

# 2021



## SAFETY PLAN / RETURN TO PLAY STRATEGIES

Updated: July 1, 2021

**DISCLAIMER:** *Players, coaches, spectators, and any other individuals participating in slo-pitch and slo-pitch related activities do so with the knowledge of the risk and potential exposure involved, and agree to accept any and all inherent risks to their personal health.*

**NOTE TO ALL PARTICIPANTS:** *Slo-Pitch Ontario does not dictate when local municipalities decide to open their fields and facilities for use by leagues, teams and players. **Based on the square footage on diamonds and fields and the Ministry's formula for calculating capacity, there are no issues playing a regular slo-pitch game on any field.** League Directors and Executives and Tournament Directors will need to work closely with their local government, Public Health Unit(s), and their Parks and Recreation departments to verify any restrictions or conditions they may have, and communicate this to all participating teams. Teams and players should be aware of, and respect, their local restrictions in relation to recreation participation.*

*The purpose of this document is to outline plans, guidelines and procedures in contemplation of a Return to Play, addressing **FIVE (5)** major areas of concern with respect to physical distancing and to provide a certain level of comfort to participants by outlining steps to be taken to help maximize their safety and well-being. These areas are: (1) **ENTRY**; (2) **OFF-FIELD**; (3) **ON-FIELD**; (4) **SPECTATORS**; (5) **UMPIRES**.*

**PLEASE NOTE:** *This document is comprised of suggested **RECOMMENDATIONS** that have been developed for use by all Members to help ensure the health and safety of our players, coaches, and spectators as we return to play. This document will be revised as necessary.*

*For more information, please contact Slo-Pitch Ontario Association.*

**SLO-PITCH ONTARIO ASSOCIATION**

**7-8 HISCOTT STREET | ST. CATHARINES | ON | L2R 1C6 | T: (905) 646-7773 | E: SPOA@SLOPITCH.ORG**

## 1. ENTRY

### *Entry Ways to Field/Diamond Area(s)*

- Considerations in this area will be dependent on the type/location of the complex or playing fields.
- Emphasis should be placed on providing safe travel areas to reduce contact between individuals entering and exiting the Park/Complex.
- Should reduce the use of indoor facilities, and plan for safe use of pathways/trails.
- The use of caution tape may be recommended to safely mark off areas that should not be accessed, as well as helping to provide marked areas for travel to and from diamonds, etc.

### *Team, Player and Spectator Sign-In (Screening)*

- Screening (Contact Tracing) is mandatory for all team personnel, administrators, umpires and spectators.
- Should be conducted following 6-foot physical distancing requirements, where/if possible.
- The use of electronic registration is strongly recommended.

### *Entry to Concessions, Washrooms, Food Areas*

- Entry ways should be properly addressed to ensure 6-foot rule can be followed, or temporary closure of concession/washroom facilities may be required.

### *Hand Sanitization*

- The establishment of hand sanitization stations may be applicable for some complexes/facilities.
- Frequent hand sanitization may be encouraged for players in league/tournament play.

## 2. OFF-FIELD

### *Concession and Food Areas/Washroom Facilities*

- Concession and Food Areas: Use of these areas, including dining room and seating areas, will be dependent upon operational guidelines of these areas/facilities outlined by facility management based on Ministry guidelines. At all times, proper physical distancing must be maintained.
- Washrooms: Will require consistent attention and sanitization. Leagues may opt to keep washroom facilities closed during play to reduce possible contamination.

### *Medic*

- Will have their own training, and may be able to provide suggestions on further safety considerations.

### *Playground Areas*

- Guidelines for these areas should be consistent with local guidelines/regulations.

### *Vendors*

- All vendors will be asked to follow outlined guidelines and regulations set out by the event organizer(s).

### *Hotels*

- Hotels will have their own procedures and guidelines in place to ensure the safety of their guests.
- Hotels may not allow previously accepted practices (such as sharing of rooms for x# of individuals).
- Alterations to the length or structure of events may be required if hotel accommodations remain unavailable.

### *Vehicles*

- Carpooling, in excess, should be avoided.

### *Headquarters/Registration*

- These locations should remain restricted to use by League/Tournament personnel only. Guidelines should be considered to keep players/coaches away from these locations as much as possible. Score reporting/complaints may need to be done electronically.

## 3. ON-FIELD

### *Hand Sanitization*

- May be encouraged to be done consistently throughout the game.

### *Coin Toss/Rules and Exchange of Line-up Cards*

- For coin toss/ ground rules procedure, one representative from each team should be allowed at home plate, with 6-foot distance maintained by all parties.

### *Bats*

- Recommend the reduction of bat sharing if possible.

### *Player's Equipment*

- No gloves to be on fence, player's bags to be distanced, no bringing out gloves, batting gloves.
- Players should be reminded to reduce the amount of shared equipment and attempt to keep each individual's equipment isolated to reduce coming into contact with the equipment of other players.

### *Protective Face Masks/Helmets*

- There should be no sharing of protective face masks or helmets at any time.

### *Face Masks/Gators/Bandanas*

- Face coverings for the purpose of reducing potential virus transmission are recommended but not mandatory as long as physical distancing can be maintained.

### *Balls*

- Sanitation of balls is not required.

### *Catcher and Batter*

- Will need to maintain 6-foot distance where and when possible. If 6-foot distancing is not possible, a face covering must be used.

### *Catcher and Umpire*

- Will need to maintain a 6-foot distance, when possible. May need different conditions dependant on the size of the field/backstop.

### *On-Deck Batter*

- Consideration should be made as to whether having an on-deck batter reduces the ability of the batter/umpire/catcher to remain 6-feet apart. If so, on-deck batter may need to be removed.

### *Tag Plays and Sliding*

- Incidental contact, such as tagging or sliding into a base, is considered part of the game and is permitted.

### *Final Game Sheet*

- If lineup cards are required to be submitted following the completion of the game, these cards should be submitted electronically by sending a picture of the card to the appropriate party.

### *Pre-Game/Post-Game Huddles*

- Huddles are not recommended and masking is required if 6-foot distancing is not maintained.

### *Post-Game Handshake*

- Will not be allowed or required following games at any level.

### *Capacity of Players on Bench/Dugout*

- Maintaining 6-foot distancing on bench/dugout areas is required.
- Players may be required to sit behind the bench/dugout to help maintain safe distances between them.

### *Exit from Playing Field During Game*

- During the game, players entering and exiting the playing field should do so in an orderly fashion that allows a 6-foot distance to be maintained between players as much as possible.
- Any player not required to be on the field should not enter the playing area (e.g. homerun celebrations).

### *First and Third Base Coaches*

- If Coaches are on the playing field, they should remain a minimum of 6-feet away from the base they are coaching in order to prevent contact with a defensive player. Also, Coaches should not engage an offensive player with high-fives, or other physical contact.
- Depending on the field, Coaches may be asked to coach from outside of the playing field if a safe distance is unable to be maintained.

### *Injured Player*

- If medical personnel are on hand, injured players should be dealt with primarily by these individuals, unless further assistance is requested.
- The number of individuals attending to an injured player should be limited to the number necessary based on the severity of the injury. Sufficient first-aid kits should be provided that include latex gloves and facemasks to help increase the safety of their interaction with the injured player.

### *Pitching Conferences/On-Field Conferences*

- 6-foot physical distancing will have to be maintained during conferences.

### *Scorekeepers*

- Scores should be reported electronically if possible to reduce congestion at Headquarter locations.

### *Call Challenges*

- Challenges may be made as long as the challenge is made by a recognized coach in a controlled and orderly fashion, and the coach/umpire are able to remain at a safe distance in which neither is put at risk.

### *Bat Testing*

- Bat testing prior to the start of games (when applicable) will be done using a visual check done by the umpire crew to ensure all bats have the appropriate Thumbprint and do not show any visible signs of damage.
- Bat testing done by leagues/tournament organizers may be postponed for the season to prevent unnecessary contact with equipment.

## **4. SPECTATORS (\*IF PERMITTED)**

***\*PLEASE NOTE: The allowance of spectators will be allowed based on capacity (maximum 200), however each Municipality host can set their own spectator numbers.***

### *Seating*

- Spectators should not be allowed to watch the game from inside the infield baselines. These areas should be kept available to allow playing teams to maintain 6-foot physical distancing for their players, and for players and teams who are arriving for their upcoming game.
- It will be required that any spectators (if allowed) will need to bring their own chairs or blankets and sit down the foul line or outside of the outfield fence.
- Seating areas, including bleachers and picnic areas, should be considered off-limits to prevent congregation of groups of spectators.
- Players who are not required to be present for a game should be considered spectators and will be required to follow spectator guidelines.

### *Restaurant/Bar/Concession/Playground Areas*

- Spectator use of these areas will be dependent on the operational guidelines of these areas/facilities outlined by facility management based on Ministry guidelines.

### *Crowds*

- Crowding will not be tolerated. Individuals will be asked to respect the 6-foot rule at all times when possible, and gatherings of individuals will be asked to separate when necessary.

## **5. UMPIRES**

### *Face Masks*

- All Umpires must carry a face mask with them at all times for use whenever may be required.

### *Catcher and Home Plate Umpire*

- To ensure a maintenance of safe distance, Umpires will be required to utilize an exaggerated inside/outside slot position as long as the Umpire has the ability to perform their duties as the home plate umpire from these positions.

- To ensure a maintenance of safe distance, Umpires will be required to utilize an exaggerated inside/outside slot position as long as the Umpire has the ability to perform their duties as the home plate umpire from these positions.
- In situations where appropriate distance cannot be accommodated (for example, due to field size), Umpires may be required to wear masks.

#### *Live Plate Plays*

- All Leagues and Tournaments should look at adopting a scoring line for the season.

#### *Base Umpires*

- Must be able to position themselves in a position at least 6-feet away from any offensive/defensive player.

#### *Umpire Conferences*

- Umpire conferences may be allowed to take place, as long as they are conducted in a safe manner such that the Umpires can be away from any players, and can maintain a 6-foot distance between one another unless all umpires are wearing face coverings.

#### *Call Challenges*

- As above, challenges can be made by a Coach in a safe and controlled manner. The Umpire will have the authority to eject said Coach if they feel their safe distance is being encroached upon and the Coach has not respected any request to remain at distance.

#### *Water Bottles*

- No sharing of water bottles between Umpires, and refillable water bottles are strongly recommended.

#### *Umpire Room*

- If used, the room should be set up to allow for a minimum of 6-foot physical distancing between each Umpire at all times.
- Umpires should remain in a closed change room for the minimum amount of time necessary.
- Umpires are recommended to wear facemasks when using these facilities.
- Umpire gear should not be left in the change rooms overnight.