



HGRA Baseball COVID-19 Preparedness Plan

This document represents the Highland Groveland Recreation Association (HGRA) Baseball Program COVID-19 Preparedness Plan for athletes, volunteers, staff, and parents/spectators (referred to collectively as “participants”). It is our intent to abide by all guidelines and recommendations from the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) regarding organized sports.

These Guidelines apply without regard to whether or not any particular individual has been vaccinated against the COVID-19 virus.

For purposes of this plan, the term “event” refers to any HGRA Baseball game, practice or other HGRA-sponsored activity.

Before Play

- Any participant should refrain from participating in or attending an HGRA Baseball event if they:
 - Are experiencing any of the established COVID-19 symptoms, including but not limited to: mild to severe respiratory illness with fever, cough and difficulty breathing.
 - Have been in contact with someone with COVID-19 in the last 10 days.
 - Are a vulnerable individual and Minnesota is in Phase One or Phase Two of reopening guidelines. A vulnerable individual is an elderly individual and/or an individual with serious underlying health conditions, including high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma and those whose immune system is compromised such as by chemotherapy for cancer and other conditions requiring such therapy.
- Prior to attending an HGRA event, participants are required to review a screening survey that checks for COVID-19 symptoms, close contacts with confirmed cases and quarantined cases, and out-of-state travel. A suitable survey will be posted on HGRA’s web site at www.hgra.org.
- All social distancing guidelines issued by the MDH and CDC are expected to be followed and will be communicated to all registrants and monitored.
- HGRA Baseball staff and volunteers will be asked to monitor and remind participants of distancing rules, especially during peak hours of activity and entry to/exit from an HGRA Baseball field.

- HGRA Baseball will limit traffic in areas typically used for play for participants through physical field markings (cones) and a staggered practice and/or game schedule
- Participants will be directed not to enter an HGRA Baseball field until (1) the time for their event; and (2) participants from a preceding event, other than staff, have departed from the field.
- HGRA Baseball staff and volunteers will adhere to a plan for cleaning and disinfecting any structures, facilities, equipment, etc. that participants may come in contact with.

Entering or Exiting the Fields

- Since access points to and from the fields used by HGRA Baseball are limited, it is impractical to establish designated entry and exit points.
- All participants will be reminded of the need for social distancing when entering and exiting the ball fields.
- An HGRA official or volunteer will be available (in-person and/or phone contact) to help maintain social distancing.

Spectators

- HGRA Baseball will comply with all attendance restrictions imposed by the Minnesota Department Health in regard to COVID-19 protections. If necessary, HGRA Baseball will impose and announce a limit on the number of persons per participant who may observe a game or practice.
- HGRA Baseball will remind participants through regular e-mail, Facebook and other appropriate means of the need to observe strict social distancing of at least 6 feet.
- Spectators must be positioned along the foul lines starting at 1st/3rd base extending to the outfield and in the outfield area at a distance unlikely to interfere with play. Spectators may not enter the area between first/third base and the backstop for any reason.
- Spectators may not sit in bleachers at any field used by HGRA Baseball.

Field of Play

- Social distancing must be strictly observed. Therefore, benches will not be used and athletes will be instructed to sit on the sidelines while observing social distancing.
- Coaches must observe social distancing at all times except when doing so prevents proper instruction of the athlete(s).

- All pre-game and post-game meetings must be held in a manner that observes social distancing.
- Social distancing must be observed throughout the game – no high fives, handshakes or intentional physical contact is permitted.
- Traditional sportsmanship lines after the game are prohibited. In the alternative, teams may cheer their opponent (e.g. 2, 4, 6, 8, who do we appreciate...) or use any other appropriate method for displaying sportsmanship.

Equipment

- Athletes are required to have their own mitts and batting helmets. HGRA Baseball will provide helmets to those who cannot purchase them. Athletes must mark their names on their helmets and keep them in their position at all times.
- Athletes are strongly urged to use their own bats. HGRA will seek donations of bats from prior participants and make them available to athletes who cannot purchase their own bat.
- Athletes may not borrow or share mitts or batting helmets. They are strongly discouraged from sharing bats. If a bat is shared, it must be disinfected after each shared use.
- Batting gloves are strongly encouraged at all times (not just for batting).
- Teams will supply two buckets of baseballs when they are in the field. Once a bucket is used up, the balls must be taken out of play until they are sanitized by a coach or team volunteer.
- All gear in a team's equipment bag must be sanitized after each game or practice.
- Each team will be given two sets of catching gear (masks and chest pads) so that the position can be safely played by two different athletes each game/practice. Additional participants may play catcher if they use their own catcher's gear. If a team does not have enough participants who feel comfortable playing catcher under these conditions, the game will go on without a catcher.

Special Rules for T-ball

- Due to the tendency of t-batters to chase a batted ball in a group regardless of position, coaches will make a special emphasis to coach athletes to maintain their defensive positioning and only field balls in and near their position.
- Coaches on the defensive team will be stationed in the field of play to encourage athletes to maintain proper defensive positioning and proper distance from other athletes.

Practices

- Coaches should try to schedule practice activities that comply with social distancing
- Coaches should encourage parents to participate in all drills and activities with their children to reduce interaction among athletes.
- Practices will be scheduled in a staggered format where no teams overlap each other. A 15min open window before and at the end of each practice will be allotted to allow for the first team to fully depart the practice field before the second team begins.

Face Masks/Face Coverings

Effective June 12, 2021:

- HGRA does not require spectators to wear masks or face coverings at any outdoor HGRA event. However, spectators still need to observe proper social distancing.
- Masks or face coverings are optional for athletes when they are actively competing on the field (or at bat) during games, and for umpires while officiating at games.
- Masks face coverings are optional for athletes during practices when they are actively engaged in scrimmages or drills where social distancing is not possible.
- Masks or face coverings are required for athletes at all other times, including those times when the athlete is on the bench or sideline, or otherwise not actively engaged in their game or practice.
- Masks or other face coverings are required for coaches and team volunteers at all times during games and practices.
- In accordance with MDH guidelines, athletes competing without masks or face coverings should be tested once a week for COVID. We strongly encourage the families of these athletes to secure such testing if you believe that doing so is appropriate.

HGRA will review this policy on an ongoing basis and will announce modifications of it if doing so is considered appropriate.

Certified by:

Dennis J. Merley
HGRA President
June 12, 2021

Paul Peterson
HGRA Baseball Commissioner