



# Aurora King Baseball Association (AKBA)

## Return to Baseball Protocols

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## Introduction

Aurora King Baseball Association remains committed to the safety of the players, coaches, umpires, volunteers, and their families. While we acknowledge the level of excitement for the return of baseball this summer, reopening baseball must take place within the context of the general reopening from COVID-19 closures occurring in the province and within our municipalities, and must be done in a slow and methodical manner.

While we all love baseball, the health and welfare of our participants must not be compromised. Participating in the sport of baseball is a privilege, and we recognize that we are privileged to have the opportunity to return to the sport we love, especially when so much has been lost as a result of COVID-19.

This document, as it may be updated from time to time, provides additional guidance to Baseball Ontario's document on how baseball can return in our community, when it is deemed safe to do so by the Province of Ontario, municipal government, Baseball Ontario and health authorities.

This document was developed using the Baseball Ontario's Return to Baseball protocols, and are meant to be complimentary to those, and provide specific direction as it relates to the operations of AKBA. The protocols in this document supersede those in the Baseball Ontario document, if stricter, however are not permitted to be less strict than those of Baseball Ontario. In the event a specific protocol is not covered in this document, but is in Baseball Ontario's, that means that Baseball Ontario's protocols must be adhered to.

While this document and Baseball Ontario's document provides guidelines for the safe return of baseball, these documents are subject to all provincial emergency orders, advise and recommendations from public health authorities, municipal by-laws etc.

This document will be periodically updated as the provincial situation, recommendations and guidelines continue to evolve. As revisions are made, the most current version of the document will be located on the AKBA website, and all registered participants will be notified there is an update via email through AKBA's registration system.

As updated from time to time, this document shall remain in full force and effect until such time as AKBA's Board of Directors rescinds its provisions.

## Who should read this document?

1. All player who are planning on participating in team activities, their parent(s)/legal guardian(s), coaches and any other volunteers shall be familiar with both this document and Baseball Ontario's document prior to taking part in any AKBA sanctioned in-person activity.
2. All coaches, players and at minimum one parent/legal guardian of each player must watch the AKBA virtual training session which reviews the AKBA and Baseball Ontario protocols and sign off that they have done so (Appendix A).

## Prior to Participating

3. All coaches and players must be registered with AKBA through the AKBA registration database, and the players must have their dues paid to the Association in full.
4. Every coach, player and parent/legal guardian of a player under 18, will be required to sign a specific COVID-19 Baseball Ontario waiver before participating.
5. Athletes who are not registered, paid or have a wavier signed will not be permitted to participate. This is in addition to other waivers and codes of conduct the Association requires unrelated to COVID-19.

## Before leaving home

6. Before leaving home to attend every team practice or other team activity, all athletes, coaches, other volunteers, and spectators are required to self-screen through <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment/>. If an individual fails the screening protocol, or feels unwell, they are not allowed to attend the team practice or event that day.
7. A person, who is identified as part of an at-risk group, including immunocompromised, is not permitted to attend an AKBA sanctioned event.
8. Any athlete, coach, volunteer or spectator diagnosed with COVID-19 or who has been in contact with any person having COVID-19 in the previous fourteen [14] days **MUST** not attend any practice or other in-person team activity, and **MUST** notify their local public health authority.
9. Any athlete, coach, other volunteer, or spectator diagnosed with COVID-19 must be cleared by appropriate medical authorities prior to attending any in-person baseball activity. Evidence of the clearance needs to be provided to the AKBA President at [akbapresident@gmail.com](mailto:akbapresident@gmail.com).
10. Every athlete & coach **MUST** come to each practice or team event having their own hand sanitizer, full water bottle(s) (preferred not disposable), their own helmet, bat, baseball glove, hat, and any other items they will need. A player or coach that does not have all these items will not be permitted to participate. If a coach & athlete come from the same household, they are permitted to share the sharable items.

11. Schedule your arrival to the facility no more than 5 minutes before practice or 30 minutes prior to games scheduled start time, to eliminate unnecessary gatherings at the diamond or in the parking lot.
12. All coaches in attendance must have a mask available to them in an event physical distance requirement cannot be maintained (e.g. injury).

### Arrival to the facility

13. Park in a responsible way, ideally leaving a gap between each car.
14. Be dressed, including proper footwear prior to arriving at the diamond, limiting the personal equipment brought to the facility.
15. Set up your personal belonging at a spot at the facility designated by the coach and maintain all physical distancing rules.
16. Dugout use is only permitted when done with 2m physical distancing. Coaches are encouraged to limit dugout use at both games and practices to ensure physical distancing can be maintained.
17. When a team practice is split into multiple groups, or if a team is following another user group on the same diamond, the arriving players and coaches are required to stay in their motor vehicle until the previous team/group have returned to their motor vehicles.
18. Coaches shall only carry the equipment they bring in their car to the diamond. Parent volunteers to assist in carrying equipment to the diamond is not permitted. If coaches wish to split the responsibility of carrying the equipment, they need to divide the equipment and keep that division of responsibility to avoid cross contamination.
19. Only coaches can set up the equipment and diamond for practice. The coach that brought the equipment must be the one that sets up that equipment (e.g. L-Screen, Bow-Net, bases, pitching machine etc.). To set up bases, the coach shall put a spike in at home plate to hold the tape measure instead of having a second person holding the tape.
20. While the infield is being set up, players are not permitted on the infield. Players shall either do their warm-up stretches in the outfield, maintaining physical distancing, or wait at their chair for coaches instructions.
21. In the event the lights are required to be turned on, a coach must be the one that turns the light on. The coach shall use a disinfecting wipe to wipe the lock, the box and the switch before touching them.
22. In the event there is a lock to get into the field a coach must be the one unlocks the lock. The coach shall use a disinfecting wipe to wipe the lock, the box and the switch before touching them.

23. Every player and coach MUST either wash their hands with soap and water (following public health guidelines for washing hands) or sanitize their hands with hand sanitizer that is 70% alcohol or higher before entering the diamond.

### Attendance

24. At no point will a baseball event exceed the number of attendees (including players, coaches, umpires, association officials, volunteers, parents and other family members) noted as the maximum number by the Province of Ontario, or any relevant municipality or public health authority.
25. The number of participants involved should be reviewed and kept down to the absolute essential (e.g. Team members, Officials, Umpires, Event staff, Volunteers, etc.)
26. Limit the number of non-participants attending (limit siblings, parents, extended family, friends, etc.). As long as the maximum number of persons permitted to gather by the Province of Ontario and the relevant municipality and public health authority is less than or equal to 100, the maximum number of non-participants attending any event is limited to 1 per player. Such spectators shall physically distance themselves from other spectators and participants.
27. The Stage established for the municipality where the team is located (i.e. home diamond) applies to that team. Travel by a team to another area of the province does not mean that the team can rely on the Stage of reopening of that other area.
28. Coaching staff will keep an attendance tracker electronically through the Baseball Ontario OnDeck app) for all practices, games and in-person activities including all players, coaches, umpires, parents and others in attendance, including name and contact information (e-mail or phone). The attendance tracked through the Baseball Ontario OnDeck app, Baseball Ontario will provide the information to the relevant Member Organization(s) and Public Health upon request.

### Equipment

29. To avoid cross contamination between team, AKBA will provide each competitive team with their own set of bases, spikes, for 2020. For teams at senior diamonds with post bases, those bases can be used but the same coach must setup and tear them down, sanitizing their hands each time as well as sanitizing the bases after each use. For 9U and below teams a pitching machine will also be issued. All this equipment will be required to be signed out with the VP of Baseball Operations and returned at the end of the outdoor season. No AKBA equipment will be stored in the AKBA blue boxes or Town issued black boxes.
30. All equipment must be washed and disinfected before and after each use, following the guidelines on pg. 5 & 6 of Baseball Ontario's Return to Baseball protocols, approved on June 11, 2020.
31. For all team training, teams are not permitted to chalk the diamonds, and AKBA liners will not be distributed to the lock boxes.
32. It will be the responsibility of the team to ensure they have the adequate cleaning and personal protective equipment (PPE) necessary as per the Baseball Ontario Return to Baseball Requirements at each and every practice or in-person team event.

## Practice

33. Practice plans shall be sent out in advance of practice by the Head Coach, reducing the necessity to have a pre-practice meeting. In the event a pre-practice meeting is required all players and coaches are to maintain physical distancing requirements.
34. The following is strictly prohibited at all AKBA sanctioned activities
- Spitting, including tobacco, and other products
  - Sunflower seeds or chewing gum
  - Sharing or water/energy drink bottles or food
  - Sharing water jugs, coolers, or drink dispensers
  - Handshakes, fist or chest bumps, high fives, hugs, kisses, etc.
35. It is strongly recommended that each player have a parent/legal guardian at practice, spectating, in the event there is an emergency that needs to be attended to with the player. The situation wants to be avoided that a non-family member is required to transport a player unnecessarily. All efforts, as long as safe for the athlete, shall be taken to maintain the 2m physical distancing.
36. Players are not permitted to share equipment. If a player does not have the adequate equipment to participate at practice, the players shall not participate. The only exception to this would be a bat, as not all players have their own bat. In those cases, a coach must wash and disinfect the shared team bat before each player uses the bat, and each team bat that is used must also be washed and disinfected prior to it being put back in the equipment back at the end of practice.
37. Players are not permitted to sharing their bat with another teammate.
38. All players and coaches must sanitize their hands a minimum of every 30 minutes during practice (ideally in between each drill, during water break) and any time they touch their face, even accidentally.

## Competition

Sports activity and life in general have been significantly affected by COVID-19 prevention measures in place across the globe. Although baseball is moderate in contact, there are several factors that each Member Organization will need to evaluate. Our traditional ways of competing will need to be altered in many instances to allow us to be back on the field of play while minimizing the risk of infection. The protocols listed under all other sections also apply to Competition.

### *Pre-game*

39. Except as noted in the following bullet point, the two teams may share the field for pre-game warm up provided physical distancing is maintained. Each team shall stay in the outfield area on its side of the field. Hitting whiffle balls in the outfield is not considered BP for purposes of the following bullet point.
40. Only one team shall be on the field at a time for BP (on the diamond), and Infield or infield/outfield practice.

41. Avoid pre-game ceremonies (i.e. anthems, first pitch ceremonies, etc.)
42. Minimum physical distance of 2 metres at Home Plate meeting. Meeting is limited to 1 coach from each team and 1 umpire.
43. Line up cards must be prepared but will not be physically shared - photos may be taken by scorekeepers etc. and the lineup card must be made available to show the umpire when requested.
44. For games, both the home team and the visiting team are responsible for cleaning/sanitizing their dugout before and after games.

#### *Baseballs*

45. Ball prep (mud rubbing) to be done by one appointed personnel with protective gloves. No use of saliva in preparing balls.
46. All AKBA teams will be required to provide game balls for every game they participate in and any team they play against will provide their own game balls for the game. The defensive team will maintain control of the game balls used while they are on defense. Defensive team will need to chase all foul balls while they are in the field. Members of the offensive team are not to touch the baseballs of the defensive team.

#### *Bats*

47. No bat boys/girls shall be allowed
48. If batter is not able to retrieve his/her own bat, a team representative of at least 16 years of age shall pick-up wearing protective gloves. Team representative shall apply hand sanitizer and/or wash hands upon conclusion of the half inning.

#### *Other Equipment*

49. PPE masks worn by pitchers, when they so choose, will be assessed as per existing rules regarding distracting colours, etc. (recommended that it not be white or grey). Rules of acceptable behaviour cannot be contravened.
50. No sharing of catcher's masks in warming up pitchers. If no catcher's mask is readily available, warm up pitches may be thrown to a player/coach who is standing, but not squatting.
51. A safety base may be used at first base. It is not mandatory to use it. The home team will determine if it is to be used for a particular game.
52. At 8U/9U, the circle to be used around the pitching machine shall be a circle with 12' diameter instead of the 8' diameter circle specified in the 8U/9U rules.
53. At 8U/9U, the offensive team coach feeding the pitching machine shall sanitize/clean their hands after every offensive inning.

#### *Umpires*

54. Ball/Strike umpire to work 2 metres behind the pitcher
55. Umpire(s) will not hold game balls
56. Umpires are to carry their own hand sanitizer and use every ½ innings.
57. If an umpire touches a game ball the umpire shall sanitize their hands immediately after.
58. Umpires may wear PPE masks at their discretion

#### *Score Keepers/Pitch Counters*

59. Should always work from a restricted area and keep safe distance from others and from each other. If using a scorer's booth, it must be cleaned/sanitized before and after use.

60. Avoid paper scoring/pitch counting when possible. Prioritize electronic scoring programs as alternative

61. Scoring equipment and microphones, if applicable, shall be thoroughly cleaned before and after use

#### *In-Game*

62. Players shall not lick their fingers, blow on their hands or otherwise go to their mouth

63. In order to maintain physical distancing between fielders and base runners, lead-offs are prohibited at 18U and below. Older leagues may adopt this rule if they choose to do so.

64. Tag plays are allowed, but the defensive player should vacate the area as soon as reasonably practicable following the tag.

65. AKBA teams are not permitted to throwing the ball around the infield after outs.

#### *Coaches*

66. Team meetings, including pitching visits, shall maintain physical distance of minimum 2 metres. A maximum of 1 person (coach or player) and the pitcher may be included in a pitching visit.

67. Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) (visor or mask, gloves) must be used by trainers (or persons performing trainer function) when assessing an injury

68. If a coach must approach an umpire, physical distancing of at least 2 metres must be maintained. Failure to do so may result in ejection.

69. While on offence, base coaches must always stay within their box, except to avoid a play being made in the coach's box. Any discussions between coaches and players (eg. batter visiting 3rd base coach; coach talking to runners, etc.) must maintain physical distancing of at least 2 metres.

70. Pitchers, catchers, spotters and bullpen coaches must always maintain a physical distance of 2 metres while pitchers are warming up in the bullpen

#### **End of event**

71. Players are required to exit the diamond immediately following the event and maintaining 2m physical distancing.

72. Players are required to pack up and leave the facility as quickly as possible and no social gatherings are to take place at the facility or in the parking lot.

73. Players, coaches and spectators are required to leave with everything they brought including any garbage, including PPE, wrappers, bottles, sanitizing wipes etc.

74. The coach that set up the equipment at the beginning of practice must also be the one that cleans up the equipment and takes the equipment home. Before equipment can be stored, it must be properly washed and sanitized following Baseball Ontario's protocols.

75. No parent or player volunteer help shall be permitted.

76. There shall not be any post event meetings, respecting that other user groups or teams may be following and need the diamond.



77. If the lights were turned on, the coach that turned them on must also turn them off. Once turned off, the coach must sanitize the switch, the box and the lock.
78. If the diamond was unlocked, the coach that unlocked the diamond must also lock the diamond back up. Once locked, the coach must sanitize the lock and the gate where touched.
79. For games, both the home team and the visiting team are responsible for cleaning/sanitizing their dugout before and after games.

### Violations

80. It is the expectation of Aurora King Baseball that all participants, coaches, umpires, other volunteers, and spectators will respect these protocols and adhere to them not only for their own safety, but for the safety of all participants. Failure to abide by these rules will come with repercussions. All participants are expected to enforce these protocols for their in-person baseball activities. Except where a protocol identifies a specific sanction or penalty, enforcement should be by way of a warning against the violator and then a request to leave the in-person activity in the case of repeated violation. Intentional violations of these protocols by individuals may result in disciplinary action, up to and including, suspensions.

## Implementation Plan for the AKBA Return to Baseball Protocols

### Phase One – Return to Train

Practices for all AKBA competitive teams will commence the week of July 13<sup>th</sup>, with Wednesday July 15<sup>th</sup> being a day off. On July 13<sup>th</sup> & 14<sup>th</sup> the Board will attend team practices to review the practices and assess the ability of teams to implement the protocols. The Board will convene virtually on July 15<sup>th</sup> to review the feedback collected and make any changes to these protocols.

Prior to a player or coach to participate in a practice they must have completed all the necessary requirements outlined in the below checklist.

Athletes	Coaches
1. Return to Training Virtual Training Signoff form for athletes (PDF form)	1. Return to Training Virtual Training Signoff form for coaches (PDF form)
2. Concussion Training Signoff form for athletes (PDF form)	2. Concussion Training Signoff form for coaches (PDF form)
3. Concussion Code of Conduct for athletes (PDF form)	3. Concussion Code of Conduct for athletes (PDF form)
4. Baseball Ontario Declaration form (OnDeck app)	4. Baseball Ontario Declaration form (OnDeck app)
5. Baseball Ontario Child – Parent Consent form (OnDeck app)	5. Baseball Ontario Wavier (OnDeck app)

### Phase Two – Return to Competition

With York Region entering Phase 3 on July 24<sup>th</sup>, AKBA Competitive teams will be permitted to play exhibition games as of August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020. Prior to playing all coaches and athletes must review the updated Return to Baseball protocols and video and sign the on-line Return to Competition training sign off form. The link is provided in the email.

All umpires that wish to umpire in 2020, must complete the following form in table 2 below and submit to the Umpire-in-Chief, who will submit to the VP Finance at [akbafinance@gmail.com](mailto:akbafinance@gmail.com). When completing the on-line forms please ensure to select AKBA as your local association so that AKBA can track compliance. If an umpire has completed any of the below forms as an athlete or a coach they will not be required to complete the forms as an umpire.

Umpires
1. Return to Baseball Virtual Training Signoff form for umpires: link sent to <b>Chris Fafalios</b>
2. Concussion Training Signoff form for umpires (PDF form)
3. Baseball Ontario Declaration form (OnDeck app)
4. Baseball Ontario Child – Parent Consent form (OnDeck app) – if under 18
5. Baseball Ontario Wavier (OnDeck app) if 18+

*The Board reserves the right to modify these protocols at any time or cancel training or competitions if necessary.*