



**PARENT & PLAYER HANDBOOK
(RULES AND POLICIES)**

2018

WWW.FLAFA.GR



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Forest Lake Area Fastpitch Association (FLAFA)

Forest Lake Area Athletic Association (FLAAA) Mission Statement

Supporting and participating in the positive development of youth.

Forest Lake Area Athletic Association Philosophy

FLAAA is to support all organized, approved youth activities in a positive environment. The primary activities are athletics that are operating under the umbrella of FLAAA. The primary areas of support are the communities included in the boundaries of Independent School District 831. The goal of FLAAA is to encourage positive learning from coaches and role models; and to develop good citizenship now and in the future for the betterment of the individual and its communities. FLAAA also supports: other youth activities, humanitarian needs, community events, schools and requests on an individual basis as approved by the Board of Directors.

FLAFA Philosophy



The general philosophy of FLAFA is to develop the athletic abilities of the athletes, promote teamwork, sportsmanship, and encourage the players to enjoy their softball experience.

What is FLAFA?

FLAFA is a participating member of the Forest Lake Area Athletic Association (FLAAA). It consists of a Board of Directors, participants, and their parents. Nominations and elections of all officers are held in October of each year at a time and location announced to all members through website announcements and email communications. Membership shall be described as all interested persons over the age of 19 to include all parents, guardians, coaches, and board members as active members herein. FLAFA holds board meetings once a month that are open to all interested parties in good standing. Association decisions are made based on parliamentary procedure when motions are made and seconded, discussed, votes recorded, and minutes taken.

Affiliation

FLAFA is affiliated with the Tri-County Fastpitch League. Tri-County is a member of the Minnesota Metro Fastpitch League (MMFL), the North American Fastpitch Association (NAFA) and the America Softball Association (ASA).

Tri County League Website: www.tricountyleaguemn.com MMFL Website: <https://mmfl.sportngin.com/>

NAFA Website: <http://nafa.mmfl.net>
ASA Website: <http://www.minnesotasoftball.com/>

Bylaws

FLAFA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. The association's bylaws are available on the website.

Board of Directors

The current board of directors and contact information are available on the website.

Committees

A list of current volunteer committees and chair persons are available on the website. Members are encouraged to become involved and join one or more of these committees. If



you are interested in participating as a committee member, contact the FLAFA President or Secretary.

Meetings

Regular business meetings are held on the third Sunday of each month. The annual meeting and election of officers is held in October. Dates, times and locations will be posted on the website as they are subject to change.

Website

The FLAFA website provides much information throughout the year including: a calendar of events, current announcements, board meeting minutes, registration and tryout information forms, and coaching applications. Refer to the website www.FLAFA.org for up-to-date information regarding all FLAFA events and activities. Contact the website coordinator with information you would like posted. All materials posted must have prior board approval.

The Traveling Program

Parent & Player Responsibility

The traveling program requires a significant commitment by parents and players.

Parents are needed to support their teams by attending games, encouraging the players, showing good sportsmanship and helping at practice when requested by the coach. It is mandatory that parents participate in volunteer opportunities as specified by the Board. Parents are encouraged to come directly to coaches or liaisons at the appropriate time and place with questions or suggestions, but please allow the coaches to do the coaching.

The players are required to attend all games and practices unless the coaches excuse them. Unexcused absenteeism will be dealt with at the discretion of the coaches.

Fundraiser Participation



Fundraising is a crucial part of the FLAFA program. Participation helps raise much needed money for the program to help supplement player's fees for things such as equipment, field maintenance, umpires, tournament fees, coaching clinics and other costs needed to maintain our program.

In the spring families are required to pay a fundraising deposit in the form of a check written to FLAFA. Upon completion of the fundraising commitment this check will be destroyed. In the event that the fundraising commitment is not fulfilled the check will then be cashed to serve as the commitment.

Detailed fundraising information will be provided at the Parent Information Meeting in the spring and will also be made available on the website.

Volunteer Duties

The mandatory volunteer schedule requires parents and/or players volunteer for at least 10 hours *per family* at any of the following events: Forest Lake Tournaments (early June, late June, or mid-July), Youth Night (late April or early May), Committee Participation, Team Parent Representative, or other events that may arise during the seasons and are posted via DIBS. Please note: No one less than 16 years of age will be allowed to work in the concession stand, in accordance with the Washington County food permit requirements.

Families are required to pay a volunteer deposit in the form of a check for \$200 written to FLAFA. Upon completion of the volunteer commitment this check will be destroyed. In the event that the volunteer commitment is not fulfilled the check will then be cashed to serve as the commitment. Detailed volunteer information, along with specific dates and times available for volunteer opportunities, will be available at the Parent Information Meeting in the spring.

Additional Commitment Requirements

As always, players and parents are required to make sure that the fields and batting cages are raked after each practice and game. Occasionally parents may need to help with field prep prior to games. Parents are also encouraged to help out at practices – this is a great way to be involved and learn more about Fastpitch.

Age Levels

FLAFA attempts to field teams in the 18u, 16u, 14u, 12u, 10u, and 8u age brackets each year. Actual numbers of teams at each age bracket will be dependent upon the numbers of



players trying out in each age bracket. Multiple teams in each age bracket will be available when numbers of players permit.

The age cutoff is January 1st of the current year. **The player's age on or after January 1 of the current year** determines the age bracket she is eligible to participate in. For example: For summer teams - A player, who is 10 years old on or after January 1, will be eligible for 10U. A player, who is 11 years old on or after January 1, will be eligible for 12U.

A player may play up an age division, but may not play down. FLAFA will permit a player to play "up" to the next age division if the number of players participating is agreeable to allow the movement of players. **FLAFA will require a player who desires to play up, to tryout at their age level and the age level that they would like to play up to as well. Team placement will be based on the individuals tryout score from the age level they wish to play up to.**

Level of Play

FLAFA will attempt field teams at the Elite, A, B & or C competition levels as determined by the tryout process. The number of teams at each skill level and age bracket depends on the number of participating players. Teams will be referred to as Rangers, Maroon, Gold, White, Black or Grey.

Playing Time

Traveling Fastpitch is progressively competitive and equal playing time is not guaranteed for the players, particularly in tournament play. The coaches will continue to analyze the development of the players to determine positions and playing time. **Playing time issues must first be discussed with the coach and then the board liaison. A 24 hour "cool off" period must be observed before speaking to a coach about any issues.**

Number of Players on a Team

Nine players are needed to cover all playing positions and a minimum of eight players required to start a state tournament game. The board recognizes that FLAFA has an obligation to our players to keep roster sizes to a manageable level, therefore providing maximum playing time for all participants. Rosters will be set at eleven or twelve players, when possible. Expansion, or reduction, of these rosters must be approved by majority vote of the Board of Directors present at the team formation meeting.



Tryout Policy & Procedure

Tryouts

Tryouts for eligible players are held each fall for spring/summer teams. Players participate in a number of stations, testing their skill levels. Detailed information regarding tryouts and registration can be found on the website.

Requests for individual tryout score reviews must be submitted in writing to the President by a player's parent/guardian. Reviews will be conducted by at least two board members and the player's parent(s)/guardian only. The purpose of the review is for informational purposes only. Parents/guardians will receive information related to their own child's tryout score only. No tryout ranking, team selection information, or other players' scores will be discussed.

The FLAFA Board is often asked how parents and players can be assured that they will get placed fairly on a team through the tryout process. To help elevate any concerns, the FLAFA board has now elected to use evaluators that are independent of the Forest Lake softball community.

All forms and scores remain confidential and are held only by the President and Secretary. Names are not revealed to other Board members until the team selection process is complete.

Registration

Registration is online only, on the FLAFA website, for summer and fall seasons. Click on the Registration tab on the left side of the Home Page. Parents have the option to pay fees online via credit card or offline via check. See the website for detailed registration information and deadlines.

Injured Players

Players unable to participate in a tryout due to injury will either be placed on a team at the discretion of the Board of Directors, or requested to try out at a later date once the player has recuperated from the injury. **Players must notify the Board of Directors of the circumstances of the injury PRIOR to tryouts. Once a player's tryout is complete, she will not be allowed to re-tryout, if the injury was known but not reported prior to the tryout.**

Out of Area Players



Players from outside of the District 831 area are allowed to register and tryout for a team subject to FLAFA board approval. Players will participate in the tryouts and be evaluated. They will be placed on a team based upon their tryout scores. A Forest Lake player residing in, or attending school District 831, will not be denied a spot on a team because of an outside player wanting to play in the area.

Special Requests

Special requests by players to be on a team with a specific coach, specific player, or group of players, will not be allowed. The goal of the Board is to form competitive teams and meet developmental needs of the players and the program. Honoring special requests often hinders these objectives.

The following team placement requests are exceptions and will be considered by the board:

- A player may petition the Board to play **up** an age division, but may not play down to a lower age group. A player will be permitted to play “up” to the next age division if the number of players participating is agreeable to allow the movement of players. FLAFA will require a player who desires to play up, to tryout at their age level and the age level that they would like to play up to as well. The player will be placed on a team based upon their tryout score at the age level they are playing in.
- A player may petition the Board to move to a different level team, i.e. “A” team to “B” team, if they are a pitcher or a catcher and this role is not available on their

appointed team. The FLAFA board members will look at 3 issues in this case:

1. Will this move hurt the team that this player was initially placed on?
2. There must be room on the team that the player would like to move to.
3. Confirm that this move will facilitate the development of the player requesting the move.

Team Selection

Age, skills, and/or ability shall determine teams. Tryouts shall be held to help determine team selection.

After tryouts are completed, the board members will meet to place the players on teams based on their overall scores. Pitchers and catchers are asked to state their interest in these positions on the registration form. FLAFA will ensure that there is pitching and catching on



every 14U, 12U and 10U "A" team. At the "B" and "C" level, these positions may need to be developed by the coach throughout the season if there are not experienced pitchers or catchers.

The optimal number of players per team is 11 or 12.

The number of players on a team will be based on the age group, number of registered players, and upon coach's recommendation and board approval. If there are not enough players from the Forest Lake area residing in District 831, players from other areas may play on a team subject to FLAFA board approval. A Forest Lake player residing in, or attending school District 831, will not be denied a spot on a team because of an outside player wanting to play in the area. Players at all age levels must petition to play up.

If there are not enough players to fill a roster, we will make every effort to find another team to place the player(s). The Board also reserves the right to recruit players from outside of the area to fill a team roster. Cuts may be necessary once all options are exhausted. However, it is the goal of the Board to avoid cutting players at 14U, 12U & 10U as player development changes dramatically at these ages.

Team selections will be posted on the website.

Final team selection shall be made no later than the first scheduled league game.

Coaches

Application

Coach applications are available on the website. Anyone interested in coaching a team is encouraged to submit an application for review by the Coaching Selection Committee. Applications will be accepted at any time and applicants may be contacted when positions are open.

Selection

The Coach Selection Committee will review all applications, conduct interviews with qualified candidates and provide a recommendation to the Board of Directors. Final approval for all coaches will be determined by the Board of Directors.

Background Checks

Background checks as well as ACE training will be required of every head coach and assistant coach. These checks will be carried out in accordance with the American Softball



Association “ASA” requirements. The Board of Directors may remove a coach for cause in response to results discovered following a background check. Links for both the background check as well as ACE training can be found on the Tri-County website.

Any other adult who is on the bench or assisting on the field is also required to have a background check done through FLAAA.

Summer and Fall Ball Programs

Summer

The summer Fastpitch season is typically mid-April to mid-July for 8U, 10U, 12U & 14U. Practices typically begin mid-April. 10U and 12U league play begins the first week of May. 14U league play does not begin until late May. 14A Rangers, 16U & 18U league play typically does not start until the high school softball season is complete.

The 8U teams will have approximately one practice and one game per week. Games are usually held on Monday or Wednesday nights.

The 10U teams will have approximately 2 practices and 2 double headers per week (1 game per week until school is out). Games will be on Tuesday and Thursday nights.

The 12U teams will have approximately 2 practices and 2 double headers per week. Games will be on Monday and Wednesday nights.

The 14U and 16U teams will have approximately 2 practices and play 2 double headers per week. Games will be played on Tuesdays and Thursdays. All games begin at 6:00 pm. For all age levels, practices will be decided by the coach.

Tournaments

Each team has the opportunity to be in 5 summer tournaments of which FLAFA will pay the registration fee.

For 10U through 14U teams:

These include two tournaments selected by the coach, the Forest Lake Fast & Furious Tournament, a State Qualifying Tournament and a State Tournament. Any additional expenses (e.g. Gate Fees, travel expenses) are the responsibility of the team.

For 16U through 18U teams:



These include three tournaments selected by the coach, a State Qualifying Tournament and a State Tournament. Any additional expenses (e.g. Gate Fees, travel expenses) are the responsibility of the team.

Entry into additional tournaments will be decided by the coach and all related costs are the responsibility of the team.

The goal of all teams is to qualify and play in the Nationals Tournament at the end of the summer season. Teams should discuss and plan for this at the beginning of the season.

If a team should qualify for a National Tournament the costs involved may include: registration fee, gate entry, team gift, trading pins, banner, hotel, parade outfit and candy. **These costs are the responsibility of each individual team participating in a National Tournament.**

Fall Ball

FLAFA supports and encourages participation in fall ball by providing equipment and facilities.

The fall Fastpitch season is typically mid-August to late September. A player's age bracket for fall ball will be determined by their age on the **next January 1st**.

The fall ball season consists of three (3) Sunday play dates, one (1) state qualifier date, and one (1) state tournament. All age levels play doubleheaders on Sundays. The state tournament is a one day tournament held on Saturday or Sunday, depending on the age bracket. All play dates, state qualifier and the state tournament are paid by FLAFA. Gate fee's for these tournaments are the responsibility of the team.

Practices typically are twice a week and will be decided by the coach.

Additional costs related to fall tournaments, as determined by the coach, are the responsibility of the team.

Tryouts will be held for fall 10U-18U teams at the discretion of the Board of Directors.

Dome Ball

FLAFA does not officially sponsor off season dome ball teams. However, some teams may choose to participate in dome ball at their own expense.

Parent & Player Information Meeting

Each spring a parent and player meeting will be held to inform parents and players of important information pertaining to the upcoming season. Final payment of all required



fees will be collected during this meeting. If special arrangements are needed to fulfill the financial obligation, please contact the FLAFA treasurer prior to this meeting date.

Parents will need to print and complete the following forms to bring to the Parent Meeting:

- **Parent Code of Conduct**
- **Player Code of Conduct**
- **Medical Release Form** *** These forms can be found on the website under the Forms tab.*

Coaches will also need birth certificate copies (for new players only) and a copy of a current picture ID at this meeting.

Fundraising options as well as volunteer signups will be discussed in detail at this meeting. Fundraising and volunteer deposit checks will be due at this time, in addition to final fee payment. Upon completion of fundraising commitments and volunteer duties, these checks will be destroyed. The fundraising and volunteer requirements will be set each year, along with the amount of the required deposits, for each. Detailed information will be announced in late February / early March each year.

The date, time, and location for the Parent/Player meeting will be announced on the website and sent via email, in late February / early March each year.

Ranger/Elite Teams

The FLAFA Elite program was established with the purpose of allowing Forest Lake area athletes to play together at a high level of competition. Elite teams have the option to compete at the 10U and 12u levels, depending upon the numbers of players and the overall skill level. The number of Elite teams each season will be determined at the discretion of the FLAFA board.

10U and 12U teams at the Elite level will be referred to as “Rangers Elite”.

Elite Players

An Elite level player is an athlete who can play one or two positions at a level where she is comparable to the top players in the state at that position and at the level in which she is competing at.

Tryouts

Summer Teams



Each year, after Fall season is completed, the FLAFA board will determine the number of eligible 10U and 12U Ranger Elite teams that will compete the following summer. Tryouts will be held at that time to place athletes on the next summers' Elite teams. Tryouts will be announced on the website and are generally held after Fall Season.

Team Selection

Tryouts and team placement for the 10U and 12U Rangers Elite teams will follow the guidelines above, with the following exceptions:

Tryouts are held outdoors on one day only.

Up to twelve (12) athletes will be placed on the roster of each Ranger (Elite) team. The board will ensure that a minimum of two Elite level pitchers/catchers are placed on each team.

In addition, for Elite level teams only, the board has the discretion to allow coach selections to complete a team roster.

- Teams consisting of a maximum 11 players will be determined by the top six (6) scores in the age group. The coach is allowed four (5) player selections to complete the team roster.
- Teams consisting of a maximum of 12 players will be determined by the top six (6) scores in the age group. The coach is allowed four (6) player selections to complete the roster.

League Play & Tournaments

Elite teams will participate in the League with the highest level of competition available. League games will take place on weeknights. In addition, coaches may elect to set up weeknight play dates with other Elite teams who are non- members of Tri County.

Elite teams will play tournaments based on coaches discretion. The coach will determine the tournaments that best fit the competition level of the team and could include multiple out of town/state tournaments. These tournaments may involve additional travel time and costs as described below.

Additional Costs

Participation in a Ranger (Elite) team typically involves costs in addition to the FLAFA player fees. These costs may include equipment, team banner, travel and lodging expenses for out of town tournaments, and additional costs for Nationals tournaments. The team budget for these items should be determined and set before the onset of the season. Teams may sponsor their own fundraising activities to help cover these additional costs.



MN Alliance Program

For detailed information regarding the Alliance program, please visit our Website at www.FLAFA.org under the MN Alliance Tab.

Uniforms and Equipment

Summer uniforms will be provided by FLAFA and will consist of (1) jersey, (1) pair of pants, (1) pair of socks and a belt. Players will have the opportunity to try on uniforms for sizing. Any additional items, such as an extra jersey or pants, sliding shorts, compression shirts, and sliding sleeves are available for order. The costs of these items are in addition to the provided uniform and are the responsibility of the player.

The Board will select and choose a conforming uniform style for all teams. All players on a team must compete in matching uniforms. Any additional customizing or embellishments must be approved by the FLAFA board including adding individual player names to jerseys, adding numbers to pants, changing sock style/color, etc.

Fee Payment and Return Policy

Players may be required to pay a registration/try out fee upon registration. This fee must be paid before a player is permitted to try out. The amount of the fee may be determined and approved annually by the Board of Directors (the Board). Try out and registration fees will be published on all registration documents.

Once placed on a team, registration fees **will not be returned**. Registration fees will be returned if a player is injured before the start of the season and unable to play or is cut from a team. The Board will consider injured players on an individual basis and may request medical documentation of the injury. Other requests for the return of registration fees, for reasons other than playing for another fastpitch program, will be considered on an individual basis and will require approval by vote of the Board.

Concession Work

Families may choose to work in the concession area of either the Hockey Arena or Fenway Fields to earn money for their child's registration fee.

The parent "volunteer" rate is \$10.00/hour and is paid directly to FLAFA on your behalf. Since the fees are paid directly to the sport, you are considered a volunteer.

If you have any questions, please contact Chrissy Hauge via e-mail: chrissy.hauge@gmail.com. Parent volunteers must be age 18 or older.

Scholarships are available upon request, usually in exchange for volunteer hours, for families where the fees are a financial hardship. No player will be denied participation due to an inability to pay the player fees. A request for a waiver of all, or part of the fees, may be made by completing a Request for Fee Reduction form. This form can be found under Forms on the website @ www.Flafa.org. Such requests will be reviewed and approved by the Scholarship Coordinator.

Payment Options

Options for payment of player fees are available. All registrations will be made online via the website. Parents may pay fees online via bank account information or a credit card, or offline via check. Payments may be in full or in three installments. Installment payments made online will automatically be deducted on specified dates. Arrangements must be made with the Treasurer for installments by check.

FLAFA Expenses

The following operating expenses of the traveling fastpitch program are paid for through Player Fees and Fundraising.

- Advertising
- Apparel
- Appreciation
- Background Checks
- Banking & Audit Fees
- Coaching Services
- Coaches Clinics
- Donations
- Equipment
- Field Scheduling
- FLAAA Admin & Facilities Fees
- FLAFA Admin/PO Box
- Fundraising Expenses
- Field Maintenance and Rental Fees
- League Fees
- Tryout Expenses
- Tournament Fees
- Umpires
- Uniforms



The Annual FLAFA Budget, Monthly Income and Expense Reports, and the Annual Financial Report are available to members at regular business meetings and the annual meeting. Contact the Treasurer for more information.

FLAFA Events

Youth Night

FLAFA sponsors Youth Night each year at a Varsity softball game in late April or early May. Food and beverages are provided at no cost to FLAFA players and their families. This event supports the Forest Lake High School softball program and is a great opportunity for younger players to become involved with the excitement of Fastpitch softball. The sophomore team will play at 5:00 pm and the Varsity team plays at 7:00 pm, under the lights.

Volunteers are needed to help with this event. Monetary donations are gladly accepted to help offset costs. In addition, the committee seeks donations of food and beverages from the high school softball teams and area businesses. If you have items to donate, please contact the Youth Night committee chairperson.

Detailed information and the date of this event will be posted on the website.

Forest Lake Fast & Furious Tournament

The Forest Lake Tournament is held annually on the weekend directly following Memorial Day. The tournament brings teams from the metro area and surrounding states. 10U, 12U and 14U teams are required to participate. Games will be played at Fenway and Columbus fields. This is a big weekend for FLAFA and our athletes. We have a reputation of hosting a competitive, efficient and friendly tournament. It is an important fundraiser for the organization and requires the help of many volunteers.

Sponsorships

In addition to the individual fundraising options and Forest Lake tournaments, FLAFA seeks support from local businesses to help support the Fastpitch program. A number of sponsorship programs are available providing options from sponsorships for individuals, teams or the whole program. 100% of all donations benefit the program. FLAFA is aware that businesses, family and friends in our community are consistently besieged with requests for donations/sponsorships and greatly appreciate the willingness of any business to sponsor the Fastpitch program.



Detailed information regarding Sponsorships may be found on the website.

Code of Conduct

All players, parents, and coaches are required to review and sign the FLAFA Parent's Code of Conduct, Player's Code of Code and Coach's Code of Conduct. The Player and Parent Code of Conduct forms must be signed and returned before an athlete may participate in practice or games. The Coach's form must be returned to the Coaching Selection Committee. The FLAFA Board of Directors will uphold the Code of Conduct and expect all Players, Parents and Coaches to abide by the code. Any violation of the codes may be subject to disciplinary action.

Code of Conduct Violations – These are the minimum requirements set forth by the FLAAA Ethics Committee.

- All FLAAA sports shall have a code of conduct for the athletes, parents and coaches that they must sign and agree to as part of their registration.
- Failure to sign and submit a code of conduct does not preclude and athlete, parent, or coach from being subject to disciplinary action.
- Members breaking any rules in the code of conduct will be subject to disciplinary action.
- The first violation will result in up to a two week suspension from the FLAAA sanctioned sport or activity.
- The second violation will result in up to suspension for the remainder of the FLAAA sport season, from the FLAAA sanctioned sport or activity.
- Further discipline may be levied by FLAAA concerning other FLAAA sanctioned sports or activities.

The FLAFA Code of Conduct forms can be found on the website.

Grievance Procedure

The FLAFA Board realizes that from time-to-time an issue may arise within the organization that requires attention. A Grievance Policy has been designed to provide a process by which an individual can present an issue for review and resolution. Complaints will be based on the conduct of members, board members, or coaches of FLAFA during association related activities. Any grievance should be presented on an individual basis; group grievance will not be accepted. It is the intent of the FLAFA Board of Directors to keep these matters confidential, involving only those directly involved with the grievance.

What to do if you have a grievance

Step #1: 24 Hour Rule-Wait 24 hours before acting. This “time out” period must be observed to allow emotions to cool.



Step #2: Talk to the individual the grievance is with- Find an appropriate time away from the team to discuss the problem.

Step #3: Talk with the coach or team parent representative - Find an appropriate time away from the team to discuss the problem.

Step #4: Talk to the Board Liaison for the team- Discuss the situation with the board liaison for the team.

Step #5: File an Official Grievance-An official grievance form can be found on our website www.flafa.org. The FLAFA Grievance Committee will only review cases that are submitted on the official FLAFA Grievance Form.

Step #5: Grievance Committee Review-A grievance committee of the Executive Board will gather information and decide on a course of action to resolve the issue. ***Please note - The FLAFA Grievance Committee will not hear complaints about the FLAFA Bylaws or Rules and Policies (Parent & Player Handbook).***

Please remember the FLAFA Board of Directors is made up of volunteers and that the decision made on grievances will be what the FLAFA Board believes is in the best interest of all participants in the program.

All decisions of the FLAFA Board of Directors will be final

These rules and policies were reviewed and adopted by the Forest Lake Area Fastpitch Board of Directors on March 23, 2012.

Revisions made and approved by the Board of Directors:

April, 2013

October, 2013

November, 2014

November, 2015

February, 2017

February 2018