

## Hershey Little League Health Safety Guidelines

Hershey Little League (HLL) has developed a health safety plan to mitigate the risks posed by infectious agents, notably COVID-19. These policies and procedures have been developed in accordance with current guidelines set forth by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), PA Department of Health (PA DOH), Governor of Pennsylvania, Little League International (LLI), and other relevant authorities. As additional information is made available, HLL will update these guidelines to reflect current “Best Practices” and remain in compliance with all state and local mandates.

It is important to note that the information within this guide does not replace the advice of medical professionals. There will always be a level of risk of contracting infectious diseases, including COVID-19. If a parent, player, or individual is uncomfortable participating in HLL activities, they shouldn't, and HLL will fully respect that decision. Moreover, HLL will carefully consider all stakeholders' concerns regarding health safety and revise our “Best Practices” accordingly. For those that agree to participate, please read and sign the HLL COVID-19 waiver before initiating any league-related activities. The Health Safety Waiver/Release can be found on the HLL website (<https://www.hersheylittleleague.net/>).

The purpose of these guidelines is to enable a safe place for area youth to learn and play the game of baseball, while stressing the importance of mitigating the spread of infectious agents such as COVID-19. These guidelines will be in effect while Dauphin County, PA is designated “Green” per the Pennsylvania Governor’s “Process to Reopen PA” plan (<https://www.pa.gov/>). Play will be re-suspended if Dauphin County, PA returns to the “Yellow” phase. The HLL Board of Directors also may vote to suspend activities if a local rise in COVID-19 cases occurs or if adherence to these health safety guidelines is deemed insufficient.

In compliance with the PA Governor’s directives regarding recreational and amateur sports, the HLL Health Safety committee will appoint a chairperson that will serve as the primary point of contact for all questions regarding COVID-19 prevention during HLL activities. The HLL Health Safety chairperson’s contact information can be found on the league website (<https://www.hersheylittleleague.net/contact-us>). In addition to alerting the nearest HLL representative regarding urgent, on-field issues that require resolution in real-time, all parents, players, officials, and coaches are encouraged to email the Health Safety chair with questions, concerns, and reports of health status changes should the need arise.

In the event of a confirmed case of COVID-19 within the HLL community, the Health Safety Committee will immediately meet to address the issue. Likely courses of action include league-wide notification via email and suspension of further HLL activities by those individuals and/or teams that were in immediate contact with the confirmed case. Notification of COVID-19 incidents by HLL will comply with all confidentiality requirements and privacy laws.

HLL strongly requires all Little League coaches, umpires, league officials, parents/guardians, and others to review and follow these guidelines. As with HLL’s general safety guidelines, no manual or guidebook can take the place of common sense or sound judgement; nor can it encompass every scenario or situation that may arise in the setting of youth sports programs. It is expected that all Hershey Little League coaches and volunteers will use both sound judgement and child-focused actions in their care and supervision of all Hershey Little League players.

### General Guidance for Communicable Disease Prevention:

- **Wash your hands frequently.**
  - Wash your hands often with soap and water for a least 20 seconds.
  - If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.**
  - When sneezing or coughing, remember to always cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or into your elbow when not wearing a facemask.
- **Practice social distancing**
  - Maintain at least 6 feet between you and others wherever possible, and follow all posted signage throughout the park/facility.
- **Wear face covering in public places**
  - Cloth face coverings are meant to protect other people in case you are infected.
  - Cloth face coverings are not a substitute for social distancing.
- **Cleaning and Disinfecting**
  - Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily and in between use.
  - We ask for your patience as more time will be needed to clean and disinfect equipment throughout practices and games.
  - Keep your area clean and dispose of any trash, tissues, hand sanitizing wipes, etc. ASAP.
- **Health Monitoring**
  - All coaches, players, umpires, and guests should self-evaluate on a daily basis for signs and symptoms of COVID-19.
  - Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus and include:
    - Fever (i.e., temperature above 101°F)
    - Cough
    - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
    - Fatigue, lethargy
    - Muscle aches, chills
    - New loss of taste or smell
    - Sore throat
    - Congestion or runny nose
    - Nausea or vomiting
    - Diarrhea
  - Sick participants and those in close contact with anyone exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 are expected to follow CDC and PA DOH guidelines, self-quarantine, and seek treatment at a medical facility if necessary. Individuals can return to HLL events upon meeting the CDC guidelines and preferably with a doctor's approval that can be shown to an HLL official.
  - For the safety of teammates and others in the HLL community, individuals and parents/guardians of players are strongly encouraged to inform their coaches, the HLL Health Safety coordinator, and/or members of the HLL Board of Directors if they exhibit signs of COVID-19 infection. Such information would be held in strict confidentiality and utilized only to minimize risk of further viral spread.
  - In the event of a confirmed case of COVID-19 among the HLL community, the Health Safety committee will meet to consider suspension of all relevant activities and authorize league-wide notification via email, phone, and social media outlets. Notification of state and local health officials will be made in accordance with CDC guidelines.

### Pre-Game/Practice:

- **Field maintenance and preparation**
  - Fields should be prepared prior to teams and spectators arriving at the complex and after they depart. It is encouraged that volunteers already participating in the game (managers/coaches, umpires, and league administrator) perform these tasks to limit the total number of individuals at the site.
  - Dugouts and field fences to be used for player-designated spaces will be disinfected before team arrival with a CDC-approved sanitizer listed effective for coronaviruses.
  - It is recommended that any shared field preparation equipment be sprayed or wiped with disinfectant before and after each use.

- **Pre-Arrival**
  - Practices and game schedules should be posted on HLL's website calendar and staggered in a manner to help ensure a large number of individuals are not arriving and departing at the same time.
  - Parent/Guardian should check temperature and assess overall health of their player prior to arrival at the field. If the player or family member is exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19, they should not come to the field. (See symptom list above).
  - Players are encouraged to use the bathroom before departing in order to minimize use of public facilities at the field.
  - Players will be required to wear cloth face coverings when physical distances of 6 ft. are not possible (see below). Please ensure the league-provided face covering or suitable alternative is available before departure.
  - Players are encouraged to bring their own portable seating to use within their space designated for personal equipment.
  - Carpooling and association with non-household members prior to arriving at the field should be minimized.
  
- **Arrival and Warm-ups**
  - Players and families/spectators are instructed not to show up to fields more than 40 minutes prior to game time.
  - Players should wait in their cars with parents/guardians until just before the beginning of a practice, warm-up or game instead of assembling in groups.
  - On-field warm-ups should be limited and last no more than 30 minutes.
  - Players should arrive at practices only at their specified time
  - Upon check-in with their coach or approved team representative, players will be scanned with a non-contact thermometer. Players with a temperature of 101°F or greater will be sent home immediately.
  - Players with temperatures below 101°F will sanitize their hands, proceed to their designated locations to store their personal equipment, and begin warming up while maintaining appropriate distancing whenever possible.
  
- **Scorekeeping**
  - Scorekeeping should be done by team coaches or a team parent/guardian. Proper distancing should be observed when exchanging line-ups, pitch-counts, and other information.
  - Press boxes should not be utilized unless there is ample room for social distancing to occur within them.
  - Scoreboard controllers can be used with proper sanitization in accordance with established guidelines (<https://ehs.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/covid-19-cleaning-computers-electronics.pdf>)
  
- **Umpires**
  - Plate meetings should only consist of one manager or coach from each team and game umpires. Distancing of 6 ft. between individuals and face coverings should be implemented.
  - Umpires should avoid direct contact with equipment where possible but, when required, use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol after the inspection of each individual piece of equipment.
  - Umpires are permitted to be placed behind the pitcher's mound/circle to call balls and strikes. Umpires are encouraged to keep a safe distance from players as much as possible and wear protective gloves.
  - If physically able, umpires are encouraged to wear cloth face coverings while umpiring.

- Umpires are encouraged to report the development of COVID-19 symptoms and results of COVID-19 testing if they have recently officiated an HLL game. Reports can be made to the Hershey Area Umpires director, who will communicate with the HLL Health Safety Committee to disseminate information to all relevant parties.

## On and in Proximity of the Field:

- **Limit Physical Contact**
  - Players and coaches should take measures to prevent all but the essential contact necessary to play the game. This should include refraining from handshakes, high fives, fist/elbow bumps, chest bumps, group celebrations, etc. Little League International suggests lining up outside the dugout and tipping caps to the opposing team as a sign of good sportsmanship after a game.
- **Drinks and Snacks**
  - Public water fountains and spigots have been shut off and will remain unavailable during the Green phase of PA's COVID-19 mitigation plan.
  - There will be no use of shared or team beverages.
  - Athletes, managers/coaches, and umpires should bring their own personal drinks to team activities. Drinks should be labeled with the person's name.
  - Single use/disposable water bottles are preferred, while the use of squeeze-activated sports bottles is discouraged as they can aerosolize microbes.
  - Players should avoid eating around the playing area. If necessary, players could bring pre-packaged food for individual consumption only.
- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**
  - HLL will supply cloth face coverings (neck buffs) to all players and coaching staff.
  - All coaches, volunteers, umpires, etc., should wear PPE whenever applicable and possible, such as cloth face coverings and protective medical gloves when handling shared equipment.
  - Players should wear cloth face coverings when in close contact areas and in places where six-foot distancing is challenging or not feasible, such as in dugouts.
  - Players should not wear protective medical gloves on the field during game play.
  - Players are not required to wear a cloth face covering while on the field during game play.
  - Players will be permitted to wear a cloth face covering on the field during game play based on any directive of a medical provider or individual determination of the player/parent/guardian/caretaker.
  - Cloth face coverings should not be placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.
- **Dugouts**
  - Managers/coaches and players should be assigned spots in or around the dugout so that they are at least six-feet apart and must be placed behind a fence.
  - Players are to stay at their assigned spots when on the bench or while waiting their turn to bat.
  - Players and managers/coaches should wear a cloth face covering while in the dugout.
  - Hand sanitizer will be available in or around the dugouts/benches and can be used upon entering and exiting the dugout/bench, including between innings.
  - Coaches and league officials should reinforce directives, guidance, and protocols as necessary with parents and children.
- **Player Equipment**

- Player equipment should be kept at their designated spaces, which will be spread out at six-foot intervals to minimize cross-contamination.
  - Players should have their own batter's helmet, glove, bat, and catcher's equipment (if intending to play that position).
    - If a player does not have a helmet, bat, and/or catcher's equipment, HLL will provide the sanitized equipment to the player.
  - Participants should avoid, or minimize, equipment sharing when feasible.
  - Some critical equipment may not be able to be obtained by every individual. When it is necessary to share critical or limited equipment, all surfaces of each piece of shared equipment must be disinfected with an EPA-approved disinfectant proven effective against pathogens such as COVID-19. Sufficient contact time must be allowed before treated equipment can be used by a new player. Increased attention should be paid to detailed cleaning of all equipment directly contacting the head and face (catcher's mask, helmets).
  - Individuals disinfecting equipment are encouraged to use gloves while using disinfectants and follow the manufacturer's directions for use. All disinfectants should be stored properly, in a safe area, out of the reach of children.
- **Baseballs**
    - To limit individual contact, baseballs should be rotated out of the game on a regular basis (~ every 2 innings).
    - Umpires should limit their contact with the ball, and catchers should retrieve foul balls and passed balls if possible.
    - Balls used in infield/outfield warm-ups should be isolated from the shared ball container.
    - Foul balls landing outside the field of play should be retrieved by participating players, coaches, and umpires. No spectators should retrieve the ball.
  - **Spitting, Sunflower Seeds, Gum, etc.**
    - Sunflower seeds, gum, etc., should not be allowed in dugouts or on the playing field.
    - All players and coaches are to refrain from spitting at all times, including in dugout areas and on the playing field.
  - **Spectators**
    - All spectators should follow best social distancing practices - stay six feet away from individuals outside their household, wear a cloth face covering at all times, and avoid direct hand or other contact with players/managers/coaches during play.
    - HLL may choose to minimize the exposure risk to spectators by limiting attendance to only essential volunteers and family members.
    - Spectators should bring their own seating or portable chairs when possible. Use of the bleachers by spectators will be prohibited or constrained to six-foot physical distancing requirements.

### Post-Game/Practice:

- In lieu of post-game hand shaking, each team will line up on their respective foul lines and tip their cap to the opposing team.
- Post-game coaches' meetings with players will be abbreviated and should adhere to six-foot physical distancing guidelines.
- Players and families should vacate the field/facility shortly after the conclusion of their game to minimize unnecessary contact with players, coaches, and spectators arriving for the next event, ideally within 20 minutes.
- Participants should wash hands or use hand sanitizer following practices and games.
- Player's equipment (e.g. bags, helmets, bats, gloves, etc.) should be cleaned and disinfected after each use by a parent/guardian/caretaker, where applicable.

## References

- <https://www.littleleague.org/player-safety/coronavirus-update/>
- <https://www.governor.pa.gov/covid-19/sports-guidance/>
- <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/youth-sports.html>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html>
- <https://www.sadlersports.com/sample-covid-19-guidelines-for-amateur-youth-sports-teams-leagues/>
- <https://ehs.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/covid-19-cleaning-computers-electronics.pdf>
- <https://www.epysa.org/>