

COVID-19 Safety Guidelines to Play Baseball in the State of North Dakota

Dickinson Mustang Baseball Guidelines (Adopted 5/19/2020)

*A collaborative effort from organization leaders from North Dakota Baseball

DISCLAIMER: Participants, parents, family, and spectators engaging in baseball and activities related to baseball do so with knowledge of the risk and potential exposure involved and agree to accept any and all inherent risks to their personal health.

Objective: The coronavirus pandemic has affected over a thousand people in the state of North 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. The “ND Smart Baseball” guidelines below are intended to provide ND legislators and task force managers, information on how ND youth baseball organizations plan to implement safe practices and to ensure we have a summer baseball season. A lot of the information below was first proposed by Minnesota Baseball organization leaders to their governor’s office. North Dakota has personalized their message to what we feel is necessary for our Great State to begin safely playing ball.

The proposed guidelines would be with approval from the CDC and North Dakota Department of Health. These guidelines would be strictly followed to ensure safe and healthy social distancing. These guidelines are broken up by three phases that allow the gradual phasing-in of baseball.

North Dakota baseball plans on entering each phase with an abundance of caution and understanding that a spike in North Dakota COVID-19 cases may limit baseball activity. We will not enter any phase without the approval from the North Dakota Department of Health and/or local legislation.

Phase I

Steady or declining active North 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 North Dakota Department of Health are followed.

Phase II

Steady or declining active North Dakota Cases for at least 28 days. The cap on the total number of people at gatherings rises to 250, or 50% of the capacity of the facility, which would be enough for most youth organizations to host games. For programs that have a higher volume of spectators at their facilities, certain guidelines would take place and adhere to the social distancing guidelines.

The field of swings and concession stand will remain closed during phase II.

Phase III

Steady or declining active North Dakota cases for at least 42 days, There are no limits on group sizes. Sports go back to normal participation and operation.

Mustang Baseball will revisit the closure of the field of swings and the concession stand.

Games played in Phase II

Proposed Spectator options & Social Distancing:

For fields that have enclosed fencing:

- Try and limit to 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 portions of our Mustang Fields where the yellow tubing is placed on the tops of the fences. This means that games may be viewed along the foul lines starting at the 1st/3rd bases extending to the outfield and the outfield area while maintaining social distancing guidelines. Our bleachers behind the dugout areas will be off limits during phase II.
- Only players, up to three coaches per team, and the umpire(s) are allowed on the field of play.

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.

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.

7-8 year old league guidelines:

- There will be a marking on the fence, spaced 6 feet apart for guidelines where the kids should stand during the game, possibly in their batting order for that inning.
- Players will exit the field, after their at bat is finished and they didn't reach base or they scored a run by crossing home plate, through the opposite dugout and then go back to their dugout.

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 too: tipping of your cap or a round of applause to the opposing team).

Scorebooks will be kept in each teams dugout, they will not exchange scorecards between innings. Mustang baseball will provide one clipboard with a scorecard for your team to keep in your dugout. The score cards will be placed in the folders in the umpire shed with both teams listed and the final score. Please sanitize your clipboard after your game is finished.

The Scoreboard controller will be handled by the home team for each game. Please sanitize the controller by cleaning with a sanitizing wipe and placing back in the umpire shed.

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.

It is highly recommended that each player provides their own equipment and refrain from sharing equipment. Mustang baseball is encouraging each player to have their own batting helmet. We will check a helmet out if families are not able to purchase a batting helmet.

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.

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 North Dakota. All games and tournaments outside the state of North Dakota, must follow the travel recommendations from the North 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.

~ND Smart Baseball ~ 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 10 days after the onset of symptoms and 72 hours after becoming fever free with symptom improvement, 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 10 days after the onset of symptoms and 72 hours after becoming fever free with symptom improvement. 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!

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Authors:

- North Dakota Cal Ripken/Babe Ruth Local Organization Leaders
- A collaboration of Minnesota statewide community-based baseball and softball organizations
 - Submitted to Minnesota Governor's office as a proposed safety guideline for baseball/softball.
- Dickinson Mustang Baseball Board of Directors

Resources:

- www.cdc.gov
- www.health.nd.gov
- www.myas.org/baseball
- www.mbl.bz