

Return to Baseball FAQs

As of July 2, 2020

Questions we're working on:

- What's next for locals where the affiliate has cancelled (Rep Council Meeting June 28th to review)
- What's next for teams where the local has cancelled (Rep Council Meeting June 28th to review)

Direct Entry will be available to teams/locals in this situation. We are working on information and the application form for Direct Entry.

Q – If I create a split-squad practice to ensure the limit of 10 per event is respected, does the group of 10 need to remain the same for each and every practice?

A - Staying in intact groups is best practice but not required, and they must stay in intact group on same calendar day.

Q - With the provincial gathering limit currently at 10 can you run a group of 10 or less on the infield and another group of 10 or less in the outfield?

A – As of June 26, Baseball Ontario has updated its protocols to allow 2 different groups, of not more than 10 each, can participate in separate practices on the same field. Everyone must stay in their own group and there can be no players, coaches or other persons participating in both events. Any equipment used by one event or group must be cleaned/sanitized prior to use by the other event or group, including if both events are being run by the same team (i.e. a split squad practice). All activities for both events must adhere to the distancing measures required by the provincial government, the relevant municipality and public health authorities and the Baseball Ontario Protocol.

Please note the following rules when implementing these changes:

- Diamonds must be age group appropriate. For example, one full size (regulation) diamond can be used to accommodate two 10-person events of any age category. "Regulation" meaning at least 300' down left/right field, and 350' at centre field. However, at a 13U-sized diamond, participants in older age categories (14U+) would be limited to one 10-person event. Participants in 13U and younger age categories could have two 10-person events at a 13U-sized diamond.
- If a team is running a split squad practice, having divided into 2 groups at separate areas of the diamond (i.e. the 2 events at the diamond are from one team), coaches cannot go back and forth between the two groups.
- If a team is running a split squad practice, having divided into 2 groups at separate areas of the diamond (i.e. the 2 events at the diamond are from one team), players cannot go back and forth between the two groups.

Full team practices are still not permitted, as long as the provincial restrictions on gatherings remains at 10!

It is important to ensure NO gatherings of large groups while activity is taking place. Please respect social/physical distancing measures as set in place by governmental public health authorities.

All activities delivered must adhere to the distancing measures and recommendations, along with any gathering restrictions issued by the Ontario Government, relevant municipality and public health authorities and Baseball Ontario Protocol, including the arrival and departure of players.

Q – My area has cancelled baseball for the season. Can I go play for a non-recognized program?

A – While we certainly would discourage this, some families may see this as the only option depending on where they live, and the next closest program offering baseball. Players who play for a non-recognized program in 2020 automatically suspend themselves from OBA for the season. Please note, non-recognized programs may not be subject to our Return to Sport protocols.

Q – We know you need to schedule 45 minutes between events but you are just holding practices do you need the 45 minutes between the two groups?

A - Yes, the 45 minutes needs to be maintained because in that time you are allowing for: (1) the team(s) involved in the prior event to clean/sanitize equipment, dispose of garbage from common areas, and have all team members vacate the facility BEFORE (2) the team(s) involved in the subsequent event enter the facility and clean/sanitize common areas; without crossover between the teams. When groups are formed for practices (split squad) the athletes need to stay in the same bubble throughout phase 2, since as long as we're at 10, and the recommendations are to keep to the same 10 for your social bubble, we would apply the same theory to practices.

Q – Our local association cancelled all in-person baseball activities for the 2020 season. What do we do to ensure we have insurance for fall tryouts?

A - Insurance can continue to be applied for as programs start up or as activities/events are added. So you should ensure you have coverage in place for the number of players who will be participating in tryouts, winter workouts and any other event taking place before April 30, 2021 (the end of the current insurance term).

Q – How do I ensure that my insurance is in place to resume in person activities?

A - In order to ensure your insurance is in place, your local must:

- ensure that all players are registered and have completed Rowan's Law and other regular waivers
- ensure that all players, parents coaches and umpires have completed (1) the Declaration of Compliance and (2) either Release of Liability, Waiver of Claims and Indemnity Agreement (if 18 or older at time of signing) OR Informed Consent and Assumption of Risk Agreement (if younger than 18 at the time of signing)
- have been an association in good standing and with OBA insurance in 2019.

Just like in previous years, associations can start activities before insurance is finalized. Our usual deadline for insurance is June 15th, but we know teams start as early as January with activities. This year we're looking at an August 1st deadline for insurance, and that is one of the things we need to finalize.

Q – Does the return to games solely rely on the gathering numbers outlined by the Province or is there a gathering number limit OBA will need to see to allow games?

A - Return to games will depend on provincial and regional sports gathering limits. The province has been referencing sports (specifically team sports) in their orders, so we will continue to monitor those orders for changes.

Q - In the practice model, can I run simulated games with the same team and players as a drill in my practices (no umpires etc)?

A - The provincial government orders currently say not games or scrimmages, so no, you can't simulate a game.

Q - Leadoffs are prohibited but there is no mention of stealing – is stealing allowed?

A - Stealing is permitted at all levels. From 18U and below, runners must remain in contact with the base until the pitcher releases the ball. Leadoffs during the game will result in one warning for each team and thereafter shall result in the offending running being called out. Time will be called.

Q - Why can seniors leadoff and the 2-metre distancing is not in effect?

A – Adults can make informed decisions about their own safety and can consent to participate. Underaged players do not have the right to do that on their own.

Q - Why is the umpire 6 feet back from the pitcher but the catcher does not have to abide with physical distancing rules with respect to the batter?

A – Moving the umpire to behind the mound served to reduce the number of individuals in close proximity without significantly impacting the integrity of the game whereas moving the catcher which would be a significant change to the game fundamentally and could lead to frequent passed balls and possible arm strain for pitchers now forced to throw an extra 6 feet

Q – Would you consider adding no infield grounders for warmups from first base between innings as part of the protocol?

A – Proper warm-up prior to an inning is essential to the player's physical health and wellbeing, particularly for players coming into the game or changing positions. As per the protocol, all players should sanitize their hands between innings just prior to going back on the field

Q – Is there any way to eliminate or minimize number of infielders converging on pop up?

A – The task force considered this question but agreed there was no way to do this. Coaches and players are encouraged to find ways within the game to reduce physical distancing in these situations.

Q – Should the trainer attending to a player supply material for parents to oversee injury instead of attending the player directly and risk violating the 2-metre distancing?

A – That is an option if a parent is available however it is possible (and perhaps likely with group size limits) that a parent is not in attendance so we must have the option to have the trainer attend to injured players wearing proper PPE

Q - What are the next steps after a COVID 19 case is established when other people attending the activity (players on both teams umpires, coaches, volunteers and parents)?

A – As noted in the protocol, the local Public Health Authority is to be notified. Public Health will want access to attendance tracking in order to conduct contact tracing

Q - If we have double headers and the teams are the same for both games, can we shorten the 45-minute time between games?

A – For the purposes of this protocol, a doubleheader between the same two teams with the same umpires would be considered a single event and would not be subject to the 45-minute rule

Q - Does Baseball Ontario have a "how to guide" on how to sanitize baseballs?

A – Soft surfaces are difficult to clean thoroughly but luckily are also the least likely to retain the COVID 19 virus. In the final protocol, sanitization of baseballs has been removed on advice from the medical expert.

Q - What constitutes a PPE glove to allow for cleaning? There was some concern that availability of this type of glove might be limited and it was asked if we used a rubber glove that you might get at a grocery store might be acceptable?

A – Yes, rubber / vinyl / latex / plastic gloves that are non-porous are acceptable for cleaning activities

Q – Does Baseball Ontario have a partner that they are working with to supply things like wipes, sanitizers, and PPE gloves that locals could use?

A – No, Baseball Ontario does not have formal relationships with cleaning product or PPE suppliers. Baseball Ontario recommends that locals investigate:

- Hardware stores
- Pharmacies
- Big Box retailers
- Grocery stores
- Medical supply companies

Q – If affiliates and/or local associations choose to cancel their seasons leaving insufficient teams to play for a league and games, would there still be OBA insurance available to us to purchase to allow for practices to at least get our athletes on the field this summer?

A – Yes, Baseball Ontario insurance will be available for purchase in these situations

Q – Are coaches able to utilize designated parents to help with some of the duties involved (like attendance checks, sanitizing areas etc.) or is it entirely the responsibility of the coaching staff?

A – Yes, Baseball Ontario encourages coaches to engage parents and other adults in these off-field activities that are crucial for a safe return respecting the physical distancing and PPE requirements contained in this protocol.

Q – Has there been any concerns raised from umpires about not feeling comfortable doing games with all the safety protocols required?

A – The Baseball Ontario Umpires committee will continue to address concerns raised and the protocol may be adapted from time to time as umpire concerns (or concerns of anyone else) are raised and addressed. Individuals, who are not comfortable umpiring, are under no obligation to do so.

Q – What does a team do, if the team they are playing is not complying with any of the protocols? Does the umpire get involved? Do we refuse to play?

A - Some of both approaches apply. Umpires will definitely be addressing rule-based changes (i.e. no leadoffs) but may not be able to address other concerns (i.e. physical distancing). Baseball Ontario encourages all participants to work cooperatively to implement and live by the protocol in a spirit of safety first and competition second.

Q – Are there any other suggestions for member organization, locals, coaches, parents etc. that we might want to consider adding?

A – The Baseball Ontario Protocol is to be used in its entirety throughout the province and restrictions and protocols may not be reduced. However, participants, locals and affiliates may supplement the protocols with further rules to strengthen the protocol. We encourage participants to operationalize this protocol in the way that best meets your needs. From time to time Baseball Ontario will provide advice, guidance or suggestions that can be added to make this easier, safer and more effective. Some suggestions received to date include:

- Establish a Communications Officer as a primary source of information
- Conduct meetings with municipalities to understand what they are doing or will do
- Conduct meetings with participant/family to educate and answer questions
- Scenarios when feeling/getting ill

Q – I thought the protocol included a requirement to sanitize baseballs during an event, but I can't find that now – has that changed?

A – Yes, the protocol has been amended to remove that requirement. Through advice from our medical review and in accordance with other evidence the requirement has been changed because the soft surface of the baseball is considered very low risk for transmission of virus. This requirement was replaced with a requirement for more frequent hand hygiene.