

Byron Youth Fastpitch Softball Association (BYFSA)

Player and Parent Handbook

This document was created for players, parents, coaches and all participants to define and explain the general policies and procedures of BYFSA.

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I. BYFSA OVERVIEW

Byron Youth Fastpitch Softball Association (BYFSA) is affiliated with the Southeast Fastpitch Conference (SFC) and USA Softball.

BYFSA Mission Statement

Within the Byron Youth Fastpitch Softball Association, our mission is to operate a quality, non-profit association that provides softball players at all levels, with the skills and fundamentals they need to be successful in this sport. Through sportsmanship, respect, commitment, leadership, and good work ethic, our goal is to grow softball players who learn lessons both on and off the field. The Byron Youth Fastpitch Softball Association strives to have a fun, open, and encouraging environment for players and families to engage in their love for softball.

II. COMMITMENT LEVEL EXPECTATIONS FOR EACH TEAM

Please read through the team level details on the following pages before making a commitment to accept a spot on any team. It is very important for all members of every team to be EQUALLY committed. It is detrimental to a team to have some players that are unable or unwilling to make an equal commitment to the team, so your commitment should not be made lightly! The expectation is that all players will honor their teammates by fulfilling their commitments and obligations to their team. Coaches will also help to hold players accountable for commitments made.

Commitment Expectations for Practices and Games - Applies to ALL TEAMS.

Practices

- *Players are expected to make practices a priority.* If a player misses practice that she has committed to it will likely affect her playing time. If a player constantly misses practices, the coach will schedule a meeting to discuss the concern with the player and parent(s). If the absences continue after the meeting, the player may be dismissed from the team.
- Once the schedule is in place and you have committed to those dates, then only instances such as sickness or an emergency should be grounds for pulling out of a practice.
- If a player misses multiple practices, while even if she did not commit to them, the missed practices will likely affect her playing time.

Games and Tournaments

- A game and tournament schedule will be created at the beginning of the season by the coach with input from the player families to make sure that enough players will be able to commit to each game to field a competitive team. Once the schedule is in place and you have committed to a game/tournament, then only things such as sickness or an emergency should be grounds for pulling out of an event.

- Players should demonstrate their commitment to their teammates by doing everything possible to make it to all scheduled games and tournaments. When a team works hard to improve together in practice with the goal of competing well in an event and then a player fails to show up, it can be very discouraging for the rest of the players. It is also disrespectful of the effort and time that the rest of the players have invested into the team.
- *Players are expected to make games and tournaments a priority.* If a player misses an event that they have committed to, it will affect their playing time in future events. If a player misses more than one event that she has committed to, the coach will schedule a meeting to discuss the concern with the player and parent(s).
- Please be certain that you understand what is expected before you make a commitment so that you can fulfill your obligations and honor your commitment to the team. Players that cannot follow through on their commitments can have an extremely negative impact on the team.

Uniforms and Equipment

- Players are able to order a competition jersey a la carte each season. Players will keep their jerseys.
- Players are responsible for providing their own black pants, plastic molded cleats, batting helmet with facemask (black preferred), Fielding mask (i.e. [https://www.ripit.com/products/defense - black preferred](https://www.ripit.com/products/defense-black-preferred)) and fielding glove
- BYFSA will provide tall yellow socks, a yellow softball belt and helmet stickers.
- Protective sliding gear is also strongly recommended
- Composite bats are preferred for 10U and higher teams
- Each team will be provided with balls and BYFSA catching gear
- Cubs and 8U will be provided bats, but players are welcome to use their own.

Season Duration

- May-July (season may vary depending on event schedule)
- Fall ball, open gym and winter dome ball opportunities will be provided as well.

Coaches

- Teams will be coached by parent volunteers

Cubs Expectations

Development of players is the primary goal. Over the weeks of specific skills development, each athlete is to learn beginning level batting, base running and fielding skills. In competition opportunities, playing time will be equal.

Program Goals

- Learn and develop basic softball skills
- Learn to love playing softball
- Learn how to contribute to a team and how to become a good teammate
- **Practice:**
 - Practice is one day per week
 - 11-inch balls will be used for practice and games
- **Competition:**
 - Games will be inhouse and played at a Byron field. Nights will be determined by field availability.

- Coaches pitch to player on team (entire roster bats), then teams switch offense to defense
 - Coaches will pitch 3 pitches to each player; followed by use of a tee
 - Games are roughly 1 hour in length
 - No umpires
 - Players rotate positions every inning
 - No stealing or passed balls
 - Can play defense with 6-10 players
- **Travel**
 - No overnight travel is required

8U Expectations

Development of players is the primary goal. Over the weeks of specific skills development, each athlete is to learn beginning level batting, base running and fielding skills. In competition opportunities, playing time will be balanced.

Program Goals

- Learn and develop basic softball skills
 - Learn to love playing softball
 - Learn how to contribute to a team and how to become a good teammate
- **Practice:**
 - Practice is at least one time per week
 - 11-inch balls will be used for practice and competitions
 - **Competition:**
 - Games will be once a week per SFC schedule, with home games and most away games in nearby towns.
 - Coaches pitch to player on team (entire roster bats), then teams switch offense to defense
 - Games are 1 hour or 3 innings in length
 - Coaches will pitch 3 pitches to each player; followed by use of a tee
 - No umpires
 - Players rotate positions every inning
 - No stealing or passed balls
 - Can play defense with 6-10 players
 - **Travel**
 - No overnight travel is required

10U Expectations

Development of players continues to be critical. At the 10U level each athlete is to learn and play several positions. Playing time each player receives is balanced (not necessarily equal) and will depend on attitude, skill level, commitment, absences, injuries and game/tournament situations. At early season tournaments and at less competitive games throughout the season, playing time should be relatively equal and shared between players within the same positions. As the season progresses, the most competitive athletes in each position may need to play more in order to give the team a chance to win more competitive games. In the end, playing time and positions will be determined by coaches.

- **Program Goals**
 - Learn and develop softball skills

- Learn to love playing softball
- Learn how to contribute to a team and how to become a good teammate
- **Practice**
 - Will average from once to twice per week
- **Competition:** Beginning level competition
 - Player pitch (distance 35')
 - 1 game per week (double header)
 - Gold level team(s) will have up to 5 weekend tournaments; 4 weekend tournaments plus an end of season league tournament
 - Silver level team(s) will have up to 4 weekend tournaments; 3 weekend tournaments (Byron, Pine Island, Dodge Center or coach discretion), plus an end of season league tournament.
 - Games and tournaments will generally be within 60 minutes of Byron. Gold teams may travel farther for tournaments.
- **Travel**
 - No overnight travel is required; however, teams may choose longer tournaments such as MONSTA Nationals.
- **Playing Time Expectations**
 - Please read through the playing time policies section later in this handbook
- **Commitment Level Expectations**
 - *Once a commitment has been made and practice and competition schedules have been set, all players are expected and obligated to follow through on their commitments*

12U Expectations

Development of players continues to be critical. At the 12U level each athlete is to learn and play several positions. Playing time will vary depending on the level of the game, but ultimately starting positions must be earned. Playing time each player receives will depend on attitude, skill level, commitment, absences and game/tournament situations. At early season tournaments and at less competitive games throughout the season, playing time should be shared between players within the same positions. As the season progresses, the most competitive athletes in each position may need to play more to give the team a chance to win more competitive games. In the end, playing time and positions will be determined by coaches.

- **Program Goals**
 - Learn and develop softball skills
 - Focus on player development within a more competitive team setting
 - Learn how to contribute to a team, be a good teammate and to compete to earn playing time
 - Understand that different roles need to be filled on each team and learn to accept roles on the team
- **Practice**
 - Will average from once to twice per week
- **Competition:** Beginning to intermediate level competition
 - Player pitch (pitching distance 40')

- One to two games per week
- 5 tournaments; 4 weekend tournaments plus an end of season league tournament
- Games and tournaments will generally be within 90 minutes of Byron
- **Travel:** No overnight travel is required; however teams may choose longer tournaments such as MONSTA Nationals.
- **Playing Time Expectations**
 - Please read through the playing time policies section later in this handbook
- **Commitment Level Expectations**
 - *Once a commitment has been made and practice and competition schedules have been set, all players are expected and obligated to follow through on their commitments*

14U and 16U/HS Expectations

Development of players continues to be critical to be competitive in game situations; ultimately playing time is competitive and starting positions must be earned. The amount of playing time each player receives will depend on attitude, skill level, commitment, absences and game/tournament situations. At early season tournaments and at less competitive games throughout the season, playing time should be shared between players within the same positions. The most competitive athletes in each position may need to play more to give the team a chance to win more competitive games. In the end, playing time and positions will be determined by coaches.

- **Program Goals**
 - Learn and develop intermediate to advanced softball skills and team play
 - Focus on player development within a competitive team setting
 - Learn how to contribute to a team, be a good teammate and to compete to earn playing time
 - Understand that different roles need to be filled on each team and learn to accept roles on the team
- **Practice**
 - Will average from once to twice per week
- **Competition:** Intermediate to high level competition for the appropriate age group
 - One to two games per week
 - 4 tournaments; 3 weekend tournaments plus an end of season league tournament
 - Games and tournaments will generally be within 90 minutes of Byron
- **Travel:** No overnight travel is required; however teams may choose longer tournaments such as MONSTA Nationals.
- **Playing Time Expectations**
 - Please read through the playing time policies section later in this handbook
- **Commitment Level Expectations**
 - *Once a commitment has been made and practice and competition schedules have been set, all players are expected and obligated to follow through on their commitments*

III. TEAM SELECTION

2025 Age Divisions

BYFSA forms teams based on age regulations by USA Softball. The age divisions are as follows:

AGE DIVISION	BIRTH DATE RANGE
8U	9/01/15-8/31/17
10U	9/01/13-8/31/15
12U	9/01/11-8/31/13
14U	9/01/09-8/31/11
HS	9/01/05-8/31/09

Player Skills Assessments

Skills Assessments are an opportunity for an athlete to demonstrate her hitting, fielding and running skills. Within the limits of a volunteer organization, BYFSA strives to make the skills assessment and tryout process as impartial as possible. Each year, there is a player skills evaluation and tryout process in which athletes are evaluated by performing skill specific drills. The result of these tryouts in addition to end of season feedback from coaches will be used by the BYFSA Board to determine which team each player will be rostered on. If enrollment at a particular level is less than the number of players needed to form a team, the Board will determine how to proceed appropriately.

- **Arrival:** All players should go to the registration table to do the following:
 - Receive a number to attach to the back of the t-shirt they are wearing
- **During Assessments:** A committee of BYFSA Board Members are responsible for the selection of tryout evaluators. No adjustments to the tryout tests or procedures will be made once the tryout begins. Each player will be evaluated based on a number of things, including but not limited to the following criteria:
 - Hitting, bunting, fielding grounders, fielding fly balls, sliding and base running
 - Softball skill level and consistency and athleticism
 - The ability and willingness to communicate on the field
 - Attitude, energy, body language, capacity for work, timeliness, and preparation
 - Ability to listen, coachability, and the ability to focus on the task at hand
 - Players will be placed on teams based on the above factors but also based on other considerations such as the number of other players with similar skill sets that may also be available for the same team.
- **Pitchers & Catchers:** Due to the specialization and time commitment of pitching & catching, 10U and older players MUST assess as a pitcher/catcher during Assessments to be considered for game time innings. The assessments will allow pitchers/catchers to be rostered appropriately and for the distribution of innings to aspiring pitchers.
 - BYFSA **highly encourages** all athletes interested in pitching/catching to express interest to their coaches. Please be aware that there is often limited time during practice

dedicated for pitching/catching instruction; BYFSA **strongly encourages** attendance at organized pitching clinics, as well as, individual pitching practice outside of team practice time. Ultimately, it will be the coach's discretion to determine positions and playing time for their team.

- As the season progress, players that did not assess as a pitcher or catcher may get playing time at these positions if shown interest and has practiced to be game ready.
- **Assessment Attendance:** Players are required to attend the full skills assessment process. Illness, injury or extraordinary personal circumstances may cause players to request an exemption from tryouts. Requests must be made prior to the start of tryouts unless an injury or illness occurs during the tryouts. Submission of supporting documents, including physician's reports, may be requested for submission prior to the end of tryouts for anyone requesting a waiver from tryouts. The BYFSA Board will review the request for exemption and determine the appropriate course of action based on the best interest of the program. Anyone choosing not to participate in tryouts will be placed on rosters at the discretion of the evaluators, BYFSA Board, and the best interests of the program.
 - If a player is sick or injured and unable to participate in tryouts, the BYFSA Board may evaluate that player based on past performance and player history.
 - If a player has a conflict and knows in advance that she will not be able to make it to tryouts, she should contact the BYFSA Board as early as possible (a minimum of 2 weeks advance notice is recommended) to arrange another time to be evaluated prior to tryouts.

Team Rosters: Once the tryout process has concluded, the evaluators and Board will work together to complete the team placement process. Once team placements have been finalized, the BYFSA Board will post rosters and notify players/families of the posting.

Summer Team Formation

The BYFSA Board has an obligation to our players to keep roster sizes to a manageable level, thereby providing maximum playing time for all participants. The Board also reserves the right to roster teams in the best interest of the BYFSA organization. For example, BYFSA may request a player(s) to move up to a higher age level to fill out rosters to maintain the best interests of the program.

8U: Teams will be rostered and play in the Southeast Fastpitch Conference league out of Rochester. The season will be approximately 8 weeks with at least one practice and one game per week. Teams will be coached by parent volunteers.

10U and Up: Prior to the season beginning, there will be a skills assessment. This is an opportunity for an athlete to demonstrate her hitting, fielding, base running, and pitching/catching skills, if applicable. The BYFSA Board recognizes that our organization has an obligation to our players and opponents to form teams with skill levels commensurate to age and competitive ability. Therefore, teams ages 10U and older will be formed on the results of the skills assessments.

- The highest tier level team at each age division will include the top position players, the top two pitchers and the top two catchers as determined by skills assessments. The top position players shall not include the top two pitchers or catchers.
- Once the top team is formed, team placement will be set by BYFSA board members weighing several factors yearly including assessments, numbers, ages, and coaches.
- Players may request to play down to a lower tier team subject to BYFSA board approval. Specifically, this allows the second rated pitcher or catcher on the higher-level team an

opportunity to play down in order to pitch/catch on a lower tier team. Teams are coached by parent volunteers.

Fall Team Formation

The BYFSA Board will appoint fall ball coaches and roster teams based on available registrations. The BYFSA Board supports multi-sport athletes. The fall season is busy with other activities. We encourage girls to still play softball but communicate with their coaches on practice and game availability.

MNSoftball

All summer and fall teams will be rostered on the MNSoftball website. This roster is used to validate teams and player eligibility for leagues and tournaments. Parents must accept the roster request. Additionally, one-time parents will need to upload their daughter's birth certificate to confirm proof of age.

IV. PLAYING TIME POLICIES

BYFSA Playing Time Philosophy

It is the belief of BYFSA that families who are paying a participation fee for their daughter to be part of a softball team deserve to be very clear on the playing time policies. As an overview, depending on the age of the athlete, there will be times when coaches are expected to put players on the field that they feel will give their team the best chance to win. It is the coach's responsibility to do what they feel will enable their team to be successful and to put the team's needs above the needs of any individual player. No athlete is entitled to playing time; playing time must be earned.

Principles that BYFSA Coaches are expected to adhere to:

- *BYFSA is not a "pay to play" club.* You are not paying for your daughter to receive playing time; you are paying for your daughter to be part of a team on which she will have the opportunity to improve, to work hard to earn playing time and to learn the importance of accepting different roles on a team.
- Each athlete on the roster will be given opportunities to improve in practice. In most age divisions, BYFSA is competing to win games; therefore, in some cases playing time will not be equal.
- *No one is entitled to playing time,* it must be earned in practice and it must be secured by how a player is able to perform in games. Playing time will depend on attitude, skill level, commitment, absences and game/tournament situations.
- *Regardless of playing time, every role on the team is important and every role must be filled and embraced in order for a team to succeed at a high level.* There are many different roles on a team, and every role is critically important to the team's success. A few examples include: practicing with intensity to make each other better, adding energy in practice or from the dugout in games, caring for teammates, studying opponents' strengths and weaknesses.

General Rule: Head Coaches determine playing time policies for their team.

In the end, it is the responsibility of the players to contribute to the best of their ability in whatever role the coach gives them. It is the parent's responsibility to respect the decisions of the coach even when they disagree, support the whole team and understand that the coach must focus on the needs of the team over the needs of a specific player.

8U Teams

- In competition opportunities, playing time will be balanced, but may vary by commitment/absences of the player.
- Players will rotate positions during games in order to learn a variety of skills and build a good softball foundation.

10U Teams

- Playing time on teams will ideally be balanced. This does NOT mean that playing time will be *exactly* equal as explained in more detail in the section below.
- Playing time WILL vary by position and team roster no matter what the coach tries to do.
- Playing time WILL vary due to player positions in a game.
- Coaches are encouraged to have the players learn and play more than one position so that they can learn a variety of skills and build a good softball foundation. Also, by playing different positions, the coach may be able to provide more opportunities for players to receive playing time.
- As the season progresses, the most competitive athletes in each position may need to play more in order to give the team a chance to win more competitive games.

12U Teams and Older teams

- Playing time will vary depending on the level of the game, but ultimately *playing time is competitive and starting positions must be earned*. The amount of playing time each player receives will depend on attitude, skill level, commitment, absences and game/tournament situations.
- Coaches are encouraged to have the players learn and play more than one position so that they can learn a variety of skills and build a good softball foundation. Also, by playing different positions, the coach may be able to provide more opportunities for players to receive playing time.
- At early season tournaments and at less competitive games throughout the season, playing time should be shared, while not necessarily equal, between players within the same positions.
- As the season progresses, the most competitive athletes in each position may need to play more in order to give the team a chance to win more competitive games.
- Equal playing time is not guaranteed and is unlikely in some cases. All playing time decisions are determined by the coach.

VI. PRACTICES

Practice Gear

Practice may occur in inclement weather, please dress and layer appropriately. Depending on the age of the athlete, players should wear appropriate practice gear at every practice. *The following are required:*

- Water bottle, batting helmet with face mask, Rip-it and fielding glove
- For 10U and older: plastic molded cleats and protective sliding gear are highly encouraged.

Player Expectations During and After Practice

- Arrive at least 10 minutes prior to the scheduled start time of practice to put cleats on and assist in preparing the field.
- Work hard, have a great attitude, add energy and be coachable!
- Be respectful of coaches, teammates and the personal property of others.
- Leave phones and/or any other electronic devices in your bag on silent.

- If you will be late or absent from a practice you must have a valid reason for it and you must inform your coach well in advance. Missing a regularly scheduled practice for a non-emergency may result in the loss of playing time as discussed in more detail earlier in this handbook.

Practice Scheduling

- Practice schedules will be different for each team and will be dependent on the availability of fields and the schedule of the coaches.
- The coach will make an effort to schedule practices that work with a majority of players; however, field availability and the coach's schedules are the two most important criteria considered.
- It is critically important that all conflicts are communicated to the coach immediately after being placed on a team so that the coach is able to do his/her best to schedule around those conflicts.

Missed Practices

- Parents and players are expected to communicate all potential practice conflicts to the coach BEFORE the practice schedule is made. After the practice schedule has been released, parents and players should confirm any conflicts immediately after receiving the schedule.
- Coaches will attempt to schedule practices so that there are as few conflicts as possible with other activities, however it will rarely be possible to avoid every conflict.
- *Athletes that want to improve and earn playing time make practice a priority.* Playing time is earned in practice! If a player does not make practice a priority, then she should not expect to see much playing time in games and tournaments.
- Missed practices will hinder that player's development and growth, will impact the team's ability to improve and will usually result in making it more difficult for the player to earn playing time.

Cancellation of Practices

- In case of inclement weather, it is up to the coach to decide whether or not to cancel practice.

VII. GAMES AND TOURNAMENTS

Players should bring their complete uniform to every competition. For specific uniform requirements please see Age Level Team Expectations (pages 5-8) earlier in this handbook. If coolers are allowed, it is recommended that players pack and bring healthy snacks.

Games (Generally scheduled as follows, *subject to change*)

- Cubs: Routinely plays on Monday evenings
 - All in house games are played in Byron
- 8U: Routinely plays on Thursday evenings
 - Home games are played in Byron; away games within 60 minutes of Byron
- 10U: Wednesday evening double header games
 - Games typically require players to arrive at the field by 5:30PM and conclude around 8:00PM. Home games are played in Byron; away games are within 60 minutes of Byron
- 12U: Routinely plays on Tuesday and/or Thursday evenings
 - Games typically require players to arrive at the field by 5:30PM and conclude around 8:00PM. Home games are played in Byron; away games are within 60 minutes of Byron
- 14U-HS: Generally plays on Monday and/or Wednesday evenings
 - Games typically require players to arrive at the field by 5:30PM and conclude around 8:00PM. Home games are played in Byron; away games are within 60 minutes of Byron

Tournaments and Communication

- Schedules will be different for each team and will be dependent on the coach's schedule and the availability of the players.
- Parents and players are expected to communicate all potential conflicts to the coach *before* the tournament schedule is made. Coaches will attempt to schedule tournaments so that there are as few conflicts as possible with other activities; however, it will rarely be possible to avoid every conflict.
- After the schedule has been released, parents and players should confirm any conflicts immediately.
- Generally, most weekend tournaments require players to arrive by 7:30AM on Saturday and run the full day. For older teams, there may be tournaments that require a two-day commitment; please plan accordingly. Families will normally receive the following information from the coach by mid-week leading up to the tournament: time to arrive, first game of pool play and play schedule. Note that bracket/tournament sometimes follows pool play meaning game times won't be known until after pool play concludes.

Transportation to and from Games and Tournaments

- Transportation to and from all games/tournaments is the responsibility of the player and her parents.
- Coaches cannot provide transportation to players without written permission from the player's parent or guardian.

During Games and Tournaments

- Parents are responsible for their child at every event. The coach is NOT responsible for monitoring, supervising or chaperoning players.
- Players must be aware of the schedule during the tournament and always be available to the coach in case of schedule changes.
- Disputes or misconduct to officials, coaches or the opposing team will not be tolerated.
- Players may leave a game or event only after the team is no longer playing, all clean-up duties have been completed and permission has been obtained from their team coach.

IX. COACH EXPECTATIONS

It is the goal of the BYFSA softball coaches to provide athletes with the opportunity to experience success in a variety of situations, both individual and team, on and off the field of play. Athletes will be challenged to reach their full potential, encouraged to develop emotional maturity, and will have the opportunity to learn how to deal with success and failure. Not only will players learn the physical skills of softball, but they can also learn other life-long skills such as: self-confidence, self-discipline, self-motivation, goal setting, teamwork, cooperation, sportsmanship and leadership.

Coaches will be required to teach and develop all players and support the entire BYFSA program. Specific coach goals may vary by age division and team. The following are expectations of all BYFSA coaches:

- A positive role model; supportive, enthusiastic, and encouraging
- Fully prepared and organized for each practice and game
- Firm and fair disciplinarian
- Honest with players and parents about roles on the team
- Communicate well with each other, players and parents
- Follow the "team first, individuals second" belief
- Uphold and follow all BYFSA softball team expectations

- Committed to the team, players, parents, BYFSA and the Byron community

Specifically:

Practice Responsibilities:

- Be a teacher and have in-depth knowledge of skills and strategies for softball.
- Develop offensive and defensive strategies appropriate to the age level of the team.
- Prepare a written practice plan to maximize player and team development. Practice plans do not need to be elaborate, but should serve to facilitate a smooth and effective practice.
- Attend practices to lead and coach athlete development. If a coach is unable to attend a scheduled practice, s/he must find a sub to run practice. Practices should rarely need to be canceled or rescheduled due to the coach's need to be absent.
- Assume responsibility for athletes during and after practice until a parent has picked up.
- Be sensitive, firm, insightful, adaptable and flexible; be consistent and fair to all players.
- Fields need to be raked and maintained as appropriate.

Game/Tournament Responsibilities:

- Ensure players have completed all paperwork with regards to registration and age.
- Prior to each game, parent communication should include arrival time, game information and location address or directions to player families.
- Arrive on time at the playing site or designated meeting place.
- Turn-in lineups prior to the game; make decisions on player positions, team strategy, etc.
- Assume responsibility for the conduct of players in practices and during games/tournaments.

Bad Weather:

In case of inclement weather, it is up to the coach to decide whether or not to cancel practice or a game.

- Contact BYFSA Board: Tommy Bendzick 507-398-0776
- BYFSA Board will cancel umpire and field arrangements
- Head Coach to contact Visiting Coach → Coaches contact information <https://www.ryfsa.com/sfc>

Rescheduling a Game:

- All make-up game dates and locations are to be agreed upon by the two head coaches.
- No games that are forfeited due to lack of players are eligible to be rescheduled.
- Contact Tommy Bendzick; he will check on field/umpire availability.

Overall Responsibilities:

- Attend scheduled coaches meeting(s)
- Complete coaches training and/or certifications, as required
- Communicate with parents on a regular basis, ensuring that the parents are aware of events and all logistics related to attending the event; the coach may appoint a team or parent representative to help with these duties. Ensure that players, parents and coaches understand BYFSA policies and conduct themselves in a manner that reflects positively on our softball organization
- Return equipment (balls, bats, tees, nets, bags, catching gear, etc) after the season.

Coaches for 10U and Younger Teams:

The BYFSA Coaches Committee will select coaches from a pool of volunteers.

- **Function:** BYFSA recognizes and supports obligations to family, school and softball. Players will learn about commitment and balancing many obligations. Decisions made by BYFSA coaches will be based on what is good for the softball program, what is good for the team and what is good for the individual. Coaches will strive to win, however, winning is defined in many ways as a result of goal-setting and thus our top priority will always focus on building young ladies of strong character through our softball program.
- **Eligibility Requirements:**
 - Knowledge of softball rules and coaching techniques is preferred
 - Ability to organize team practices, schedules and work cooperatively with BYFSA
 - Provide excellent communication with parents and/or the appointed parent representative
 - Pass a background check and complete required training as needed.

Coaches for 12U and Older Teams:

- **Function:** To coordinate all aspects of the assigned team and to work cooperatively with BYFSA to enhance a quality program within the policy framework of the club.
- **Eligibility Requirements:**
 - Knowledge of softball rules and coaching techniques is required
 - Two+ years of coaching school or club/association softball coaching experience preferred
 - Must be flexible regarding practice, travel and game times for coaching activities
 - Ability to organize team practices, schedules and work cooperatively with BYFSA
 - Provide excellent communication with parents and/or the appointed parent representative
 - Pass a background check and complete required training as needed.
- **Desired Qualifications:**
 - Possess a balance of athletic coaching skills
 - Ability to provide leadership and direction
 - Experience working with adolescents
 - Frequent access to email or text messaging; comfortable with technology
 - Detail oriented and skilled in interpersonal communication
- **Responsible to:** BYFSA Board

X. PLAYER/PARENT EXPECTATIONS AND COMMUNICATION

Communication Methods

Communication is very important between the players, coaches, and parents, and is instrumental in the overall experience. You will be able to find practice and game schedules, results, rosters and coaches contact on the BYFSA website. The SportsEngine App is the preferred way to send and receive communication.

Expectations for Players

- Athletes are responsible for their effort, attitude and choices.
- Be respectful of teammates, coaches, fans, umpires and opponents, represent Byron positively.
- Players will be held accountable for their actions and behavior.
- Communication is important: players are expected to be open, direct, and honest.
- Athletes are encouraged to discuss softball concerns or questions with their head coach.

- Players must understand that every role on their team is important and serves a purpose on the team, and that player roles will be determined by the coach over time and may change during the season.
- Some players will be leaders, others will be motivators and others will be supporters. Some players will contribute more from the field and some players will contribute more from the dugout. All athletes are expected to give full effort, compete hard, and do their best to improve in practice.
- Each player must be respectful of others regardless of differing values, beliefs and personalities. To be a team, players are not expected to be friends but do need to respect individual differences.
- Make practice a priority; players may need to sacrifice social activities to be a committed teammate.
- **Dugout/Game Expectations:** Players will remain inside the dugout during all games. Do not leave to talk to parents, friends, etc. Only players, coaches and bookkeepers are allowed inside the dugout during games. The only food (other than sunflower seeds) allowed in the dugout during the game is a healthy snack for energy - fruit, granola bars, etc. No meals- nachos, hamburgers, pop, etc. will be eaten in the dugout during a game; meals can be eaten between or after games. All players are expected to be in tune with the game and need to be cheering positively for all teammates. A team cheer/chant is okay to start a rally or celebrate a big play. All cheers must be positive and in good sportsmanship. Players will pick up and leave a clean dugout.

Expectations for Parents

- Be on time to drop off and pick up players from events and practices
- Make practices and tournaments a priority for your athlete. Communicate all practice and tournament conflicts well *in advance* to the coach
- Support athletes in a positive manner on and off the field. Set a positive example by respecting players, fans, umpires and coaches
- Model positive behavior and good sportsmanship during all contests
- Understand that you are responsible for your child at every event
- Understand the BYFSA playing time policy *before* the season begins
- Allow the coaches to coach and the players to play. If you want to be a coach, then please contact the BYFSA Board and express interest; if you are not the coach of the team then be a supportive parent and leave the coaching to the coach.

Social Media Expectations Players, Parents and Coaches:

Social media and smartphone apps can be useful tools, however, they can also spread information in a negative way that exposes your personal life. Remember that you represent your team, BYFSA and the Byron community at all times; YOU are accountable for your online presence.

- Because the Internet can be accessed by anyone, it is recommended that you do not post inappropriate information (pictures or text) or join groups that do not promote positive behavior.
- Use discretion when posting pictures of yourself, teammates, friends or other families to social media. Remember that coaches, opponents, school administration, the general public, law enforcement agencies and future employers have access to these social media sites. When it comes to online postings, NOTHING IS PRIVATE; inappropriate postings will follow you for life.
- In summary: Do not post anything that would embarrass the coach, the team or your family. If you believe something you posted would disappoint your family, then know that it will disappoint your coach/parent/daughter too.

Publicity and Photo Release

BYFSA is making a concentrated effort to promote the positive activities, honors and play of our teams and athletes. This includes working with local media and developing our own publications. These publications include information, likenesses and images, which may appear on the BYFSA web site, as well as, on social media. Your child's image may appear in occasional candid photos without any type of name identification and the use of these photos of your child is permissible. There may also be times when BYFSA coaches, volunteers or the board may take photographs of athletes, audio/video tape players or interview athletes for softball related stories in a way that would individually identify a specific player.

By agreeing to this handbook, the authorizing parent grants BYFSA the permission to use my child's photographs and/or videotaped image for the purposes mentioned above. I understand that BYFSA may use these photos and/or videotaped images in subsequent years unless I revoke this authorization by notifying the BYFSA Board in writing. Furthermore, I hereby consent that such images and recordings are the property of BYFSA and they shall have the right to distribute, duplicate, reproduce and make other uses of such photographs or recording as they desire free and clear of any claim whatsoever on my part.

XI. ABUSE PREVENTION POLICY AND PROCEDURES

PURPOSE: This policy establishes how Byron Youth Fastpitch Softball Association (BYFSA) will prevent the physical, emotional and sexual abuse of children and youth by its employees and/or volunteers. BYFSA seeks to create a welcoming and nurturing environment and has zero tolerance for those whose actions may jeopardize the safety, health or innocence of a minor.

DEFINITIONS: Abuse: Because it takes many forms, abuse can be broken down into the following subtypes, all of which are prohibited within the scope of this policy:

- Physical abuse: Injury inflicted on a child or youth
- Sexual abuse: Contact or activity of a sexual nature between an adult and a child or youth
- Emotional abuse: Mental or emotional injury inflicted on a child or youth by the actions of an adult
- Neglect: Failure to provide adequate care for a child or youth
- Economic abuse: Deliberate misuse of money or belongings of a child or youth
- Child: A child is defined as anyone under the age of 12.
- Youth: A youth is defined as anyone between 12 and 18 years of age.

POLICY GUIDELINES

CANDIDATE SCREENINGS: Safeguards will be used to eliminate from consideration any candidates who display characteristics that could classify them at a high risk for violating this policy. The required screenings and background information will depend on the position and its level of involvement with children and youth. BYFSA follows the US Center for SAFESPORT protocols for training and abuse prevention.

For those who regularly work with or around children or youth - Candidates for positions that involve regular interaction with children or youth may be screened and selected using the following:

- Standard BYFSA application that includes signed authorization to perform necessary background checks
- Criminal background checks in any and all states where the candidate has lived in the past seven years
- Sexual offender registry checks in any and all states where the candidate has lived for the last seven years

- Driving records and any applicable certification if the position requires the transportation of children. Criminal and sexual offender registry checks will be conducted regularly for those who work with children or youth.

All information collected about a candidate will be reviewed and used to determine if they are appropriate for the respective position. If hired, all information collected during the hiring process will be included in the volunteer's permanent file, which will be maintained over the course of their employment or volunteer services with BYFSA.

STRUCTURAL GUIDELINES FOR PROGRAMS: All BYFSA programs are designed to encourage safe interaction between BYFSA's volunteers and children or youth. The following guidelines are meant to keep established safeguards effective:

- Volunteers are restricted from being alone with a child or youth where they cannot be easily observed by others.
- Volunteers are not allowed to implement new activities or programs for children without BYFSA consent. Request for new activities or programs should be submitted in writing to the BYFSA Board.
- Written permission must be obtained from a parent or guardian before any volunteer transports a child or youth in the name of BYFSA.

GENERAL CONDUCT: In an effort to provide a safe and healthy environment for both mind and body, the following guidelines are meant to guide BYFSA employees and volunteers during their interactions with youth. These guidelines do not and cannot outline every situation that may be encountered, requiring volunteers to act with a certain degree of personal discretion. Because a certain action is not prohibited in this section does not mean it is acceptable behavior. BYFSA reserves the right to take disciplinary action against employees and volunteers whose actions are found to be inappropriate regardless of whether they appear in this section:

- Volunteers will treat all children and youth with respect and consideration. Treatment must be fair and equal, and must not be based on sex, race, religion, sexual orientation or economic or social status. All efforts must be made to avoid favoritism, or the appearance of favoritism.
- While representing BYFSA, volunteers must not possess, distribute, use or allow others to use any alcohol or drugs.
- Volunteers must act in a professional manner and not engage in activities with minors that is inappropriate or unlawful.

INCIDENTS AND REPORTING: If you believe that you or a child are being subjected to harassment, you should:

- Tell the harasser that his/her actions are not welcome and they must stop, if you feel comfortable enough to do so.
- Report the incident immediately to the BYFSA President. This representative will keep other board members fully informed.
- Report any additional incidents or retaliation that may occur to the above resource. This representative will keep other board members fully informed.
- Any reported incident will be investigated immediately and thoroughly. Any sexual or physical abuse allegations will be immediately reported to local law enforcement.

- Complaints and actions taken to resolve complaints will be handled as confidentially as possible, given BYFSA's obligation to investigate and act upon the reports of such harassment.
- Appropriate actions will be taken by BYFSA to stop and remedy any and all such conduct, including temporary suspension of duties during the investigation period.
- Retaliation of any kind or discriminating against an individual who reports a suspected incident of harassment or who cooperates in an investigation is prohibited.
- When appropriate, the BYFSA board shall communicate reports of abuse to members. The confidentiality of anyone making a report will be protected.

An individual who violates this policy or retaliates against an individual in any way will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including immediate termination and removal from position.

If, for any reason, a volunteer feels there is a need to make an exception to these guidelines, they must submit to the BYFSA President a written description of the incident and why their actions were necessary. Their report will be reviewed for wrongdoing. A copy of the original report along with any additional findings made by the reviewer will be included in the employee's, or volunteer's, permanent file.

XII. CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

Unacceptable Behavior

If a player has engaged in unacceptable behavior, depending on the nature of the disruption, the coach will handle the consequences. The coach may collaborate with the BYFSA Board to determine appropriate solution to the behavior

Conflict Management

The majority of those who engage with BYFSA are volunteers. Coaches, Board Members and other volunteers are not expected to tolerate disruptive or disrespectful behavior by players or parents. Profanity and verbal abuse will not be tolerated. Discipline for detrimental behavior conducted during any BYFSA sponsored game, tournament or event where BYFSA teams are a participant is the responsibility of the coach. If a player does not respond to a coach's verbal warning(s), the BYFSA Board authorizes coaches the ability to dismiss a player from a practice, game or tournament for conduct deemed detrimental to the team. The interpretation as to what constitutes insubordinate or otherwise inappropriate behavior at the time of the incident will rest on the judgment of the coach.

First Offense - Suspension from current practice, game or tournament. The coach shall inform the player's parent(s) of the incident and the player will return to the next scheduled practice or game. A mandatory telephone conference or meeting between the player, the player's parent(s) and coach must take place before the player can resume participation with the team.

Second Offense - The player is automatically suspended from further participation until a mandatory meeting can be scheduled with the player, the player's parent(s), coach, BYFSA President and Vice President. The coach may recommend disciplinary action above and beyond these guidelines to the BYFSA Board if the severity of the situation warrants. Any deviation from the recommendations stated above is subject to the approval of the BYFSA Board. In all cases, notice of suspensions will be communicated to the player's parent(s), the coach and the Board.

Example problems and consequences:

- Unexcused absences and tardiness to practices, games or tournaments: Loss of playing time
 - Multiple unexcused absences and tardiness: Suspension from play and/or Dismissal from team
 - Unsportsmanlike behavior: Suspension from play
 - Abusive behavior to other players and/or coaches: Dismissal from team
-
- Alcohol, drugs and/or tobacco are not allowed at any time during the season. Suspension from play. **Dismissal from a Team due to Parent Behavior**
If there are offenses by a parent that are deemed to be disruptive to team chemistry and performance, then the parent will be approached and solutions will be discussed.
 - If the concerns are still not resolved, the next step would be to set up a meeting with the BYFSA President and Vice President, coach and the family to discuss further. If the behavior still does not improve, then it may result in any and/or all players in the family being dismissed from BYFSA team(s).
 - Examples of disruptive behavior include:
 - Disobeying rules and expectations of parent
 - Unsportsmanlike behavior by parent
 - Abusive behavior by the parent to player(s) and/or coach(es)

Concerns with Coaching Behavior

If a player and/or parent feel that the coach's behavior is unacceptable, they are required to report the issue to the BYFSA President who will in turn report the information to the BYFSA Board. If the BYFSA President is the coach, then the concerns may be brought directly to the BYFSA Vice President.

- If the behavior is deemed as inappropriate by the BYFSA Board, corrective action will take place.
- Player and parents will be kept aware of any pertinent information regarding the corrective action.
- If action has been taken to correct the behavior of the coach and results are not desirable, the player and parent(s) must submit a formal complaint in writing to the BYFSA Board for next steps.

Playing Time / Positions

If a player is concerned with playing time or position being played, then the PLAYER will need to talk directly to the head coach and not to other players or coaches. Players can improve and increase chances of earning more playing time by discussing with the head coach what they can do to improve their personal level of play.

Player Communication Guidelines: Players are expected to respect their coach's decisions, however, should communicate with the coach regarding playing time granted they:

- Do not talk with the coach after they or the coach is upset - use the 24 hour rule.
- These types of concerns should never be discussed at a game or tournament; make an appointment for a meeting with the coach outside of practices and games.
- If the player does not receive the desired results after talking with their coach, the player is to set up a meeting following the three-step process laid out under the Grievance Procedures section following

Things parents may *not* ask the Coach about:

- Playing time
- Game strategies

- Other players on the team

Things parents may want to ask the Coach about:

- Does my daughter work hard and have a positive attitude?
- How would you evaluate my daughter in terms of her offensive, defensive and/or team skills?
- In what area(s) does my daughter need to improve?
- Is my daughter a positive addition to the team?
- What can I do to help?

Parent Communication Guidelines:

- Use the 24 hour rule in case of a conflict. Give each person time to cool down before discussing the issue and then talk on the phone or meet in person when your athlete is present to discuss the issue. Text messages and emails are not appropriate in these instances.
- **It is never acceptable for a parent to talk to the coach about playing time or any disagreements without the athlete present.**

Grievance Procedures

While BYFSA works diligently to address issues before they become problems, we recognize that parents and players need to know how to proceed should they wish to seek resolution to an unresolved problem. If there is a complaint, the following steps are to be followed:

- Follow the 24 hour rule: Allow 24 hours to elapse before initiating communication; do not try to resolve a conflict with a coach before or directly after a game. Encourage your athlete to begin the 3-step communication process:

1. Athlete meets with the head coach.

Whenever possible players are encouraged to work with their coach to resolve differences. *Most of the time a conflict will be solved after Step 1.*

2. Athlete and parent meet with the head coach.

If the problem remains unresolved after discussing the concern between the player, head coach and parent, please contact the BYFSA President.

3. Athlete, parent, and head coach meet with two members of the BYFSA Board.

The BYFSA President will facilitate an informal meeting between the player, head coach, parent(s) and two members of the BYFSA board. At this meeting the participants will discuss possible resolutions of the problem. If deemed necessary by any Board member present at the meeting, a summary of the outcome will be presented to the BYFSA Board for approval.

If the matter is not resolved at the informal meeting and someone wishes to pursue the matter further, a written complaint should be directed to the attention of the BYFSA President. An email or letter must be signed, and contain an email address and phone number. The coach or other individual(s) involved will be given an opportunity to respond, in writing, to the statement. The complaint and response will then be brought before the BYFSA Board as soon as possible. If deemed necessary by the Board, the parties involved may be requested to appear before the Board to answer questions. Written correspondence stating the final decision and action taken by the Board will be communicated to both parties within 15 days. It is anticipated that the majority of problems should be resolved without Board involvement. Submitting a concern to the Board should only be considered when all other means of resolving an issue have failed.

XIV. PLAYER AND PARENT CODE OF CONDUCT

BYFSA Player Code of Conduct

Representing BYFSA is a privilege that should elicit great pride in both the athlete and her family. It is also a responsibility that demands a commitment once a family decides to join the organization. Standards of behavior are high and a willingness to live up to them is essential to being part of the BYFSA organization.

Athletes participating in activities are required to understand and conduct themselves in accordance with the following Code of Conduct at all times; understanding that there will be consequences if abused.

1. I agree to display good sportsmanship and positive behavior, both on and off the field.
2. I will treat all athletes, coaches, parents and officials with respect and dignity.
3. I will accept the calls of the officials and will play to the rules of the game.
4. I will respect the rights and beliefs of others and will treat others with courtesy and consideration; gossip and negative talk of my teammates, coaches or parents is not acceptable.
5. I will be courteous to opposing teams and will treat all players and coaches with respect.
6. I will do everything in my control to always be on time.
7. Player attendance at practices, games and tournaments is essential and I understand that an absence for any reason may result in loss of playing time.
8. I understand that being part of a team within the BYFSA program is a PRIVILEGE. I am not entitled to be on a team nor am I entitled to any playing time on the team. I know that playing time is EARNED. I will work hard in practice and try to earn playing time, but I will accept my role on the team even if it isn't a playing role. My attitude, behavior and work ethic will not be dependent on whether or not I start or get any playing time on my team.
9. I understand that my coach alone will determine playing time and starts in competitions and that those decisions may be based on many factors, including but not limited to: playing ability, athleticism, work ethic, commitment to the team, practice habits, willingness to communicate with my teammates on the field, the way that I interact with teammates in practice and in games, leadership qualities, energy, coachability, physical condition, ability to listen and attitude in general.
10. I will refrain from the use of cigarettes, drugs, alcohol and profanity.
11. I understand that I am representing BYFSA and that my behavior will match the high standards of this organization. The consequences of breaking the above rules will vary from probation, suspension and eventually to the permanent removal from the organization without refund of fees.

BYFSA Parent Code of Conduct

Representing BYFSA is a privilege that should elicit great pride in both the athlete and her family. It is also a responsibility that demands a commitment once a family decides to join the organization. Standards of behavior are high and a willingness to live up to them is essential to being part of the BYFSA organization. Parents and athletes participating in BYFSA activities are required to understand and conduct themselves in accordance with the following Code of Conduct at all times; understanding that there will be consequences if abused.

1. I agree to display good sportsmanship and positive behavior at all times, both on and off the field.
2. I will treat all athletes, coaches, parents and officials with respect and dignity.
3. I will accept the calls of the officials and will play to the rules of the game.
4. I will respect the rights and beliefs of others and will treat others with courtesy and consideration; gossip and negative talk of athletes, coaches or parents is not acceptable.
5. I will be courteous to opposing teams and will treat all players and coaches with respect.

6. I will do everything in my control to ensure my athlete will always be on time.
7. I will refrain from "coaching" my daughter during games.
8. As a parent I understand and respect the differences between parental and coaching roles and agree to uphold the authority of the coaches who are working with my child.
9. I will use good judgment if I disagree with coaches or their methods and will inform them of any issues or conflicts in a private conversation.
10. I will not attend a game or practice under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
11. I agree to pay all fees on time unless prior arrangements have been made with the Treasurer.
12. I understand that I am representing BYFSA and that my behavior will match the high standards of this organization.

I am a parent and/or guardian of an athlete who would like to participate on a BYFSA team. I have reviewed the BYFSA Parent and Player Handbook and understand the rules, expectations, guidelines, responsibilities and obligations that my daughter will be expected to adhere to if she is a part of a BYFSA team, and I plan to support my daughter in this effort.

- I will remember that my daughter is participating for fun and that this experience is for her and her teammates and not for me.
- I will focus on being a good parent to my daughter and leave the coaching to the coach(es).
- I will never question or confront coaches at a practice or competition.
- I understand that the coach may not see things the same way that I do when it comes to decisions on playing time, game strategy, player positions, practice habits or other factors that may affect the level of success that the team has.
- I understand that if I exhibit a negative attitude towards the coach or other players in front of my daughter, it will only make her experience more negative while making it more difficult for her to live up to the codes of conduct that she agreed to adhere to in order to be part of a BYFSA team.