

## **SAFETY AWARENESS GUIDE**

### **WARNING, DISCLOSURE AND DISCLAIMER**

Use of the techniques in this Softball Safety Awareness Guide should not be considered a guarantee that participants, spectators or others will be safe or free from injury or harm while participating in the sport of amateur softball. There are risks and dangers incidental to the game of softball, including specifically (but not limited to) the danger of being injured by thrown bats, thrown balls, batted balls or other objects softball poses a risk to its participants, spectators and other persons at or near USA Softball events or practices. Softball is a vigorous team sport at times involving severe cardiovascular stress and violent physical contact. Softball involves certain risk, including but not limited to death, heat-stroke, serious neck and spinal injuries resulting in complete or partial paralysis, brain damage and serious injury to virtually all bones, joints, muscles and internal organs, and equipment provided for the protection of the participants may be inadequate to prevent serious injury. It is further disclosed that softball involves a particularly high risk of ankle, knee, head, and neck injury. In addition, participation in USA Softball events may involve activities incidental thereto, including but not limited to, travel to and from the site activity, participation at sites that may be remote from available medical assistance, and possible reckless conduct of other participants. Participants engaging in softball and activities incidental to softball do so with knowledge of the danger involved and agree to accept any and all inherent risks of property damage, personal injury, or death. Parents, family, guests, participants and spectators assume all risk and danger of personal injury, losses, damages to person or property and all hazards arising from, incidental to or related in any way to the game of softball.

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# **SAFETY AWARENESS GUIDE**

## **PREAMBLE**

Use of the techniques in this Softball Safety Awareness Guide should not be considered a guarantee that participants, spectators or others will be safe or free from injury or harm while participating in the contact sport of amateur softball. Please read the entire document, including the Warning, Disclosure and Disclaimer at page 178.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Anyone who has played softball, or any other contact sport, knows that there are inherent risks. Many of these risks are listed in the Warning Disclosure and Disclaimer found in this Guide. While no contact sport can ever be free from risk, many times risks can be minimized. The participants in contact sports must take ownership of these issues and make it their personal responsibility to be aware of their surroundings and take steps to minimize these risks.

This guide, and our dedicated on-line library of documents contained in this guide, are formulated to assist you in educating yourself to minimize risks and prevent unnecessary injuries.

Over the years, USA Softball has educated its participants in the area of safety awareness. The USA Softball web site, [USASoftball.com](http://USASoftball.com), and USA Softball's insurance agent's web site, [RPSBollinger.com](http://RPSBollinger.com), have made these documents available. With this Safety Awareness Guide, USA Softball is launching an aggressive campaign designed to educate its members.

This guide is designed to help you minimize and/or prevent injuries and accidents. We hope you find the information useful.

Also, please keep in mind that it is always best to be insured in the event that something does happen. If your USA Softball team or league is not already insured, USA Softball has made both accident and liability insurance easy, affordable and available to you. The accident insurance will help pay the cost of medical bills, while the liability insurance will protect you if you are ever sued in your capacity as an USA Softball coach, player or volunteer. For information on how to insure yourself or your team, please contact your local USA Softball JO or Adult Commissioner.

## SAFETY AWARENESS GUIDE

### Topics addressed in this Guide include:

- Softball Safety Recommendations
  - Equipment
  - First Aid
  - Youth-Specific Considerations
  - Adult-Specific Considerations
  - Field Condition Issues
- Lightning Safety Guidelines
- Physical and Sexual Abuse Information and Prevention
- Recommended Travel Policy
- Medical Condition Issues
- Crisis Management Plan
- CDC Concussion Awareness
- USOC Safe Sport Initiative and Resources

*Never hesitate to contact us if you think we can help with an issue.*

- Your friends at USA Softball!

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2801 N.E. 50th Street  
Oklahoma City, OK 73111  
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## **SAFETY AWARENESS GUIDE**

### **USA SOFTBALL AND THE HISTORY OF ITS RULE MAKING RESPONSIBILITIES**

ASA was founded in 1933. In 2013, ASA Softball celebrated its 80th year as an organization promoting the sport of softball. In 2017, ASA/USA Softball was rebranded to USA Softball.

USA Softball's longstanding support and promotion of amateur softball was one of the primary reasons that the copyright to the Official Rules of Softball were assigned by the International Joint Rules Committee on Softball to ASA Softball on May 31, 1980. Those Official Playing Rules were adopted by ASA Softball's Council on October 10, 1980, and became effective January 1, 1981. The Official Rules have been revised almost every year since. Amendments to the Rules are proposed, voted upon and enacted at an annual legislative session of USA Softball's Council, a legislative body consisting of over two hundred USA Softball volunteers and staff from across the United States.

USA Softball's Official Rules include certain equipment standards and mandatory equipment requirements for USA Softball Championship Play. USA Softball's rule making authority and official playing rules govern only USA Softball's championship play. Participants playing in non-championship play are not governed by USA Softball's Official Playing Rules and, as explained below, are free to modify USA Softball's Official Playing Rules as appropriate.

The Official Playing Rules set forth mandatory equipment requirements, such as batting helmet requirements in USA Softball's youth program. This section explains the type of mandatory equipment and for which events the equipment is required to be used under USA Softball's official playing rules. This section also sets forth various 'recommended' types of protective equipment. Please note that USA Softball's official playing rules generally describe mandatory equipment and prohibited equipment. USA Softball's official rules do not contain references to 'recommended' protective equipment. Therefore, the below 'recommendations' are not the official playing rules of USA Softball or official USA Softball policy. Instead, these recommendations are merely provided in this Guide for the reader's consideration. The recommendations are also not exhaustive. Participants are encouraged to use all available protective equipment. Please note that USA Softball does have an official policy and rule that promotes and gives each player the right to the use of additional protective equipment beyond that which is required under its official playing rules. Rule 3, Section 5(F) of USA Softball's Official Playing Rules states that any defensive or offensive player has the right to wear any non-mandated additional protective equipment he/she desires.

USA Softball's official playing rules are designed to be used at USA Softball championship events and implemented by USA Softball officials and volunteers. USA Softball is

## SAFETY AWARENESS GUIDE

aware that its Official Playing Rules, or modifications of its Official Playing Rules, are used by leagues and organizations participating in non-championship play. Please be aware that because USA Softball's official playing rules (including its mandatory equipment) are designed for USA Softball championship play, the Official Playing Rules have built-in assumptions concerning the competition. For instance, there is a heightened risk of injury where games are played among players with a wide disparity in skill levels (i.e. 12 year old team

playing against an 18 year old team or Coed teams with highly skilled and lesser skilled players). To attempt to address the disparity among participants in USA Softball championship play, USA Softball has implemented a classification system that classifies teams or players according to their respective age or skill level. For instance, youth players are classified by USA Softball by age, such as 18-U (18 and under), 16-U (16 and under), 14-U (14 and under) and 12-U (12 and under) for USA Softball championship play. Adult players are classified for USA Softball championship play under Class A, Class B, Class C or some other designation. USA Softball maintains rules concerning eligibility and movement between classification levels. All USA Softball championship play is governed by this classification system. USA Softball's classification system for USA Softball championship play minimizes players participating against each other with a wide disparity in skill levels. In the event a participant elects to play in a higher classification level, or in the event a youth player elects to play with adult players, there may be a heightened risk of harm or injury due to a disparity in size, weight, skill level and/or other factors.

To the extent a local league uses USA Softball's official playing rules for non-championship play and does not maintain a classification system, that local league may want to implement more restrictive equipment standards and/or require certain additional protective equipment than is already contained in USA Softball's official playing rules.

One of the primary purposes of USA Softball is to promote the sport of softball. One of the purposes of USA Softball's official playing rules, including its equipment standards and classification system, is to promote softball, promote competitive balance and to preserve the integrity of the sport. USA Softball recognizes that every year, at varying levels, all different types of softball games are played, including youth, Coed, recreational, league, tournament and national championships. Please recognize that USA Softball's official playing rules are not designed to fit every situation. No set of rules can effectively address such a wide array of situations. USA Softball recognizes that the imposition of mandates requiring the use of cutting-edge, expensive or over-extensive equipment during play will not promote the game of amateur softball but instead hinder it. An exhaustive list of mandatory equipment in its rules to fit all players and all situations would be counterproductive to the sport. Such rules would also likely hinder the widespread participation in amateur softball. Therefore, although not mandatory, players

## SAFETY AWARENESS GUIDE

are encouraged to consider and wear additional protective equipment. No protective equipment can make the game entirely safe or free from injury, but additional equipment can lessen the risks of injury.

### USE OF USA SOFTBALL'S OFFICIAL RULES OUTSIDE THEIR INTENDED PURPOSE

USA Softball, as National Governing Body for Softball in the United States understands that local, recreational, city or county leagues may adopt and use USA Softball's official playing rules. The use of any or all of USA Softball's playing rules is strictly a local matter and the rules may be altered as league officials deem necessary to conduct their own non-championship league play. USA Softball's official playing rules, or any modification thereof, should not be considered a guarantee that participants, spectators or others will be safe or free from injury or harm. To the extent USA Softball's official playing rules are modified by local leagues; such modification may increase the potential or likelihood of injury, death or property loss, including the dangers associated with increased batted ball speeds. USA Softball expressly disclaims any and all liability associated with the use of its official playing rules or any modification of its official playing rules.

### BASIC SOFTBALL EQUIPMENT INFORMATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Proper fitting softball equipment is just as important to your team's success as learning proper softball fundamentals and skills. To see if your equipment is legal for USA Softball Championship Play look in the equipment section of the latest USA Softball Participant Manual/Rule Book or on the USA Softball website at [USASoftball.com](http://USASoftball.com) under "Approved Equipment." The following provides a general outline of USA Softball's official playing rules concerning mandatory equipment to be used in USA Softball championship play. As explained above, this section also contains some recommendations concerning equipment.

**Balls:** Softballs generally come in three sizes 11", 12", and 16" and are used in both Fast Pitch and Slow Pitch depending on the age group. To give you a better idea of just how big that is—a baseball is nine inches. Keep in mind that the word softball doesn't mean that the balls are "soft." In fact, they are similar to a baseball in overall hardness. So whether you are coaching a group of inexperienced kids or whether you are participating in a Coed adult game with players possessing a wide disparity of softball skills you should consider using a softer ball, safety ball or a lower COR/compression softball available from many of the ball manufacturers. All manufactures that are licensed to manufacture balls that meet USA Softball's certifications for championship play can be found by visiting the certified equipment section of [USA Softballsoftball.com](http://USA Softballsoftball.com). You can also find a list of balls that have been previously certified

## SAFETY AWARENESS GUIDE

that are no longer approved for USA Softball Championship play.

**Bats:** USA Softball publishes a list of approved bats along with a list of Non-approved bats with 2000 or 2004 certification marks and can found at USASoftball.com. The Non-approved bats with 2000 or 2004 Certification marks contain bats previously approved that have been found to no longer meet our equipment testing and certification standards. Therefore these bats are no longer approved for USA Softball Championship play. Bats used in USA Softball Championship play must appear on the approved Bat list, have a 2000, 2004, or 2013 ASA certification mark, and not be on the Non-approved list with 2000 or 2004 certification marks list.

We encourage all coaches, parents, players and league directors to check for USA Softball's certification logo and to check the non approved list often as it changes on a reoccurring basis. If skill disparity among the players or local conditions warrant, the USA Softball has provided bat descriptions allowing league directors and tournament directors to specify certain specifications.

**Note:** *Sections 1 and 3 of Rule 3 of USA Softball's official rules discusses USA Softball's certification of balls and bats for use in USA Softball Championship Play. The preamble to Rule 3 states: Rule 3 governs the equipment to be used in USA Softball Championship Play. Equipment bearing USA Softball's approved certification mark(s) should not be construed as a warranty or guarantee that the equipment is safe or will safeguard participants or spectators from injury. Instead, USA Softball's certification marks merely indicate that the equipment model has been tested and complies with USA Softball's rules for Championship Play. The primary purpose of Rule 3 and USA Softball's equipment standards is to promote competitive balance and to preserve the integrity of the sport of amateur softball. The use of USA Softball approved equipment in Championship Play or otherwise should not be considered a guarantee that participants, spectators or others will be safe or free from injury or harm. There are risks and dangers incidental to the game of softball, including specifically (but not limited to) the danger of being injured by thrown bats, thrown balls, batted balls or other objects.*

**Catcher's Mask:** Catcher's masks protect the catcher's face. Catcher's masks are mandated by USA Softball's Official Playing Rules in all games except for Adult Women's slow pitch, Adult Men's slow pitch and Adult Coed. The masks come in different weights depending upon the thickness of the material. One important part of the catcher's mask is the throat protector. It can be either a large piece of plastic connected to the mask by two strips of leather, or a metal extension at the bottom of the mask. The throat protector is as important to the catcher's safety as the mask itself, we recommend you make sure your catcher's mask includes one. Make sure your catcher's face mask fits properly. Adjustable straps on the back of the mask allow the mask to be adjusted for a proper

## SAFETY AWARENESS GUIDE

fit. Also, if your catcher is using the adjustable throat protector, make sure that it fits properly (it should completely cover the throat). It should dangle just enough to be flexible, but it should not be too loose or too low. Catcher's Masks are required for all fast pitch (i.e. youth and adult fast pitch) and for youth slow pitch. Throat protectors are required for all fast pitch (i.e. youth and adult fast pitch) and are recommended for all catchers.

**Catcher Masks and Throat Protectors for Adult Fast Pitch:** Catchers must wear masks with throat protectors. An extended wire protector may be worn in lieu of an attached throat protector. Helmets are optional by fast pitch catchers, and if worn any style is approved. In adult fast pitch, a plastic face mask/guard by itself is not an acceptable substitute for a catcher's mask.

**Catcher Masks and Throat Protectors for Junior Olympic Fast Pitch:** Catchers must wear a mask with throat protector, approved helmet with ear flaps. An extended wire protector may be worn in lieu of an attached throat protector. Any player warming up a Junior Olympic pitcher must wear a mask with throat protector and approved helmet with ear flaps. FP catchers cannot nearly wear the plastic face mask/guard. NOTE: (Section A-B-C) The ice hockey goalie style face mask is approved for use by catchers. If the throat protection built into the mask is inadequate, in the judgement of the umpire, a throat attachment must be added to the mask before using.

**Catcher Masks for Junior Olympic Slow Pitch:** Catchers must wear an approved batter's helmet with ear flaps, the catcher's helmet and mask, or an approved plastic face mask/guard with catcher's helmet. A throat protector for Junior Olympic Slow Pitch catchers is not mandatory but recommended.

**Catcher's Chest Protector:** The chest protector protects the catcher's chest. It has adjustable straps on the back. Chest protectors come in different sizes, so your catcher should have one that covers the chest without being too bulky to prevent quick movement. This is required only for fast pitch youth catchers, but is recommended for all catchers (adult and youth, fast pitch and slow pitch).

**Catcher's Shin Guards:** Shin guards protect the catcher's legs from foul balls and from runners sliding into home plate. They fit over the front portion of the catcher's legs with small extensions going over the top of the foot and knee. Shin guards have adjustable straps in the back to make them fit snugly. Make sure your catcher selects a set of shin guards that are the same length as his or her legs. They come in youth and adult sizes so be aware of this when buying shin guards for your catcher. Shin Guards are required for J.O./Youth Fast Pitch catchers but are recommended for all catchers.



## SAFETY AWARENESS GUIDE

**Fielder's Glove:** A glove has individual fingers and can be worn by all defensive players. Gloves come in adult and youth sizes, and in outfield and infield lengths. The outfielder's glove is longer than an infielder's glove, but either type may be worn by infielders and outfielders. Do not think that the more expensive the glove, the better it is. When choosing a glove, the player should be able to control it (not too big), and it should be comfortable.

**The USA Softball glove rule now allows any player to wear a mitt or glove at any position. We only regulate the glove's size and colors. The USA Softball glove rule is as follows:** A Glove/Mitt may be worn by any player. The dimensions of any glove/mitt used by any fielder shall not exceed the specifications set forth below (see drawing and specifications [in Rule 3, Section 4]). (Fast Pitch) The Pitcher's glove may be of one solid color or multicolored as long as the color(s) are not the color of the ball being used in the game.

**Helmets:** All batters in fast pitch softball must wear batting helmets. Not just while they are batting, but also while they are base runners. All Junior Olympic players acting as coaches in the coach's box must properly wear double ear flap helmets. **Please note:** *A NOCSAE-approved face guard is mandatory on all fast pitch youth batting helmets.*

Helmets also come in different sizes, usually Small, Medium and Large, so make sure you have enough helmets in the different sizes for everyone on your team. Helmets must be NOCSAE approved in order to be legal and safe. Don't buy helmets without the NOCSAE seal. Helmets must also be equipped with a securely fastened NOCSAE certified mask or guard. The mask must bear the NOCSAE seal on it also. If the mask and helmet are molded as one piece only one NOCSAE seal is required.

In addition, any defensive or offensive player may wear a helmet at any time. It is recommended that offensive players (not batting) wear a helmet even though it may not be mandatory under USA Softball's rules. For instance, base runners often have their backs to the fielders so their heads may be more vulnerable to thrown balls than defensive players. It is recommended that all coaches and other persons on the playing field wear helmets.

**Home Plate:** There is only one home plate on each softball field, with the exception of Senior Slow pitch which has two, and its shape is totally different from the other three bases. It gets its unusual shape because the two foul lines (first base and third base) come together at the point of home plate. Home plate is in fair territory, with the point facing away from the pitcher.

**Double First Base:** A base is normally 15" x 15" in size. A double first base is either two separate bases or one base 15" x 30" in size, half inside and half outside the foul line. The inside base is white and the outside base is of a contrasting color. A double first

## SAFETY AWARENESS GUIDE

base is mandatory in all levels of USA Softball championship play.

**Bases:** There are three bases on a softball field (first, second and third). When running the bases, there are various risks of injury. These risks include injuries from sliding, being hit by a thrown ball and/or collision with other players. Certain injuries from sliding may be heightened or mitigated by the type of bases used. There are a variety of different types of bases (i.e. hard or soft, moveable or permanent). When participating in softball, make yourself aware of the type of bases used during each game so that you can employ base running techniques the minimize risk of injury to your hands, wrists, arms, feet, ankles, legs or other areas.

### Summary of USA Softball-Mandated Protective Equipment For USA Softball Championship Play:

The below chart, dated as of October 1, 2008, details which USA Softball Championship Play games require which mandatory protective equipment. The last column indicates that, although not required in all situations, protective equipment is permitted to be worn by any player in any game at any time under Rule 3 of USA Softball's Official Playing Rules.

<b>EQUIPMENT:</b>	JO/Youth Slow Pitch Program (Male & Female)	JO/Youth Fast pitch Program (Male & Female)	Adult Women Slow Pitch	Adult Men Slow Pitch	Coed	Adult Women Fast Pitch	Adult Men Fast Pitch	Permitted to be worn if participant so desires
Double First Base	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Catcher's Mask	X	X				X	X	X
Catcher's Throat Protector		X				X	X	X
Catcher's Chest Protector		X						X
Catcher's Shin Guards		X						X
Batting Helmet	X	X				X	X	X
Chin Strap for Batting Helmet								X
Face Mask (usually for pitchers)								X
Other Protective Equipment								X

The above rules are shown as of the date this chart was prepared. Please consult the latest version of the rules for any updated requirements.

\*In addition, all offensive youth players acting as coaches or otherwise must wear a helmet when standing anywhere outside the dugouts. Examples include but are not limited to coaching, bat girl/boy, etc.

## **SAFETY AWARENESS GUIDE**

### **SOFTBALL AND YOUTH SAFETY AWARENESS**

Safety is and has always been a concern of USA Softball, and the organization has implemented many safety initiatives over the years. Safety issues are thoughtfully considered along with other factors such as competitive balance and preserving the integrity of the sport of softball. USA Softball was the first association to require all of its youth batters and base runners to wear helmets; to require catchers to wear a mask with a throat protector and an approved helmet with ear flaps; to allow the use of a double-base system at first base; and to recommend the use of safety balls and bats for players at the 10-under levels. USA Softball created a nationwide coaching education program to assist volunteer coaches in better educating, training and preparing young players to participate in the sport.

The USA Softball JO program is dedicated to building healthy, productive, confident children. Sometimes adults fail to realize just how difficult the skills of softball can be for youngsters. Therefore, we encourage coaches and parents to allow children to learn at their own rate, and to praise players as they progress in their development.

Everyone wants to be a winner. USA Softball's purpose is to create a team of winners - winners not only on the softball field, but in life.

Foremost, the USA Softball Junior Olympic Youth program is about children - it's about creating a positive environment where they can grow and develop, and learn a sport they can enjoy for a lifetime. Most importantly, it's about making sure they come away from their softball experience feeling confident about themselves and who they are.

### **SOFTBALL AND ADULT SAFETY**

As adults, we play softball for many of the same reasons that children do. We like to compete, have fun, and continue to share the excitement of playing a sport we love with friends. However, just as youth players play against others in their own age group to achieve a relatively fair and safe playing field, adults have to make certain considerations regarding fair and safe play. While it is common sense that an "A" player should not bat against a novice pitcher, some leagues form in ways that could produce just such a situation. Coed leagues often bring together a wide range of skill levels. And while it is nice to try to accommodate everyone, it is wise to keep players of widely different ability levels from playing against each other in the same game or league. There is a greater likelihood of injury in games where players having a wide disparity of skill levels are playing in the same game.

As a general rule, adults are going to hit the ball faster and harder and therefore there

## SAFETY AWARENESS GUIDE

is often a greater risk of injury. The game of softball is played with bats and balls. Although termed a 'softball', a softball is a hard object that can cause serious injury or even death. As such, at all levels of the game, especially adults, horseplay with bats and balls should never be tolerated.

Adults should also ensure that they do not participate in softball while under the influence of alcohol, drugs or medication, as doing so creates a greater risk of injury to the person under the influence and those around him/her. Playing under the influence of alcohol or any other substance that causes reaction times to slow down is very dangerous. Most people are keenly aware of the dangers of driving while intoxicated. Driving while intoxicated is dangerous, in part, because of slowed reaction times. For these same reasons, participating in softball while intoxicated is likewise dangerous and should never be undertaken.

## COACHES

While players have a responsibility for their own safety, a coach also must be aware of safety issues and use common sense and safety practices. This includes a concern for the mental as well as physical well-being of the participants.

Overlooking a safe environment can seriously affect how your players learn softball skills and fundamentals. How many of your players pull their heads on ground balls, catch fly balls off to one side, or jump out of the way as soon as the pitcher pitches the ball? These are the results of an unsafe learning experience, or to put it in coachspeak, "fear of the ball."

Keep in mind that what might be safe to you is not necessarily safe to your players. To a child who is just learning to play softball and who knows that he or she cannot throw or field a ball, the last thing they want to do is stand in front of or underneath a hard hit ball. They fear they cannot catch it, and they know that if they miss they are liable to get hurt. Although this may not be good thinking for a ballplayer, it is a perfectly logical train of thought. Would you want to do something that you know will cause you great pain? How do you "make it all safe?" Instead of using regular softballs, use a softer, safety ball. You will be pleasantly surprised at the tremendous amount of improvement you see in your players in a short period of time. Once your players realize that the ball will not hurt them, they will get down in front of the ground ball and correctly position themselves underneath the fly ball.

Using a safety ball is not "sissy," or just for little children. It is an important tool to your softball success if it helps your players improve and learn in a safe environment.

# SAFETY AWARENESS GUIDE

## FIRST AID

During a typical softball season, in spite of the very best injury prevention plan, some injuries will occur. Most of these will be during practice, and you or another competent adult must provide care as best you can. You want to know as much as you can about treating injuries to keep the damage from an injury to a minimum. Consider enrolling in a first aid class and taking a CPR course. You should have a first aid kit at your practices and games (suggested contents below), and know the telephone numbers of emergency personnel. Do you have medical release forms? As a coach, you should make every effort to expand your knowledge of first aid so that you can minimize the damage from injuries received in practices and games.

**AIDS and Injuries:** You should not let a fear of acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) from stopping you from helping a player. If you are aiding an injured player, you are at risk if you allow contaminated blood to come in contact with an open wound. That is why you should always have a pair of rubber gloves with you. The rubber gloves will protect you from AIDS should one of your players carry this disease. Check with your league director or a medical professional for more information on how to protect yourself from AIDS.

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### Suggested First Aid Kit Supplies

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Ice or Impact Ice Bags	Splint Material	Plastic Bags
Scissors	Band Aids	Sun Screen
Athletic Tape	Gauze	Antibiotic Tape
Q-Tips/Cotton Swabs	Antibiotic Ointment	Sting Kill
Safety Pins	Tweezers	Bug Spray
Cell Phone	4 Pairs of Rubber Gloves	Medical Release Form
	Towel	

**R.I.C.E. Principles:** You may have heard of the R.I.C.E. Principles for injuries. Below is an overview of the R.I.C.E. Principles for treating injuries:

**R-est:** Activity should be discontinued as soon as the pain or injury is noticed. Continued exercise may further aggravate the injury. The concept of “no pain, no gain” is replaced with “train, don’t strain; if stressed, get rest.” The rest should continue until symptoms of pain and injury subside.

**I-ce:** An ice pack should be applied immediately to a new injury. Ice decompresses swelling and blood flow and reduces pain. Where there is swelling, application should be continued intermittently for 72 hours. Ice should never be applied directly to the skin

## SAFETY AWARENESS GUIDE

and the maximum time for each pack application is 20 minutes. Using ice at bedtime is not necessary unless the pain interferes with sleeping.

**C-ompression:** Initially, a wet wrap can be applied to give compression. Start distal (i.e. farthest from a point of reference) to the injury and wrap toward the heart. Later, an elastic bandage can be used. It should be wrapped firmly, but not tightly enough to cut off circulation around the injured area. During the early stages when swelling is severe, the wrap should be loosened every half hour, then reapplied. Compression reduces swelling and blood pooling. Compression at bedtime is not necessary unless the pain interferes with sleeping.

**E-levation:** Elevate the injured part so that it is higher than the heart at all times initially (including during sleep) and whenever possible until swelling has subsided. In this way, gravity prevents pooling of blood and other fluids. See a physician immediately following any major injury.

**Heat Related Injuries:** When playing summer outdoor sports such as softball, precautions should be taken to avoid heat injuries. Heat exhaustion and heat stroke are two summer afflictions to be aware of. Be aware that athletes are sensitive to the heat. Every player will have a different tolerance level so one person may be fine and the others may require attention even in the same conditions.

**Heat Exhaustion:** Heat related injuries like heat exhaustion and heat stroke are very serious and can be life-threatening. Softball is played outside during the heat of the summer and heat related injuries are always possible. Be alert to this.

### **Signs and Symptoms of Heat Exhaustion:**

- Moist and clammy skin
- Pale skin color
- Normal body temperature
- Profuse sweating
- Dizziness, nausea, weakness and fainting

### **Do:**

- Get the athlete out of the heat into a cool, shady area
- Loosen or remove clothing and take off helmet and/or hat
- Lie the athlete down and elevate feet
- Cool down the athlete with wet towels, ice water, air-conditioning
- Transport athlete to emergency room if athlete does not recover after a short rest

## SAFETY AWARENESS GUIDE

### **Do Not:**

- Give athlete any more fluids if they vomit
- Allow athlete to become chilled
- Allow athlete back into the game or practice
- Take this problem lightly; call for help immediately if you are unsure

**Heat Stroke:** Heat stroke is life-threatening! The athlete's entire system is shutting down because of extreme heat, and death is possible if immediate action is not taken.

### **Signs and Symptoms of Heat Stroke:**

- Hot, dry skin and body temperature is very high (104-105F)
- Rapid pulse and breathing
- Behavior may be irrational
- Athlete may lose consciousness
- Eye pupils are constricted (very small)
- Weak, loose muscles

### **Do:**

- Cool athlete immediately and as fast as possible
- Call emergency help immediately
- Remove athlete from heat
- Put athlete in cold water, if possible

### **Do Not:**

- Give the athletes fluids
- Leave the athlete
- Allow athlete back in the game or practice

Do not underestimate the dangers associated with heat and/or humidity. These dangers are recognizable and preventable. Be aware that each of your athletes has different heat tolerance levels, and be sensitive to these differences.

**The Most Important Nutrient - Water:** Water loss for an athlete can be critical and, in severe cases, can lead to death. Maintaining an adequate level of water in the body can be easy if the athlete understands the importance of water.

The body cools itself much like the cooling system of an automobile. As muscles produce the energy needed for training and competition, they generate heat. This heat, in turn, causes body temperature to rise. Blood picks up heat from the muscles and carries it to the skin's surface where it is lost as sweat evaporates. Sweat is the body's main method of cooling itself.

## **SAFETY AWARENESS GUIDE**

As you sweat, you lose water - water which must be replaced if you want to perform at your best. Losing as little as two or three percent of your weight via sweat can cause a decrease in concentration, coordination, strength and stamina. More importantly, if lost water is not replaced, your body begins to conserve water by slowing the sweating and thus, the cooling process. You must replace lost water.

Do not give your athletes salt tablets. Water will be pulled from the body to dilute the salt. If the team physician or trainer feels that additional salt is needed, it should be added to foods at meals or eaten in salty foods such as ham, chips or other snack foods.

### **ALWAYS BE AWARE OF FIELD CONDITIONS**

All participants in softball should be aware of their surroundings at all times. This includes both on and off the playing field. Prior to participating, each individual should review the playing field and surrounding area to be sure he/she is aware of hazards or dangers so he/she can avoid them. For instance, each participant should follow these general principles:

- 1 Make yourself aware of any holes, depressions, raised sprinkler heads and other hazards.
- 2 Clear the infield of stones, pieces of glass, foreign objects and debris.
- 3 Check the field for equipment from other sports – football tackling sleds, portable soccer goals, little league baseball pegs, etc.
- 4 Position backstop to be sure it is the proper distance from home plate. Ensure that screening is secure with no sharp protruding edges.
- 5 Be sure all fences are in good repair and free of protruding hazards or sharp edges.
- 6 Be sure dugout areas are properly positioned and set back from the field of play.
- 7 Be aware of your property. If you park your car near a field, be aware of the risks of a foul ball or home run possibly doing damage to your car.

While events such as USA Softball National Championships are mostly played on well-manicured fields, recreational players often do not have such privileges. Therefore, you should always be aware that there will likely be various hazards present at local parks or playing fields. To prevent injury, make yourself aware of these hazards from the outset so you can avoid them. You should also make other participants aware of any hazards you observe.

Also, please be aware that non-hazardous field conditions may vary from field to field or from location to location. For instance, the types of bases used, warning track diameter, wall distance, wall material, heat, humidity storm activity, weather conditions, type of grass, sunken or level dugouts, on deck-circle location, obstructions and protrusions in or around the field of play (i.e. light poles, standpipes), fence height, etc. cetera. Be aware of your surroundings at all times by familiarizing yourself with your surroundings prior to play.



## **SAFETY AWARENESS GUIDE**

### **USA SOFTBALL GUIDELINES FOR LIGHTNING SAFETY**

All individuals participating in or observing an outdoor softball event are responsible for their own safety and should monitor threatening weather conditions. Umpires are responsible for monitoring weather conditions with respect to games and will make the call to stop play, remove individuals from the field, and announce a warning to the spectators.

The umpire should keep an eye on weather conditions, including observing weather conditions. Storm watches or warnings known to the umpire should be heeded.

When the weather becomes dangerous, the umpire will announce that all play activities are suspended and all individuals, including players and spectators, should seek appropriate shelter. In instances where there is more than one umpire, any umpire may suspend a game when weather becomes dangerous. No place is absolutely safe from lightning threat; however, some places are safer than others. Large, enclosed structures (substantially constructed buildings) tend to be safer than smaller structures or open structures. In general, a fully enclosed vehicle with the windows rolled up tends to be safer than being outside so long as contact with metal surfaces inside and outside the vehicle is avoided.

The following areas are not appropriate shelter and should be avoided: Any area of higher elevation; wide-open areas such as sports fields, tall isolated objects such as flag poles, light poles, or trees; metal fences and metal bleachers, unprotected open buildings like dugouts, picnic pavilions, rain shelters and bus stops.

When determining whether or not to suspend play, the umpire should use his/her common sense and good judgment. If a thunderstorm appears imminent before or during an activity or contest (regardless of whether lightning is seen or thunder heard), postpone or suspend the activity until the hazard has passed. Signs of imminent thunderstorm activity are darkening clouds, high winds and thunder or lightning. Even storms that are many miles away can pose a lightning danger. This may mean the appropriate decision is to suspend activities even before the first sight of lightning or sound of thunder.

All individuals should have the right to leave an athletic site or activity in order to seek a safer structure or location if they feel they are in danger from impending lightning activity. Lightning Safety is the number one consideration. The activity, the completion of the game or the outcome of the game are all secondary.

Unless an advanced lightning detection device is in use, if activity has been suspended due to lightning, the umpire should wait at least 30 minutes after the last lightning flash or

## SAFETY AWARENESS GUIDE

sound of thunder prior to resuming activity. Unless an advanced lightning detection device is in use, each time additional lightning is observed or thunder is heard, the minimum 30-minute waiting period should be reset. A clear sky or lack of rainfall are not adequate indicators for resuming play. Unless an advanced lightning detection device is in use, the minimum 30-minute return-to-play waiting period should not be shortened. Play should not be resumed even after the 30 minute waiting period if any signs of thunderstorm activity remain in the area or if the weather forecast indicates the threat is not over.

NO LIGHTNING SAFETY GUIDELINES CAN GUARANTEE ABSOLUTE SAFETY. THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE STATES THAT EACH YEAR MORE THAN 400 PEOPLE ARE STRUCK BY LIGHTNING AND, ON AVERAGE, SEVENTY PEOPLE ARE KILLED EACH YEAR BY LIGHTNING. IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF EVERY PERSON TO BE AWARE OF WEATHER CONDITIONS AND TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTION TO PREVENT OR MITIGATE THE RISKS OF WEATHER RELATED INJURIES. PLEASE USE COMMON SENSE AND GOOD JUDGMENT. PLAN AHEAD AND REMAIN AWARE OF YOUR SURROUNDINGS.

### **Lightning Safety At-A-Glance:**

- Lightning safety is the number one consideration; the activity can be made up later.
- The umpire(s) should monitor weather conditions and determine whether or not to suspend play.
- Signs of imminent thunderstorm activity are darkening clouds, high winds and thunder or lightning. Even storms that are many miles away can pose a lightning danger.
- When determining whether or not to suspend play, the umpire should use his/her common sense and good judgment.
- If a thunderstorm appears imminent before or during an activity or contest (regardless of whether lightning is seen or thunder heard), postpone or suspend the activity until the hazard has passed.
- No place is absolutely safe from lightning threat; however, some places are safer than others. Large, enclosed structures (substantially constructed buildings) tend to be safer than smaller structures or open structures.
- Unless an advanced lightning detection device is in use, if activity has been suspended due to lightning, the umpire should wait at least 30 minutes after the last lightning flash or sound of thunder prior to resuming activity. Unless an advanced lightning detection device is in use, each time additional lightning is observed or thunder is heard, the minimum 30-minute waiting period should be reset. A clear sky or lack of

## SAFETY AWARENESS GUIDE

rainfall are not adequate indicators for resuming play.

- Unless an advanced lightning detection device is in use, the minimum 30-minute return-to-play waiting period should not be shortened.

Depending on the particular area in which you are located, there may be other weather-related risks such as tornado, earthquake, hurricane, flooding or other conditions. For more information about severe weather threats and tips, see publications available from the NOAA National Weather Service website ([www.nws.noaa.gov/om](http://www.nws.noaa.gov/om)) or visit the National Severe Storm Laboratory website (<http://www.nssl.noaa.gov>).

## SEXUAL AND PHYSICAL ABUSE

The sexual and physical abuse of children remains a societal problem that requires attention. While not specific to the sport of amateur softball, the threat of abuse in sports programs does exist. USA Softball is committed to creating and upholding traditions of excellence in softball by building and maintaining a supportive and nurturing environment in which children and youth may grow, develop, and prosper. To ensure such an environment, USA Softball seeks to attract the most qualified and enthusiastic staff and volunteers to assist in USA Softball programs. Whether the children involved in USA Softball programs are our own, or the children of others, each of us has a responsibility to protect them. It is the policy of USA Softball that there shall be no abuse, either physical, mental, emotional or sexual, of any participant involved in any of USA Softball's programs. USA Softball will not tolerate any abuse.

There is no such thing as a so-called "consensual" sexual relationship with a minor." Neither applicable law nor USA Softball recognize such relationships as 'consensual' relationships. All such relations with a minor constitute sexual abuse under the law and, therefore, will be treated by USA Softball and law enforcement authorities as sexual abuse. If you are aware of a 'consensual' sexual relationship between a minor and an adult, you should report it immediately to your local Child Protective Services (CPS) office. USA Softball takes all allegations of abuse very seriously, and USA Softball refers all allegations to the local or state law enforcement authorities for investigation in which USA Softball will fully cooperate.

**Reporting:** Local law enforcement authorities and other state agencies, including those responsible for Child Protective Services (CPS), have the primary responsibility in the field of child protection. Child Protective Services (CPS) is a program mandated by individual states for the protection of children who are alleged to be abused or neglected. The function of this program is to screen and investigate allegations, perform assessments of the children's safety and risk of harm, and evaluate the conditions that support or

## SAFETY AWARENESS GUIDE

refute the allegations and need for intervention.

USA Softball is an amateur softball organization. USA Softball does not possess the expertise, power, authority or resources to investigate claims of abuse. Child Protective Services and local law enforcement are best suited and trained to investigate and pursue claims of abuse.

Those who believe they have identified an instance of child abuse or neglect shall report it to their local Child Protective Services (CPS) office, which will investigate the matter. A list of states with toll-free (800, 866, 877 or 888) phone numbers for reporting child abuse or neglect is available at [www.childwelfare.gov](http://www.childwelfare.gov). You may also report abuse and contact local authorities by calling the 24-hour Childhelp® USA National Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453). Urgent or life threatening situations shall be reported immediately by calling “911.”

Additionally, persons known or believed to be a threat to USA Softball participants or youth should be reported to USA Softball so USA Softball can determine whether such persons should continue to be eligible to participate in USA Softball on a going forward basis. Please refer to the USA Softball Code, available at [USASoftball.com](http://USASoftball.com), for the procedure by which such a complaint may be reported. Filing a complaint pursuant to the USA Softball Code is not a substitute for notifying local authorities of an instance of child abuse or neglect. Those persons who believe they have identified an instance of child abuse or neglect should immediately report it to their local Child Protective Service (CPS) office or to local law enforcement authorities.

**Resources:** At <http://www.nsopr.gov/>, the U.S. Department of Justice maintains the Dru Sjojin National Sex Offender Public Website in which the public can search various sex offender registries.

Please note that the regular use of background checks is not a guarantee of a child's safety or that children will be free from harm. For instance, a background check will not detect a first time offender or a person using a false identity. Background checks may also not detect persons who have prior convictions in jurisdictions that do not maintain searchable databases or whose records contain typographical or other errors. As a result, background checks can not replace the need for all persons to be diligent, to be attentive, to take all abuse allegations seriously and/or to refer all allegations of abuse to law enforcement authorities.

The best source of information on the registered sex offenders in your community is quite often your local law enforcement authorities.

Additional information and resources are available at [www.safesport.org](http://www.safesport.org).

## SAFETY AWARENESS GUIDE

**Zero Tolerance Policy Against Abuse:** We are committed to providing a safe environment for our members and participants, and to prevent abusive conduct in any form. Every member of this organization is responsible for protecting our participants and ensuring their safety and well-being while involved in sponsored activities.

To this end, we have established the following guidelines of behavior and procedures for our staff, volunteers and participants. All members of this organization, as well as parents, spectators and other invitees are expected to observe and adhere to these guidelines.

- 1 Abuse of any kind is not permitted within our organization.** This means we do not tolerate physical, sexual, emotional or verbal abuse or misconduct from our players, coaches, officials, volunteers, parents or spectators.
- 2 Physical and sexual abuse, including, but not limited to, striking, hitting, kicking, biting, indecent or wanton gesturing, lewd remarks, indecent exposure, unwanted physical contact, any form of sexual contact or inappropriate touching, are strictly prohibited within our organization.**
- 3 Emotional abuse or verbal abuse is also prohibited.** These include, but are not limited to such forms of abuse as: yelling, insulting, threatening, mocking, demeaning behavior, or making abusive statements in regard to a person's race, gender, religion, nationality/ethnicity, sex or age.
- 4 Every member of this organization is responsible for reporting any cases of questionable conduct or alleged mistreatment toward our members by any coach, official, volunteer, player, parent, sibling or spectator.**
- 5 Buddy System for Players:** We recommend that every activity sponsored by our program put a Buddy System in place. Each youth participant should be assigned a buddy during sponsored activities. No child should go anywhere – to the bathrooms, locker rooms, or other location – without his or her buddy.
- 6 Buddy System for Adults:** To further protect our youth participants, as well as our coaches, officials and volunteers, two adults should always be present at every activity. In particular, we recommend that.
  - No adult person should allow him/herself to be alone with a child.
  - Do not drive alone with a child participant in the car.
  - Do not take a child alone to the locker room, bathrooms or any other private room
  - Provide one-on-one training or individual coaching only with the assistance of another adult.

## SAFETY AWARENESS GUIDE

- If you must have a private conversation with a youth participant, do it within view of others, in the gym or on the field, not in a private office.
  - Coaches and other adult members of this organization should not socialize individually with participants outside of sponsored activities. This would include one-on-one social networking, emailing and texting. Coaches and other adult members of the organization should not nurture one-on-one relationships and/or participate in one-on-one texting, emailing or social networking relationships with individual participants. This would not include team-wide or group communications.
7. Supervision/Chaperone ratio: We recommend that for any sponsored activity, the ratio of adults to youth participants be 1:8 – one (or more) adults for every eight children, with a minimum of two adults for every activity.
  - 8 When traveling overnight with youth participants, children should be paired up with other children of same gender and similar age group, with chaperones in separate but nearby rooms.
  - 9 We encourage parents to become as active as possible in sponsored activities, games, practices and other events. The more the parents are involved, the less likely it is for abusive situations to develop.
  - 10 Empower our children to trust their feelings and let them know that their concerns, fears and hopes are important by listening to them. Open communication between children and parents, or between children and other adults in the organization may help early warning signs of abuse to surface.
  - 11 We will respond quickly to any and all allegations of abuse within this organization. This information will be communicated to the authorities for investigation and will be reviewed by the organization. The alleged offender will be notified of such allegations promptly.
  - 12 Any person accused of sexual or physical abuse may be asked to resign voluntarily or will be suspended on an interim basis until the matter is resolved. In each case, the person accused will have an opportunity to be heard before a final decision concerning eligibility to participate is made by the organization. Regardless of criminal or civil guilt in the alleged abuse, the continued presence of the person could be detrimental to the reputation of the organization and could be harmful to the participants. A person who is accused but later cleared of charges, may apply to be reinstated within the organization. Reinstatement is not a right, and no guarantee is made that he or she will be reinstated to his/her former position.

## SAFETY AWARENESS GUIDE

- 13** We promote good sportsmanship throughout the organization and encourage qualities of mutual respect, courtesy and tolerance in all participants, coaches, officials and volunteers. We advocate building a strong self-image among the youth participants. Children with a strong self-image may be less likely targets for abuse; similarly, they may be less likely to abuse or bully others around them.

Traveling teams present an opportunity for abuse or an opportunity for a credible accusation of abuse to be made. We recommend local associations, leagues and teams to adopt and follow Softball Team Travel and Conduct Policy. A sample Travel and Conduct Policy is included for your consideration. The Travel and Conduct Policy is designed to ensure the protection of adults and children and to clearly outline the conduct expected of participants. When formulating your organization's Travel and Conduct Policy, please consult the USOC Safe Sport handbook at [www.safesport.org](http://www.safesport.org) for additional information.

### Signs and Symptoms of Possible Child Abuse

#### Physical Abuse

- Unexplained bruises
- Unexplained cuts or scrapes
- Unexplained stomach injuries
- Fear of adults
- Withdrawn behavior
- Fear of parents
- Fear of going home

#### Physical Neglect

- Underfed or constant hunger
- Unattended medical needs
- Constantly tired
- Constantly unclean

#### Sexual Abuse

- Difficulty walking or sitting
- Poor peer relationships
- Stomachaches
- Sudden onset of behavior problems

#### Emotional/psychological Abuse

- Speech problems
- Antisocial behavior
- Habit of sucking, biting or rocking

## SAFETY AWARENESS GUIDE

- Loss of appetite
- Learning difficulties

### **Sex Offender Facts**

- Sex offenders come from all walks of life, and from all socio-economic groups. They can be male or female, rich or poor, employed or unemployed, religious or non-religious, highly educated or uneducated or from any race.
- Usually non-violent and have few problems with the law (pedophiles are frequently respected community members).
- The suspect is known to the victim in over 80% of sex crimes. In other words, the suspect is a parent, relative, caregiver, neighbor, co-worker, or significant other.
- May seek employment or volunteer with programs involving children of the age of their preference.
- Strangers can be “good guys” or “bad guys” (this includes females). Persons known to you or your children can be “good guys” or “bad guys” (again, this includes females).
- Sex offenders have great social skills. This is what enables them to gain the confidence and trust of not only the children but the parent.
- Sex crimes flourish in secrecy. Sex offenders have secretive lifestyles, and many of their sexual assaults are so well planned that they appear to occur without forethought. Many sex offenders are otherwise highly functioning people who use their social skills to commit their crimes.
- Many pedophiles seek out mothers or single parent families for the purpose of victimizing their children. They offer food, money and baby-sitting services – anything to be helpful and put them in a position to gain confidence and trust.
- Most sex offenders “groom” their victims prior to any sexual abuse. They play games with the children, take them to fun restaurants, to get ice cream, etc. They do whatever the child wants in order to gain confidence and trust.
- The single most effective means of protecting your child is communicating with your child. They have to feel comfortable discussing sensitive matters with you. If they don’t feel they can talk with you about their true feelings or that they will be “put down” for it, then you can’t expect they will tell you when they are put in an uncomfortable situation by a child molester.
- Teach your child that they should not be asked to touch anyone in the bathing suit areas of their body, or allow anyone to touch them in those areas. Teach them types of situations to avoid. It’s not good enough to tell a child to avoid strangers.
- Most child molestations are committed by someone known to or related to the child.



## SAFETY AWARENESS GUIDE

### SAMPLE SOFTBALL TEAM TRAVEL AND CONDUCT POLICY

This policy has been established to ensure that each player benefits from the overnight trips organized by USA Softball teams and leagues. No player should be permitted to complete his/her reservation until he/she and his/her parent or guardian have read together the following policies and have signed that the player will comply with the policies.

**Policies: (You may add to and/or modify this as you deem appropriate.)**

1. Players must respect hotel property. The player is responsible for any damage or misappropriation of hotel property. The player and/or the player's family are responsible for restitution should any damage or should any loss of property occur. The player and/or the player's family must reimburse the hotel before the group leaves the premises.
2. Players must be considerate and respectful of the rights of other hotel guests. Unnecessary and loud noises, such as slamming doors, running in the hallways, and loud music, are strictly forbidden.
3. Players are responsible for respecting the property of the transportation service. The player and/or the player's family are responsible for any damage or misappropriation of the property of the Transportation service. The player and/or the player's family are responsible for restitution should any damage or loss of property occurs.
4. Players will not enter any vehicle except the ones that are provided by the tour. Players will not engage in any activity with persons unfamiliar to the Trip Supervisor and Chaperones without their consent.
5. The players shall represent [INSERT NAME OF TEAM or LEAGUE] at all times and must never conduct themselves in a way that is detrimental to the reputation or identity of the club. It is understood and agreed that if a player willfully disregards the established rules of the team or of this policy, the Trip Supervisor and/or Chaperone will notify his/her parents and he/she may face serious consequences including suspension and expulsion. Law enforcement agencies will be notified of and involved in situations as deemed appropriate by the trip supervisor or as required by law.
6. The players are subject to the authority of the Trip Supervisor and Chaperones at all times. If a player has any concern about the behavior of fellow players, they should bring these concerns to the Trip Supervisor and/or Chaperone. The Trip Supervisor will determine the course of action to follow and shall be authorized to act "loco parentis," that is, to proceed in the place of the parent. The Trip Supervisor, Coaches and/or Chaperones shall not assume liability, either expressed or implied, for any

## SAFETY AWARENESS GUIDE

action taken in good faith and with regard for the well-being of an individual player or the players as a whole.

- 7 In the event of an illness or injury, absent specific written directives provided by the parent in advance, the advice of local medical professionals will be followed. Parents agree to assume any medical expenses not covered by their own family medical insurance policies and that of the USA Softball accident policy.
- 8 Any medication that must be administered during an overnight field trip, either over the counter or prescribed requires a physician's written order and a parent/guardian authorization. Required medication should be in a properly labeled container. The player may carry and self-administer the medication during the overnight field trip.
- 9 The team's zero-tolerance substance use policies will be adhered to regardless of the laws or customs of other countries.
- 10 The nightly curfew will be \_\_\_\_ P.M. Players are expected to be in their own rooms with the lights out at this time. Bed checks will be made. Players may not leave their hotel room for any reason once bed checks are made. The hotel staff has been advised to notify the Trip Supervisor if there is any infraction of this rule.
- 11 Players are not permitted to have members of the opposite sex in their room at any time, nor is it permissible for a player to share a room with an adult Chaperone or Coach unless it is their own parent or guardian.
- 12 Players are not permitted to change assigned hotel rooms.
- 13 Players must be on time for all scheduled activities and meals on the trip. Each player will fully participate in each day's program of activities. Players will not deviate from the schedule, program, or directions of the Coaches and Chaperones without their consent.
- 14 Players are limited to one piece of luggage and one carry on piece. Luggage must have identification clearly visible. Players are responsible for the contents of their luggage and are asked not to bring any personal property of value.

The signature of either parent to this policy statement shall constitute full permission for: the player, the player named below to participate in the trip. It is likewise understood that USA Softball disclaims all legal responsibility on any matter whatsoever.

## SAFETY AWARENESS GUIDE

We have read together the foregoing and agree to the conditions as outlined above.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent's Name—Please Print

\_\_\_\_\_  
Player's Name—Please Print

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent's Name—Please Sign and Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Player's Name—Please Sign and Date

*Revised 7/08*

### USA SOFTBALL BACKGROUND CHECK SCREENING POLICY

USA Softball, Inc. ("USA Softball") and/or USA Softball's state/metro associations reserve the right to screen any volunteer, contractor and/or employee who has access to children in USA Softball programs. The screening may consist of (1) a Staff and Volunteer Application Form, (2) an interview, (3) consent to reference and fingerprint for a background check report, and/or (4) approval by staff and/or committee members.

Please note that the 50 states of the United States adopt different laws and categorize the offenses differently. The USA Softball list of offenses below is not intended to be an exhaustive list of offenses but a list of commonly used terms to define the offenses. Other convictions, accusations, charges or facts should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

If a background check is performed and any of the following convictions are revealed, USA Softball, its National Background Check Committee, and/or its state/metro associations shall undertake a review of such individual's application to determine whether such person should be permitted to participate in USA Softball programs:

**\*\*Murder**  
**\*\*Rape**  
**\*\*Sexual assault**  
**\*\*False Imprisonment**  
**\*\*Armed Robbery**  
**\*\*Indecent solicitation of a child**  
**\*\*Aggravated sexual abuse/assault of a child**  
**\*\*Child abuse**  
**\*\*Child molestation**  
**\*\*Sexual conduct with a minor**  
**\*\*Sexual abuse of a child**  
**\*\*Online solicitation of a minor**

**Arson**  
**Assault**  
**Bad checks/Insufficient Funds**  
**Bookmaking**  
**Breach of computer security**  
**Breaking & Entering**  
**Burglary**  
**Coercion**  
**Conspiracy**  
**Credit Card Abuse**  
**Crimes against elderly**  
**Disorderly conduct**  
**Domestic violence in the presence of a minor**  
**Domestic violence/abuse**  
**Drug dealing**  
**Drug possession**  
**Drug trafficking**

**DUI/DWI (3 in last 7 years)**  
**Escape from penitentiary**  
**Evading arrest**  
**Firearms/Weapons charges**  
**Forgery**  
**Furnishing alcohol to a minor**  
**Identity theft**  
**Indecency with a child**  
**Money laundering**  
**Petty theft**  
**Prostitution**  
**Public intoxication (2 in last 5 years)**  
**Shoplifting**  
**Theft/Robbery/Larceny**  
**Violation of a protective order**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Abandon/Endanger a child**

## SAFETY AWARENESS GUIDE

If a background check is performed and reveals a conviction of any of aforementioned offenses, then the application shall be reviewed by a member of the National Background Check Committee (or such person's designee) for a determination of eligibility. A denial of eligibility may be appealed by the applicant to the entire National Background Check Committee.

In addition, if the background check reveals that the applicant is listed on a sex offender registry\*\*, then the applicant shall be ineligible for participation in USA Softball programs.

### **Appeal Process:**

USA Softball recognizes that no policy can encompass every situation, so USA Softball has formed its National Background Check Committee to evaluate applications and decide appeals variance requests on a case-by-case basis in certain situations where good cause exists.

An applicant may appeal a denial of eligibility to the entire National Background Check Committee, so long as the appeal is timely filed within fourteen (14) days of the date stated on the denial correspondence. The appeal process shall provide the applicant with an opportunity to present his/her side of the story. An appeal may advise the Committee of incorrect information appearing in a background check report, a mistaken identity with another individual, or extenuating circumstances as to why the person should be permitted to participate despite a conviction of one of the aforementioned offenses.

Any person whose application for participation in USA Softball's program has been denied may appeal the denial within fourteen (14) days to USA Softball's National Background Check Committee by filing his/her appeal with his/her USA Softball State/Metro Local Association Commissioner. All appeals shall be in writing and sent first to the Commissioner of the State/Metro association. The written appeal submission must contain a statement of the specific grounds why the prior determination should be reversed and must be accompanied by all evidence supporting the request for reversal. With the written appeal submission, the person filing the appeal may also file any other information or evidence in support of the appeal. The USA Softball State/Metro Local Association Commissioner will review the information and make a recommendation to the National Background Check Committee in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The National Background Check Committee shall review the appeal and decide whether the applicant's appeal should be granted or denied.

Subject to the Mandatory Ineligibility requirements below, in extenuating circumstances and for good cause shown, USA Softball's National Background Check Committee shall have the authority to, but not be required to, grant an appeal and permit an individual to participate in USA Softball's program even though that person has been convicted of one of the above non-mandatory offenses (or its equivalent).

### Mandatory Ineligibility for Certain Felony Offenses and Applicants listed on a Sex Offender Registry:

An applicant's listing on a sex offender registry and/or conviction of any felony conviction(s) Any of the following shall constitute an applicant's mandatory ineligibility from participation in USA Softball programs: (a) an applicant's current listing on any sex offender registry; and/or (b) any felony conviction(s) occurring within the prior 15 years for any offense(s) marked with an "\*\*\*\*". For all such applications, the National Background Check Committee may consider appeals based upon incorrectly reported information and/or mistaken identity but the Committee shall not have the authority to grant an appeal for extenuating circumstances or good

## SAFETY AWARENESS GUIDE

cause shown in instances where the applicant is currently listed on a sex offender registry or has been convicted within the last 15 years of a felony of the type marked with a "\*\*\*\*" above.

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### CARDIOPULMONARY RESCUSITATION (CPR)

CPR is a specialized skill to endeavor to revive victims of cardiac arrest (no breathing, no pulse). CPR training is regularly available by certified instructors trained by the American Red Cross, American Heart Association and other organizations. Traditionally, CPR includes clearing the air passage, mouth-to-mouth breathing and chest-compressions.

Recent studies and advisories suggest that untrained bystander-rescuers should be encouraged to provide compression-only CPR (a/k/a hands-only CPR) if they are unable or unwilling to provide mouth-to-mouth breathing, although the best method of CPR is still compressions coordinated with mouth-to-mouth breathing.

Being trained in CPR is an invaluable skill not only in connection with softball but also in connection with your workplace environment, your family, and your everyday life. USA Softball has no particular expertise in this area but everyone is encouraged to become familiar with these issues and/or certified in CPR. For more information:

- Please visit [www.americanheart.org/handsonlycpr](http://www.americanheart.org/handsonlycpr) to learn more about Hands-Only CPR.
- Please visit: [www.americanheart.org/cpr](http://www.americanheart.org/cpr) to learn more about conventional CPR or to find a CPR class near you.

<sup>1</sup> Source: Sayre, M.R., et al. "Hands-Only (Compression-Only) Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation: A Call to Action for Bystander Response to Adults Who Experience Out-of-Hospital Sudden Cardiac Arrest. A Science Advisory for the Public From the American Heart Association Emergency Cardiovascular, March 31, 2008 © 2008 American Heart Association, Inc. <http://circ.ahajournals.org/cgi/content/full/117/16/2162>

### A GUIDE TO CRISIS MANAGEMENT FOR USA SOFTBALL

The headlines seem to come with increasing frequency. Child severely injured sliding into home plate...lightning strikes player in the outfield...fight breaks out after game. As a youth-serving professional, would you and your staff know what to do if something terrible were to happen? How would you and your staff react to an unexpected life-threatening, chaotic and emotionally charged situation?

While it is impossible to anticipate every event, you can develop a framework for responding to crises that may increase the likelihood of a good outcome.

## SAFETY AWARENESS GUIDE

The purpose of this section is to provide you with the tools and critical thinking skills which you can use to help you make the best decisions when you are challenged by circumstances beyond your immediate control.

If you already have a crisis plan in place, use this guide to refine or reaffirm what you have developed. If you don't have a plan, we hope that you will use this outline as a starting point. In either instance, share your plan and crisis management information with your coaches. Educate them. Practice.

Just don't wait for a crisis to happen before you begin figuring out what to do.

**What is a crisis?** When asked to define "crisis," most people would respond by describing a cataclysmic event, like a tornado, hurricane, medical emergency or an emotionally trying situation. Because the experience of a crisis is highly individualized, what represents a crisis for one person may not be experienced as a crisis by someone else.

When a crisis has occurred, we are faced with incomprehensible uncertainty. We don't know what lies ahead. The aftermath might include serious injury, loss of life, damage to property and reputation, or litigation.

No two people will define "crisis" in the same way. It may help, however, to keep the following in mind:

- A crisis is an unstable or crucial time or state of affairs, an emotionally significant event, a radical change in the status of a person's life due to bodily injury or death, or a serious endangerment to property in which a decisive change for better or worse is impending.
- In crisis situations, it is obvious or highly likely that a third party (such as the police, medical personnel, or an insurance company) will be involved in some way.

**Before the Crisis:** Preparation is the key to effective crisis management. The best time to think about how to handle a potential situation is well before it happens. Setting aside "Think Time" now to outline a crisis management plan may increase the likelihood of a positive outcome and minimize "Response Time" after a crisis has occurred. We urge you to put together a kit that contains these guidelines and other materials you may need in a crisis.

Call your local emergency management agency (EMA) to identify potential natural and man-made disasters that may affect your area. Once you have identified potential exposures, arrange a meeting with your EMA for additional suggestions that will help make your crisis management responses more specific to the disasters that may occur in your area.

Remember, in addition to preserving life and health, your crisis management plan should

## SAFETY AWARENESS GUIDE

also protect your organizational structure and operations, personnel, and services you provide. Consider storing duplicate business records in a secured, offsite location. Review your plan at least once a year with your coaches and volunteers, so it is practiced and current.

**Responding to a Crisis:** As you develop your crisis management plan, design your communications strategy. You may need to communicate while the crisis is happening. For example, you have just become aware of an allegation of molestation in the locker room. Developing a code word or signal ahead of time and using it when a crisis occurs will let your coaches know it's time to implement the crisis management plan. Immediately following the event, the steps you take should be responsive in nature. Planned, practiced actions can help you avoid chaos and lower the risk of additional negative consequences.

During the first few minutes, concentrate on gathering accurate, concise information. This information will help you respond immediately and eliminate confusion later.

Realize that things are likely to happen rapidly and often simultaneously. Stay focused, but flexible when carrying out the first steps of your plan. You may need to change the order of the following actions.

### Action Steps

- 1 Find Out:** Find out and record exactly what happened; which individuals were involved; and their current location, present condition, and immediate needs. Note any actions that have been taken so far. Ascertain who was in charge or supervising when the incident occurred, and determine who is in charge now. Assess which resources you now have available, which outside resources may be called in, and how such assistance will be delivered. Document the facts as you learn them. Keep a notebook and pen or pencil in your crisis response kit.

### Essential facts checklist

- What happened?
- Who was involved?
- Where are they now?
- What is their present condition?
- What action has been taken so far?
- Who was supervising/coaching?
- Who is in charge?
- What internal resources are available?
- What outside resources are needed?
- How will assistance be delivered?

## SAFETY AWARENESS GUIDE

- When did the incident occur?

As you get the facts about what happened or is still happening, it's important to determine if the crisis is life threatening or not. If you are faced with an encroachment of a life-threatening situation, you may need to take immediate action before you contact emergency services.

- 2 Call Emergency Services:** Equipped with facts, call 911 or the appropriate emergency services. Telephone numbers to emergency services should be prominently maintained in your coaching manuals, and kept in cell phones so that they can be accessed quickly and easily. Always carry directions to the ball field where you are playing. In a crisis, it may be difficult to provide precise directions to emergency personnel. Consider adding a fully-charged cellular telephone, with telephone number clearly posted on it, to your crisis response kit. This way, if no telephone services are available, you may still be able to communicate.

Calls made at this time should be kept to an absolute minimum. Limit your calls to the following:

**Emergency Medical Services:** Describe the situation accurately and quickly. The facts you have gathered will help you to respond to the dispatcher's questions and increase the likelihood of a prompt and proper response. Remember to ask relevant questions. For example, if children or adults have been injured, find out what actions should be taken before the emergency medical personnel arrive.

We recommend having one or more coaches certified in CPR and First Aid on the premises at all times.

**Fire Department:** You may need to alert the fire department, even if there is no evidence of fire. There may be unknown hazards present—gas leaks, hazardous chemical spills, for example—that the fire department can identify and remedy.

**Police Department:** If a crime has occurred, notify the police immediately. The police can also be helpful in securing and controlling access to the area.

Special circumstances may require calls to other authorities or agencies. For instance, call the Poison Control Center if you suspect that a child or adult has ingested a harmful substance. If you suspect that a child is missing, immediately call the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. The Center can mobilize resources and coordinate a search with the FBI and local authorities. Keep in mind that the first minutes and hours after a child is suspected missing are often the most important in obtaining a successful recovery.



## SAFETY AWARENESS GUIDE

- 3 Stabilize the Situation:** With help on the way, your attention can be directed to stabilizing the situation. You can accomplish this by accounting for those involved, assessing their condition, removing everyone from further harm, and controlling the activity at the scene.

When you develop your plan, identify individuals who can act as “greeters.” Greeters help monitor the flow of traffic, keep unauthorized individuals out of the crisis area, and direct press inquiries to a designated spokesperson. The individuals you select for this role should be diplomatic but authoritative, articulate, and level-headed. Greeters also need to be well versed on your crisis management plan. Provide them with brief, bullet points of information about how the media can contact the designated spokesperson, as well as how, when, and where parents can retrieve their children.

As soon as possible, disperse these greeters to strategic areas (entrances, exits) with appropriate instructions. When something terrible happens, people who want to help, onlookers, media and less well-intentioned people often flock to the site.

Account for all individuals involved. In the confusion of the moment, it may be difficult to remember everyone’s name. A current roster and list of players and volunteers should be placed in your crisis response kit. Consider making a duplicate of your sign in sheet, and periodically placing the duplicate in your crisis response kit.

### Checklist for Stabilization

- Deal with hazards in the area.
- Disperse greeters.
- Account for individuals; gather in a central location.
- Attend to the needs of the injured.
- Look for additional injuries.
- Attend to the needs of the non-injured.
- Assign a coach or trusted parent volunteer to care for the uninjured children.
- Preserve everything involved in the incident.

Immediately attend to the needs of those people who are obviously injured, and search for others who may have been injured. Administer care following the instructions you receive from Emergency Services. After injured individuals have been cared for or placed in the care of a qualified person such as an EMT, turn your attention to the non-injured individuals who may have witnessed the event.

If possible, gather the non-injured individuals in a centralized location. This area should be free from hazards and access should be restricted. Use barriers if they

## SAFETY AWARENESS GUIDE

are available, and station a greeter at the entrance and exit to the area.

Assign an adequate number of staff members to care for the uninjured children. It is important to maintain a balance between the demands of the crisis and the need for continuity of everyday activities. Children should be closely observed. Some children may seem to be okay, even though they may be hurt or deeply affected by the incident. Sometimes the crisis will elicit memories of earlier trauma. Watch for these “silent sufferers,” and make sure that they receive appropriate care and attention.

In your crisis planning, consider using a, child care center, school, church or synagogue as a possible evacuation site. Make arrangements to use these facilities in advance, and store emergency supplies at these locations. If necessary, plan ahead for the safe transportation of the children in your care to these alternative emergency facilities.

Finally, preserve the integrity of the scene to the best of your ability. Some items can provide important forensic evidence for police, medical personnel, insurance companies and others. Restrict as much of the affected area and objects as circumstances allow.

- 4 Establish Crisis Headquarters:** Once the immediate pressure of the crisis has abated and the situation has been stabilized, organize crisis headquarters. Look for an area that is reasonably quiet and secluded. A calm atmosphere will allow for clear thinking and an opportunity to make phone calls without distraction. Scout possible locations in advance, and find at least one alternative that fits the bill.

Store emergency equipment and supplies in a pre-designated area or backpack so that they can be easily and rapidly moved into crisis headquarters. When headquarters is functional, take some time to think about a protocol for the phone calls you will make. A telephone protocol is a statement or script that you and designated staff can use to impart information about the crisis accurately and consistently. This procedure can help reduce speculation and contain the “emotional temperature.”

Set up a log for incoming and outgoing telephone calls. It's extremely important that you maintain a record of what has been communicated, with whom you spoke and when the conversation occurred. This log should be maintained until the crisis is completely resolved.

- 5 Contact Parents/Guardians of Children Involved:** Your first communication with the parents and guardians of children involved in the incident can be a very difficult task. At this point, take some time to think about what you want to communicate. Put yourself in a parent's place. How would you want someone to deliver this kind

## SAFETY AWARENESS GUIDE

of news? What would you want to know? How might you react?

For now, focus on informing the parents and guardians of the children who have been directly involved — injured, harmed or adversely affected — in the crisis. Carefully compose a script for these conversations that provides the facts of the situation, and reflects your concern for the well-being of parents, guardians, and children.

Offer to make arrangements for parents or guardians to travel to the hospital, your facility or emergency location. Coordinate their arrival and arrange for suitable accommodations once they have arrived.

- 6 Mobilize the Crisis Team:** Your professional and business advisors, as well as community leaders and agencies, may be able to offer you assistance in responding to the aftermath of a crisis. Activate these resources now.

In assessing the range of care and supervision needed, consider the crisis' impact on each of the following groups:

- Individuals directly involved in the incident;
- those closely affected by the incident; and
- your community — other children, parents, guardians, volunteers, and others with whom you regularly interact.

Once you have an understanding of the kind of care you need, begin to plan the level of intervention that the situation requires. There are three levels of intervention to consider: the team's crisis response team; local community resources; and outside resources. Identify the areas in which you will need assistance. Seek clergy and mental health providers who have experience in responding to crises.

Each member of your team should have a clearly defined role. During implementation, coordinate the flow of information between team members.

Realize that children, other coaches and volunteers may show secondary effects of involvement in or having witnessed an incident. Keep track of everyone involved in the event, even if they withdraw from your program. Unexpressed anger, for example, can lead to an accumulation of resentment. Follow up with those involved and find out how they are doing.

- 7 Call Emergency Resources:** Contact the appropriate emergency resources to help with cleanup, repair, and continued management of the crisis. Your crisis response kit should contain a list of these resources, contact names and their office and emer-

## SAFETY AWARENESS GUIDE

gency phone numbers. For your convenience, we have prepared a list of emergency resources and have supplied phone numbers for national resources such as the American Red Cross, the Center for Disease Control, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

### Suggested Emergency Resources:

National:	Community:	Facility Specific:
<b>American Red Cross</b> 1-800-REDCROSS	Animal Control Agency	Electrician
<b>Centers for Disease Control</b> 800-CDC-INFO Emergency Hotline 770-488-7100	Hospitals, local and regional	Equipment Rental Services
<b>Environmental Protection Agency</b> National Response Center 1-800-424-8802	Gas and Electric Company	Fire Equipment Service Company
<b>Child Protective Services/ Childhelp®</b> USA National Child Abuse Hotline at 800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453)	Health Departments, local and state	Food Service Vendors
<b>Poison Control Center Hotline</b> 800-222-1222	Telephone Company	Plumber
<b>FEMA/Department of Homeland Security</b> 1-800-621-FEMA (3362) DHS Citizen Line: 202-282-8000	Water Company	Transportation Services
	Family or Women's Shelter	Tree Care Specialist

- 8 Call Support Resources:** Establish relationships with advisors and community resources well in advance of a crisis so that they can be quickly mobilized if a crisis occurs. Identify people who have had specific experience in crisis response. When you solicit the assistance of these individuals, ask whether there will be a fee associated with their participation. Note this in your crisis response files, along with the day and after-hours telephone numbers for your contacts.

### Suggested support resources:

- Insurance agent/company
- Appropriate USA Softball Officials
- Business partners/Board of Directors
- Attorney/law firm
- Neighboring schools, child care centers, camps
- Clergy

## SAFETY AWARENESS GUIDE

- Mental health professionals
- Physicians
- Professional associations
- Public relations advisors

**9 Contact Other Parents/Guardians:** Contact the parents and guardians of those who were not directly involved in the incident, and tell them what has occurred. You can do this by telephone or letter, depending on the level of urgency required by the situation.

Begin your message by acknowledging that an incident has occurred. Assure parents that their child was not involved in the incident. Provide basic facts about the incident, but do not discuss details or identify individuals who were involved in the incident. Inform parents about the level of support that was or will be provided to their child.

Close by thanking the parents for their patience and understanding, and encourage them to contact you if they have any questions or concerns.

We suggest having your attorney review the notice prior to its release. Whether you communicate by phone or mail, keep a log of all telephone calls and correspondence received in response to your message. Maintain the log until the issue has been fully resolved.

**10 Manage the Media:** Crises which involve children seem to attract a large amount of media attention. If your program experiences a crisis, you should expect that the media will become involved. How you handle the media can have a significant impact on your personal, your team and your organization's reputation.

Fortunately, there are steps you can take that may alleviate "bad press." Consider notifying media contacts after a crisis has occurred — before they contact you. Review all of the information that you plan to provide the media with your attorney before releasing it. Consider asking your attorney to be present when you speak with media representatives.

Make arrangements to meet with the press in one place, at one time. During this meeting, try to place the incident in a historical perspective. Describe your program, your overall safety record and business practices. Ask the media for balanced, not sensational, reporting of the incident. Provide them with the basic facts of the incident, avoid speculation and assigning blame. Do not release the names or any other personal information about the people involved in the event. Also, keep in mind that when meeting with the media, nothing is "off the record."

### Post Incident Follow-Up

**11 Post Incident Actions:** In the weeks and months following the incident, carry out status checks with those persons involved, their families and others affected by the incident. Similarly, contact members of your crisis response team. Ask them to help evaluate your response. Focus on what you could do better, and update your crisis response plan accordingly. Periodically check your crisis response supplies and kit, so that they are complete and up-to-date.

### **Crisis Response Kit**

- Notebooks, pencils, pens
- A cell phone/charged/extra battery/with number posted on phone
- Emergency services telephone numbers
- Current roster with medications & special needs
- Child profile kits
- List of coaches and volunteers
- List of emergency contact numbers for children & coaches
- List of emergency resources and telephone numbers
- List of support resources and telephone numbers
- List of media contacts
- Copy of crisis response plan
- Flashlight
- National Oceanographic & Atmospheric Administration weather radio (battery-operated)
- Blankets
- First aid kit
- Batteries
- Bottled water—at least a 24-hour supply
- Snacks
- Permission to treat/health forms
- Disposable camera with flash
- Current phone book
- Change for pay phones
- Whistles

**12 Organize Files and Prepare Reports:** During the course of the crisis, you will have compiled a great deal of information. Shortly afterward, you should organize the data you have collected. Make copies of your incident notes, telephone logs, prepared statements, etc., so that you can use this material in compiling reports you write or file.

Reports should be prepared and preserved in consultation with your attorney and insurance agent. These reports should be factual in content and should contain a

## SAFETY AWARENESS GUIDE

description of everything that happened and how you and others responded. Do not release reports to anyone who is not specifically authorized by your attorney or others representing your interests. If you can, arrange face-to-face meetings with investigators or confirm their identity with a third party.

Be sure to file all claims and incident reports with the appropriate authorities in a timely manner. These include medical, property, liability and workers' compensation insurance claims, reports to child welfare authorities, OSHA and other state/local regulatory agencies. Cooperate fully with any ongoing investigations conducted by the authorities.

### File and reports checklist

- Incident notes
- Telephone logs
- Scripts and statements
- Correspondence
- Insurance claims
  - Accident Medical Insurance
  - Worker's Compensation
  - Liability
  - Property
- Reports
  - Child welfare agencies
  - OSHA
  - Health Department
  - State and local agencies
- Press clippings and videos of television coverage

## THE IMPORTANCE OF "PLAN B"

- You awaken in the morning and discover that a power outage during the night has reset your alarm clock, causing you to oversleep.
- You're driving to a meeting and find yourself hopelessly stuck in traffic.
- Your plane arrives in Denver as planned, but your baggage is sent to Atlanta. It's midnight and you have a 10 am meeting with an important client.

**What do you do?** When confronted with obstacles or "what ifs," we're often challenged to come up with "Plan Bs."

In dealing with crisis, "Plan Bs" take on additional importance. People may not be able to perform the tasks they've been assigned; services expected may not be available; the situation may have aspects that were unanticipated.

## **SAFETY AWARENESS GUIDE**

When you review your crisis response plan, take time to develop and document “Plan Bs.” Help your coaches and parent volunteers understand the multiple tasks or duties they may be asked to perform.

## **TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF**

Throughout this process you have been attending to the needs of everyone. Do not neglect your own care. There are sources of support for you “inside” and “outside” your facility. Spend time with your staff and children in your care. Reconnect with your core beliefs (why and how you started coaching).

Take time for physical exercise and relaxation. Give yourself permission to participate in and enjoy everyday routines, as well as special events. Treat yourself with kindness. Be aware of, appreciate, and generate humor. Maintain involvement in professional and community activities.

Remember, none of us is alone. Avoid isolation. Spend time with friends. Don’t hesitate to develop a relationship with a mental health professional who can help you work through this difficult experience.

## **ISSUES CONCERNING SOFTBALL PARTICIPATION WITH MEDICAL CONDITIONS, INCLUDING PREGNANCY**

Participants who have certain medical conditions, including pregnancy, may have heightened risks or may be susceptible to additional risks of injury from softball activities.

USA Softball has no particular medical expertise and therefore cannot advise participants as to the risks associated with their participation in softball with a particular medical condition or while pregnant.

Before deciding to proceed with participation in softball, (if the participant has not already done so), the participant should consult with a qualified medical professional concerning whether it is safe for him/her (and/or her unborn child) to continue participating in softball while pregnant or with said medical condition and, if so, the participant should consult with their doctor concerning how he/she should continue to participate and/or how long he/she should continue to participate.

Please be aware that there are risks and dangers associated with participation in softball while having a medical condition or while you are pregnant. Continued participation in softball during pregnancy poses risks to your health and well being and the health and



## SAFETY AWARENESS GUIDE

well being of your unborn child. This Guide contains a copy of the Warning, Disclosure and Disclaimer contained in our organization's governing documentation. As a result of your medical condition or pregnancy, there may be additional risks and dangers associated with your participation in softball activities and/or the existing risks and dangers may be heightened while your medical condition exists. For those who are pregnant, the existing, heightened and/or additional risks and dangers will apply not only to you but also to your unborn child.

Depending on the circumstances, you may be required to present a signed authorization from a qualified medical professional before being able to continue to participate.

To the extent you choose to take a temporary leave of absence from participation while you are pregnant or have a medical condition, upon your return, you will not be penalized in any manner by USA Softball as a result of your temporary leave of absence.

Please consider the above information and consult with your medical professionals concerning your continued participation in softball activities.

## CONCUSSIONS AWARENESS

### **CDC Concussions Awareness — The Facts:**

- A concussion is a brain injury.
- All concussions are serious.
- Most concussions occur without loss of consciousness.
- Concussions can occur in any sport or recreation activity.
- Recognition and proper response to concussions when they first occur can help prevent further injury or even death.

A bump, blow, or jolt to the head can cause a concussion, a type of traumatic brain injury (TBI). Concussions can also occur from a blow to the body that causes the head to move rapidly back and forth. Even a “ding,” “getting your bell rung,” or what seems to be a mild bump or blow to the head can be serious.

**Recognizing A Possible Concussion:** To help recognize a concussion, you should watch for and ask others to report the following two things among your athletes:

- A forceful bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body that results in rapid movement of the head.  
*and*
- Any change in the athlete's behavior, thinking, or physical functioning.

Athletes who experience one or more of the signs and symptoms listed below after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body should be kept out of play the day of the injury

## SAFETY AWARENESS GUIDE

and until a health care professional, experienced in evaluating for concussion, says they are symptom-free and it's OK to return to play.

### **Signs Observed By Coaching Staff**

- Appears dazed or stunned
- Is confused about assignment or position
- Forgets an instruction
- Is unsure of game, score, or opponent
- Moves clumsily
- Answers questions slowly
- Loses consciousness (even briefly)
- Shows mood, behavior, or personality changes
- Can't recall events prior to hit or fall
- Can't recall events after hit or fall

### **Symptoms Reported By Athlete**

- Headache or "pressure" in head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double or blurry vision
- Sensitivity to light
- Sensitivity to noise
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy
- Concentration or memory problems
- Confusion
- Just not "feeling right" or is "feeling down"

**Danger Signs:** In rare cases, a dangerous blood clot may form on the brain in a person with a concussion and crowd the brain against the skull. An athlete should receive immediate medical attention if after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body s/he exhibits any of the following danger signs:

- One pupil larger than the other
- Is drowsy or cannot be awakened
- A headache that not only does not diminish, but gets worse
- Weakness, numbness, or decreased coordination
- Repeated vomiting or nausea
- Slurred speech
- Convulsions or seizures
- Cannot recognize people or places
- Becomes increasingly confused, restless, or agitated
- Has unusual behavior
- Loses consciousness (even a brief loss of consciousness should be taken seriously)

## SAFETY AWARENESS GUIDE

**When A Concussion Is Suspected:** If you suspect that an athlete has a concussion, implement your four-step action plan:

- 1 Remove the athlete from play. Look for signs and symptoms of a concussion if your athlete has experienced a bump or blow to the head or body. When in doubt, sit them out.
- 2 Ensure that the athlete is evaluated by a health care professional experienced in evaluating for concussion. Do not try to judge the severity of the injury yourself. Health care professionals have a number of methods that they can use to assess the severity of concussions. As a coach, recording the following information can help health care professionals in assessing the athlete after the injury:
  - Cause of the injury and force of the hit or blow to the head or body
  - Any loss of consciousness (passed out/knocked out) and if so, for how long
  - Any memory loss immediately following the injury
  - Any seizures immediately following the injury
  - Number of previous concussions (if any)
- 3 Inform the athlete's parents or guardians about the possible concussion and give them CDC's fact sheet on concussion. This fact sheet can help parents monitor the athlete for sign or symptoms that appear or get worse once the athlete is at home or returns to school.
- 4 Keep the athlete out of play the day of the injury and until a health care professional, experienced in evaluating for concussion, says s/he is symptom-free and it's OK to return to play. A repeat concussion that occurs before the brain recovers from the first—usually within a short period of time (hours, days, or weeks)—can slow recovery or increase the likelihood of having long-term problems. In rare cases, repeat concussions can result in edema (brain swelling), permanent brain damage, and even death.

**Get more information and educational resources on concussion, at:**  
**[www.cdc.gov/Concussion](http://www.cdc.gov/Concussion)**

*Please also familiarize yourself with and comply with any State or Local laws that govern concussion awareness, concussion education and training, concussion protocols and/ or other legal requirements which may apply in your jurisdiction.*

*The above information was provided by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control. Also, please note that concussion awareness disclosures, protocols and requirements may be mandated by state or local law. Consult applicable laws for legal requirements. Also, take a free online training course on Concussion in Sports at [www.nfhslearn.com](http://www.nfhslearn.com).*

## SAFETY AWARENESS GUIDE

### UNITED STATES OLYMPIC COMMITTEE INITIATIVE AND RESOURCES

#### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS CONCERNING SAFESPORT AND THE USA SOFTBALL COMPLAINT AND DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES.

##### **What types of conduct might subject to a USA Softball Member to discipline and ineligibility?**

- Unsportsmanlike conduct.
- Physical violence, such as an attack on an umpire, tournament official or participant immediately preceding, during or immediately following a game or arising out of USA Softball Activities.
- Commission of fraud, such as playing under an assumed name, falsifying an affidavit or roster or giving false information to tournament officials.
- Participating when they do not meet the eligibility requirements of USA Softball.
- Knowingly competing with or against individuals or teams which are suspended from USA Softball play.
- Commission of any act while participating in USA Softball activities such as: failure to pay indebtedness, destruction of property, violation of state or local laws or any other acts that are contrary to the objectives and purposes of USA Softball or arising out of USA Softball Activities.
- Violation of USA Softball substance abuse policies and procedures.
- Forfeiting a game in championship play.
- Bullying, hazing, harassment, emotional misconduct, physical misconduct, and sexual misconduct (including child sexual abuse and sexual harassment) as defined by the USOC SafeSport program at [www.safesport.org](http://www.safesport.org).
- Interference with any USA Softball Hearing Process as cited in this Constitution.
- Other misconduct that reasonably calls into question the participants suitability to participate in the applicable activity.

(as of Nov 2017)

##### **What is the Center for SafeSport?**

The Center for SafeSport is an initiative started by the United States Olympic Committee whose mission is to make athlete well-being the centerpiece of sports participation. SafeSport requires that athletes participate in sports free from bullying, hazing, sexual misconduct or any form of physical or emotional abuse. The Center is headquartered in Denver, Colorado and administers complaints and imposes discipline on behalf of each National Governing Body of the United States Olympic Committee.

## SAFETY AWARENESS GUIDE

### **Who specifically is subject to the Jurisdiction of the Center for SafeSport?**

Only those members of USA Softball that are designated as “Covered Individuals” are subject to the jurisdiction of the Center for SafeSport. All other members remain subject to the disciplinary procedures of USA Softball.

USA Softball’s designated ‘Covered Individuals’ for SafeSport purposes, are, as follows:

1. National Office Staff
2. National Teams, including:
  - a. Staff
  - b. Coaches
  - c. Players
  - d. Athletic Trainers
  - e. Medical Personnel
  - f. Umpires appointed by the NGB to national championship events or international events
3. Local Association Softball Officials, including:
  - a. Board of Directors
  - b. Commissioners appointed by USA Softball
  - c. JO Commissioners appointed by the USA Softball Commissioners
  - d. Player Representatives appointed by USA Softball Commissioners
  - e. Umpires-In-Chief appointed by USA Softball Commissioners
  - f. National Championship Tournament Directors appointed by USA Softball or USA Softball Commissioners
4. A.C.E. Program Coaches of the USA Softball’s Local Association Members

Form and Manner of SafeSport Sexual Misconduct Disciplinary Complaints. For Disciplinary Complaints involving sexual misconduct against any ‘Covered Individual’, Complaints shall be made directly to SafeSport pursuant to the SafeSport rules and procedures at [www.safesport.org](http://www.safesport.org). To the extent a Disciplinary Complaint alleges any form of sexual misconduct, it will be administered by the Center for SafeSport of Denver, Colorado ([www.safesport.org](http://www.safesport.org)) and, in lieu of reporting to USA Softball, should be reported directly to the Center for SafeSport by calling (720) 524-5640 (M-F 8am-5pm MT) or online at [www.safesport.org](http://www.safesport.org). The Center For SafeSport administers its investigations, complaints and discipline pursuant to its own procedures and SafeSport Code, which can be found at [www.safesport.org](http://www.safesport.org).

Is Reporting Mandatory? Yes, Adult Covered Individuals are REQUIRED to report suspected sexual misconduct to the Center for SafeSport. A failure to timely report may subject the person to discipline by the Center for SafeSport.

What procedures govern Complaints and Discipline not administered by the Center for SafeSport ? All non-SafeSport disciplinary complaints will be administered by

the USA Softball Local Association Commissioner for the area in which the offending conduct occurred, in accordance with the procedures and rules outlined in Chapter 3 of the USA Softball Constitution at <https://www.teamusa.org/usa-softball/about/about-us>.



**Where do I report a concern of misconduct?**

Type of conduct	Enforcement authority	Who to report to*
<b>Sexual misconduct</b>	U.S. Center for SafeSport— Response & Resolution Office (exclusive authority)	U.S. Center for SafeSport— Response & Resolution Office
<b>Other misconduct— emotional and physical misconduct</b>	USA Softball	USA Softball Local Association Commissioner for the area in which the offending conduct occurred.
<b>Other misconduct— proactive policies (e.g., travel policies)</b>	USA Softball	USA Softball Local Association Commissioner for the area in which the offending conduct occurred.

*\*If conduct could also constitute child abuse and neglect, it should be reported to appropriate law enforcement authorities. If you believe you are the victim of crime, you also always have the option of reporting to law enforcement.*

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& the 2017 USA Softball Local Association Champions,  
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