicing social distancing with all fielders. This will limit the number of people around home plate and will still allow the umpire to call the game and see the whole field.

It is recommended that umpires wear approved CDC masks. Umpires should not handle baseballs. It will be the responsibility of both team(s) coaches to supply balls at the appropriate time. Defensive team will supply the entire inning.

Example: Pitchers will bring the ball to the dugout at the end of each inning. Thus opposing pitchers then bring their sanitized ball to be used for their defensive inning.

Retrieval of balls (Foul or Home Run), sanitizing must occur before the ball is to be returned to gameplay and/or given to athlete(s) for performance accolades.

Travel Games & Tournaments: Travel based teams would still have the opportunity to participate as long as the travel games are conducted within the state of South Dakota. All games and tournaments outside the state of South Dakota, must follow the travel recommendations from the South Dakota Department of Health and destined States travel restrictions, or until all travel restrictions are lifted.

For tournament games, host organizations will stay in communication with their local Convention and Visitor's Bureau on policies that hoteliers have put in place to ensure the safety of their guests. This information will be relayed to the participating teams.

In conclusion, enforcement of these guidelines will be a collaborative effort among the directors and coaches of each local organization. It is recommended that each local organization post these guidelines on their websites and at all fields where practices and games are conducted.

SD VFW Smart Play — COVID-19 Policy

If a player or coach tests positive for COVID-19 during the season, CDC guidelines will be followed. The person who tested positive will need to stay at home for 14 days before resuming baseball activities.

Any player or coach that had close contact (less than 6 feet for a prolonged period of time) will be asked to stay home for 14 days as well. It will be up to the local coaches to determine close contact.

**If you don't feel well, running a high fever, cold like symptoms.
Please stay home! You not only affect you, but your buddies too!**

Authors:

- **Department of SD VFW Baseball Committee/ North Dakota Cal Ripken/Babe Ruth Local Organization Leaders**
- **A collaboration of Minnesota statewide community-based baseball and softball organizations**

Resources:

- www.cdc.gov
- www.doh.sd.gov
- www.mvas.org/baseball
- www.mbl.bz