

# Minnesota Vortex/A's Girls Fastpitch Softball Club

## COVID-19 Return to Practice/Play Guidelines

May 13, 2020

In response to Governor Tim Walz's Emergency Executive Order 20-56, "Safely Reopening Minnesota's Economy and Ensuring Safe Non-Work Activities during the COVID-19 Peacetime Emergency", the Minnesota Vortex/A's Girls Fastpitch Softball Club has created its recommended best practices for return to practice/play. Please note that all guidelines from local and state officials supersede the Minnesota Vortex/A's recommendations and guidelines.

### Recommended Best Practices for Return to Practice:

1. Pre-practice email sent to players, parents, coaches and team managers one week before practice detailing practice guidelines:
  - a. Require all participants to practice social distancing including limited carpooling.
  - b. Explain that any participant experiencing symptoms of sickness should not attend practice and will be prohibited from attending.
  - c. Make clear that all posted and published local- and state-regulated guidelines shall be followed.
  - d. No Spectators; players only.
2. Upon arriving clean & disinfect hard surface areas (benches, bat racks, etc.). Team manager make final inspection.
3. Expand the dugout area to ensure proper distancing; players provided stations for bag/equipment 6 ft. apart.
4. Sanitation of equipment provided by teams (encourage parents to supply their players with antibacterial wipes and hand sanitizer for disinfecting shared playing equipment and cleaning hands).
5. Players should plan on bringing an individual water bottle; no team shared coolers.
6. Allow players to wear PPE items if they choose, as long as the items do not compromise the safety of any and all participants at the practice.
7. Group practice by Infield and outfield; keep small groups of kids separated by positions to ensure social distancing guidelines.
8. 5-7 infielders practice within the infield area.
9. 5-7 outfielders practice within the outfield area.
10. Hitting instruction provided in separate field area to selected infield/outfield players ensuring social distancing guidelines.
11. Multiple training stations can be set up with smaller groups of players allowing focus on fundamentals while maintaining social distancing.
12. After practice, clean dugout of all trash and other items and wipe down (clean) hard surfaces such as benches, bat racks, etc.
13. Ban the use of sunflower seeds and any other actions that may create respiratory droplets while around others.

### Recommended Best Practices for the Field-of-Play:

1. Follow all local and state guidelines for facilities and events.
2. The managers meeting at home plate should be limited to one coach from each team plus the umpires. No players at plate meeting. Eliminate the meeting if possible.
3. Where possible, consider options for limiting both the pitching and the scorecard exchanges, in order to reduce person-to-person contact.
4. Allow teams to spread players out; expand the dugout area when room permits and only if player safety will not be compromised. Expansion of the team dugouts should not be done into foul ball areas. Attempt to limit bench personnel to essential team personnel.
5. Encourage parents to supply their players with antibacterial wipes and hand sanitizer for disinfecting shared playing equipment and cleaning hands between innings/quarters/periods.
6. Allow players to wear PPE items if they choose, as long as the items do not compromise the safety of any and all participants in the game.

7. Require teams to clean their dugout of all trash and other items after each game, and to wipe down (clean) hard surfaces such as benches, bat racks, etc. Team manager or coach to make final inspection.
8. Upon arriving at a dugout for the first time, teams are to disinfect hard surface areas (benches, bat racks, etc.). *Procedures #7 and #8 here will comply with the CDC recommendation of a two-step process for cleaning and disinfecting.*
9. Directors should consider adjusting the playing formats and increasing the amount of time between games, to minimize overlap and traffic flow where needed.
10. Ban the use of sunflower seeds and any other actions that may create respiratory droplets while around others.

### **Minnesota Vortex/A's Recommended Best Practices for Returning to Team Activities**

1. Follow all local and state guidelines as well as facility and event guidelines for all team activities.
2. Encourage all attendees to practice social distancing.
3. No team/player handshakes, no team/player high fives, and no group gatherings between teams on the field. Try to keep social distancing between teams. Ask team members to tip their caps to the other team – from across the field – after a game.
4. The managers meeting at home plate should include just one coach from each team plus the umpires. No players at the plate meeting.
5. Allow teams to spread players out; expand the dugout area when room permits and only if player safety is not compromised. Expansion of the team dugouts should not be done into foul ball areas on the playing field.
6. Encourage parents to supply their players with antibacterial wipes and hand sanitizer for disinfecting shared playing equipment and cleaning hands between innings.
7. Limit person-to-person contact as much as possible.
8. Allow players to wear PPE items if they choose, as long as the items do not compromise the safety of the game.
9. Teams should clean their dugout of all trash and other items after each game. Teams are encouraged to disinfect hard surface areas (benches, bat racks, etc.) upon first arriving at a dugout. Team manager or coach to make final inspection.
10. In dugouts, discontinue use of water coolers that are provided by tournaments, parks or teams. Players should bring their own, personal cooler instead of using a team cooler. No sharing of water bottles. Each player must have their own water container, or teams should provide disposable cups for their players and coaching staff.

### **Minnesota Vortex/A's Recommended Tournament Best Practices within Facilities**

1. Follow all local and state guidelines, including those for the exchanging of money at the gate, concessions, vendors, and potential cashless payment processes, where feasible. Ensure all staff are equipped according to protocols.
2. When gathering restrictions are in place reduce event staff to maximize event participants.
3. Direct all teams to clean dugout/bench area when departing after their respective games.
4. When entering a dugout/bench area, the arriving team is required to sanitize this area.
5. Ensure there are sufficient communications and signage within the facility regarding safe practices for all attendees. Post laminated signage throughout the facility reminding people to practice social distancing. Display signage about safe and healthy practices at entrance and in applicable locations throughout the facility.
6. Maximize social distancing at larger facilities; have multiple one-way traffic entry and exit points where possible and feasible.
7. Follow city, county and state requirements for crowd gatherings and concession stands.
8. Regularly clean restrooms, following local requirements.
9. Stagger the start times of games to enable separation of teams and prevent their interaction as they arrive at or leave the facility. One-way directional signage will help further reduce interactions.
10. Spectator fees: Evaluate and follow local state guidelines for cash exchange systems or other ticket systems. Spectators must enter and exit at separate locations where possible. Events are advised to follow the local and state government guidelines for event/facility capacity.
11. Minimize the number of coaches and bench personnel in dugout/team bench areas.
12. Award ceremonies shall be contact-less, with a team representative designated to receive and distribute awards to players. Submit pictures and the names of award recipients to event designee via e-mail or text message.