



INVER GROVE HEIGHTS SOFTBALL FEDERATION PARENT HANDBOOK

MISSION STATEMENT:

To provide girls of all ages of Inver Grove Heights and its surrounding communities with opportunities to learn and improve upon their softball skills while developing respect for others, build self-confidence and encouraging teamwork in a fun and safe environment.

Objectives:

- Emphasize the teaching and reinforcement of the fundamental skills of individual and team play.
- Assist in the development of quality softball players.
- Be competitive with other associations at both the Tri County and State Levels.
- Support the Simley High School girls' fastpitch softball program.

General Expectations:

The goal of IGHSF is to provide an opportunity for girls of all ages to play fast pitch softball in an atmosphere that encourages and promotes teamwork, friendly competition, amicable relationships, good sportsmanship and community. The organization expects coaches, players, fans and parents to exhibit courtesy at all times.

During the softball season, every player is expected to place IGHSF fastpitch softball as their #1 sports priority. While the player is not prohibited from participating in non-IGHSF activities, those activities must be secondary to IGHSF.

The IGHSF season is defined once the teams have been determined (approximately end of February) until the end of National Tournaments (approximately end of July). Teams may practice indoors through the winter; however, this is considered "Off Season." Players are encouraged to play other sports and will not be penalized if they miss IGHSF activities during the offseason.

In general, each team will play in 2-3 "open" tournaments during the summer season as well as Tri County, State and Nationals tournaments (if that team qualifies for each). If a coach would like to play in more tournaments, that coach is responsible for meeting with the team parents to gain agreement. That coach is also responsible for raising the additional money to pay tournament fees.

PLAYER REGISTRATION, ELIGIBILITY AND TRYOUTS

Player Registration:

The IGHSF offers both summer and fall sessions. Participants must register prior to the start of each season during the published dates as established by the IGHSF Board.

Registration Provisions:

The parent of any player who wishes to participate in the IGHSF sessions must complete and sign:

- A volunteer acknowledgment form for each participating player.
- Parent/player code of conduct form.
- Registration forms through the online registration process via the ighsf.com website.
- Any person who registers under an assumed name or gives an incorrect age will become ineligible and will be suspended for the remainder of the current sports playing season.

Fees:

Fees will be established annually for each participant and are required to be paid at the time of registration. Fees cover the costs of participation including but not limited to:

- League entry fees
- Tournament entry fees
- Umpires, team equipment and field maintenance

Fees will not be used to cover/subsidize travel expenses incurred by teams during regular or postseason play. **No refunds** are given once the teams have been established and announced (summer and fall). Refunds will be made **ONLY** to players not placed on a team.

The IGHSF Board may assist with registration fee due to financial hardship. Scholarships are available to families who have experienced extenuating circumstances such as loss of a job, divorce, medical challenges within the family, or other circumstances approved by the board. Families receiving a scholarship for the program will be required to provide additional volunteer hours to the organization than a family paying the full registration fee. Out of the ordinary volunteer opportunities need to be requested of and approved by the IGHSF Board.

Player Eligibility & Age Qualifications:

Teams will be established in any of five (5) age classifications: 8U, 10U, 12U, 14U and High School League. The age classifications are as follows for both Summer & Fall seasons:

- **8 & Under (8U):** Players are 8 or younger as of August 31st of the current year.
- **10 & Under (10U):** Players are 10 or younger as of August 31st of the current year.
- **12 & Under (12U):** Players are 12 or younger as of August 31st of the current year.
- **14 & Under (14U):** Players are 14 or younger as of August 31st of the current year.
- **High School League:** Players are 18 or younger as of August 31st of the current year.

The age level at which a player may participate is in accordance with the rules set by the Minnesota Softball Federation (MSF) and American Softball Association (ASA). Players are encouraged to play at their MSF age level; however, players may elect to try out at an older age level team provided the IGHSF Board grants them permission to try out at the older age level. Rostered players **CAN NEVER** play at a younger age level per League, State and National Rules.

Player Tryouts:

If needed, tryouts are typically held once registration is closed for the summer season. The goal of the tryout process is to evaluate each player impartially and objectively so that they may be placed on a team with players of similar ability.

The IGHSF Board, coaches and independent evaluators will determine evaluation criteria for tryouts. Players' skills will be rated and ranked. Pitchers and catchers will have additional skill sets evaluated. Players that do not tryout cannot be considered for a level A team unless otherwise approved by a majority vote of the IGHSF Board. No parents are allowed to stay and watch during try outs.

Player Evaluations:

Players shall be evaluated by an impartial evaluation team which may include the Simley High School

coaches, IGHSF Board members and/or independent evaluators. Results of individual evaluations are not part of the public record and are not to be shared with any persons outside of the IGHSF Board. Coaches and parents may request an individual player be moved to a higher or lower age group. Individual requests will be heard by the IGHSF Board after evaluations.

Team Placement (*Team Selection*):

1. Evaluations, tryout scores and information will be compiled on each player. This information will be available for review by the coach and the IGHSF Board. The following criteria will be used for team placement:
 - Tryout scores
 - Team placement in prior years
 - Coaches input
 - Age level
2. The IGHSF Board and coaches will evaluate the pool of available players for each age group to determine the number of teams and competitive levels A, B and C.
3. The top ranked participants from each age group may be placed on the highest-level team based on the criteria defined in paragraph 1. The top pitcher and top catcher will be placed on the top team based on paragraph 1. In the event the top players are all pitchers, catchers or a combination thereof that will not allow the formation of the next level team, the IGHSF Board will determine the corrective action.
4. The IGHSF Board reserves the right to make any changes necessary to the team and player selection process, including moving any player(s) from any age group or level to another age group or level. Any change(s) must be approved by majority vote of the IGHSF Board.
5. All team rosters must be approved by a majority vote of the IGHSF Board.

Rosters are targeted, but not limited, to include up to 12 players. If a roster reduction is necessary to create two teams, the IGHSF Board will make that decision. Every effort will be made to place each participant on a team, but if necessary, a player will be offered a waiver to play elsewhere.

When player shortages arise in a particular group, players from the next lowest age group may be moved up if there is an abundance of players at the lower age group. If a roster is still short, attempts will be made to recruit players first from within the Inver Grove Heights community, rather than from other communities. If a team shortage still exists, attempts will be made to place players on a team with a neighboring community.

PARENT EXPECTATIONS

Travel:

All IGHSF teams are required to travel to different communities in league games and tournaments. Parents and players having conflicts in schedules or transportation should make arrangements with other parents or players to ensure that they will be able to participate. **Each team depends on all players attending every game.**

Uniforms and Equipment:

IGH Traveling Softball registration fee does NOT include the uniform. Parents are required to purchase uniforms which consist of a jersey, pants, belt and socks. Additional items may be purchased by the parents. Other items required to play are the responsibility of the parents. These items include:

- Glove
- Softball Shoes (No metal cleats except at 14U and older)
- Batting Helmet: All players must have their own helmet to provide proper fit and eliminate the concerns about communicable infections (lice). Batting helmets must have a chin strap and a NOCSAE approved face mask.
- Bat: Bats are not provided for 12U and older. All bats must conform to the ASA bat performance standard. Please check the bat guidelines for proper length and weight for your player.
- Softball Bag: Players will need something in which to carry their equipment and possessions.
- Catchers Equipment: Catcher's equipment is not provided for 12U and older. However, starting at 12U, the association will reimburse up to \$100 for catchers' equipment every other year. A receipt is required for reimbursement.

Other items recommended but not required: Batting gloves, mouth guard, fielder/pitcher face mask, sliding shorts, sunglasses, sunscreen, bug spray, sweatpants, sweatshirt, ball, dry socks, Under Armor type long sleeve shirt and water bottle. Jewelry may not be worn during the games.

Guide:

The philosophy of IGH Fastpitch differs from that of a recreational softball program. As a result, playing time and position will not necessarily be equal for each girl as they get older and progress up to 12U and beyond. All players are not at the same level. Therefore, the best players *may* see the most playing time. Each girl will be given an opportunity to improve. With improvement will come additional playing time. The coach will make the final decisions regarding playing time for each player. Coaches will strive to play everyone in all league games. However, due to the rules of the game, the length of playing time may not be equal for each player. If a player is dissatisfied with her playing time, the player should speak privately to her coach after a game or practice. Players should then attempt to make improvements in the areas suggested by the coach after a game or practice.

Parents are expected to follow The Good Sportsmanship Guidelines that were designed for players and participants. Avoid negative comments about players, coaches and officials. **Please address any concerns directly to the coach involved in private.**

IGHSF policy prohibits the use of tobacco, alcohol or illegal drugs on the field at any time.

No IGHSF player or coach is permitted to participate (roster) on two traveling fastpitch teams concurrently in the same season. If found in violation of this rule, punishment may include 1 year suspension from IGHSF and forfeiture of volunteer fee, subject to Board vote.

During the Region and State Tournaments, teams are allowed to "pick up" two additional players from other teams that did not qualify for postseason play. This may impact the playing time of regular team members. Be aware that other teams may pick up IGH players as well.

VOLUNTEER EXPECTATIONS

The IGHSF is dedicated to providing the lowest possible cost to players, while at the same time continuing to provide excellent equipment, uniforms and clinics. We have established many fundraisers to meet those goals, however, we require help in carrying out those activities.

Each family is expected to participate in IGHSF fund raising and events. Parents will also be asked to help with organizational matters. Therefore, the following requirements have been established for every softball calendar year:

- A volunteer fee of \$250 per family **OR**
- A 9-hour volunteer time (per family) minimum
- Families receiving Financial Aid will be required to fulfill 15 hours.

Those not meeting this requirement will forfeit the \$250 volunteer fee to the association. (See below)

Volunteer Policy Administration:

The IGHSF Board will organize, delegate and monitor all volunteering activities. In order for the required time to count towards the yearly requirement, the time must be preapproved through the IGHSF Board.

The policy will be administered as follows:

- Upon player registration, all parents will be required to submit a separate check in the amount of \$250 for their volunteer fee. This check **WILL NOT** be cashed unless forfeited.
- All volunteer events will be posted on our website (<http://ighsf.com>).
- The duties and time slots will vary depending on the event.
- Time slots will be filled on a first come/first served basis.

Volunteer Opportunities:

Examples of jobs or responsibilities that can be used to meet the 9-hour (per family) include:

- Team Head Coach
- Assistant Coach
- Team Manager
 - Collect birth certificates, photos and signed team roster.
 - Establish contact distribution list (email, text, phone)
 - Send out practice and game schedules.
 - Secure hotel rooms for out-of-town games/tournaments
- Concessions and field prep for IGH hosted tournaments
- Other duties determined upon approval.

PLAYER EXPECTATIONS

Practice is critical. During the summer session, players can usually expect 2 or 3 practices per week until the start of the league games schedule. After the league games schedule starts, players can expect practice at least once per week with 2 nights of league games and tournaments on the weekends. Practices will be organized to accomplish specific objectives. Players are expected to attend all practices, games and tournaments. Please contact your coach if you are unable to make practice, games or tournaments.

Player and Coach Relations:

Every umpire, coach and player should be treated with respect. This is the top priority for every coach and player. This includes positive reinforcement and working out issues in private conversations. Any player who feels they are not being treated appropriately should discuss the issue with the coach. If for any reason a player is uncomfortable raising the issue with the coach, they should address their concerns to any member of the IGHSF Board.

Playing Time Expectations:

On the IGH Traveling Softball teams, playing time may not be equal. The amount of playing time any particular player receives is dependent on many factors, a few of which are: skill, ability, competitive attitude, attendance at games and practices and punctuality. Also, please understand that factors such as full rosters and substitution rules can make it difficult to equalize playing time.

Fielding and Batting Position Expectations:

A player may choose to pursue a starting spot at any position on the field. Every effort will be made to develop the skills necessary for every player to play in their preferred position. This applies only to players who have shown a firm commitment to the team by attending most practices and games.

The following process may be used to develop and determine players at each position:

- First Practice
 - Ask players for desired positions.
 - Explain what skills are needed for each position.
- Preseason practices
 - Evaluate the players at each position against the skill set that is needed.
 - Tell each player what skills need additional development.
 - Work with each player on weaknesses.
- End of Preseason
 - Tell each player individually where they are likely to play given their skills and the skills of their teammates at that point.
 - Explain to each player what skills need improvement and how to improve them.
- Mid-Season
 - Each player should have enough exposure to every position to have a general idea of the responsibilities and skills required to play (except pitcher and catcher and any position for which safety is a concern).
 - Tell each player individually where they are likely to play given their skills and the skills of their teammates at that point.
 - Explain to each player what skills need improvement and how to improve them.

Assessing each player's abilities to play preferred positions and balancing the needs of the team will determine the starting players at each position. In most cases, the highest skilled players will play where they prefer. However, this is a team sport, and players may be asked to play in a non-preferred position for the overall good of the team.

Batting order is not guaranteed. Coaches have the discretion to move players around as they deem necessary. For example, a strong batter and/or fast runner who normally bats in the top 4 may be moved to a lower batting order to provide strength and/or speed in the bottom half of the batting order.

Softball Training and Clinics:

Players are encouraged to attend clinics that are offered through a variety of many organizations. The IGHSF Board will send information regarding clinics as it becomes available.

COACHES EXPECTATIONS

- Exemplify behavior that is representative of being an adult, a coach, a member of the IGHSF and a leader for girls of all ages.
- Demonstrate high ideals, good sportsmanship, and desirable attitudes in personal behavior and demand the same standards from his/her players.
- Emphasize to his/her players and support personnel the importance of proper behavior and the necessity of restraining from entering the playing field to engage in an altercation of any kind.
- Maintain self-control at all times.
- Cooperate with and assist the IGH Board in the planning, scheduling and conduct of organization activities.
- Utilize positive educational methods in coaching, giving all players an opportunity to develop and use initiative, leadership, and judgment.
- Pay close attention to the physical condition and well-being of players, refusing to jeopardize the health of an individual for the sake of improving his/her team's chances of winning.
- Discourage profanity or abusive language directed toward anyone involved with the IGHSF and its activities.
- Refuse to disparage opponents, officials, or others associated with the IGHSF or its activities.
- Conduct himself/herself properly when raising a question about or discussing a call with an official.
- IGHSF coaches have an obligation to participate in the building of the entire softball organization, not just their team.

REMOVAL OF PLAYER, COACH, OR BOARD MEMBER

The IGHSF Board reserves the sole authority to suspend or remove a player, coach or board member whose individual behavior may be deemed detrimental to his/her team and/or the IGHSF organization. Suspension or removal of a player, coach or board member is a very serious situation and must be dealt with in a fair and open manner. The request for suspension or removal must be made in writing and directed to the IGHSF Board. The board President will send a written notification to the individual that a request for removal has been made to the board. The notification will include the precise reason(s) for the request and any evidence presented to the board validating the reasons. The individual will be given an opportunity to respond to the notice. The board will review the request for removal, notification and respond to determine the next course of action. If there is sufficient justification, a hearing before the voting board will be held to discuss the request, supporting evidence, response and provide the individual an opportunity to address the board directly. A quorum of voting board members must be present at this meeting and a majority of that quorum is required for the suspension or dismissal of a player, coach or board member. Offending criteria includes, but is not limited to:

- Abusive behavior whether physical or verbal towards teammates, parents, coaches, opposing players, umpires, and/or spectators.
- Offensive and/or insulting language, or inappropriate physical contact
- Unethical or unsportsmanlike conduct
- Conflicts of interest with other team programs that are detrimental to the IGHSF program, such as

- participating as a head or assistant coach on a team competing against an IGH team.
- Recruiting players from IGH's program for another team prior to completion of the regular season
- Violation of the league rules that may jeopardize the IGHSF program or league status.

If the board determines the offense and/or supporting evidence does not warrant suspension or removal, it may give the individual a warning or drop the matter completely.