



# RETURN TO PLAY GUIDELINES

UPDATED AS OF MARCH 1, 2021

## INTRODUCTION

On May 6, 2020, the Government of BC announced BC's Restart Plan. Part of that plan was to ask that sector-specific guidelines be created. Government tasked viaSport, a non-profit society that acts as an agent for the BC Government in providing direction and oversight to amateur sport, with developing Return to Sport Guidelines. Those guidelines were developed with direction from the Provincial Health Officer and released on June 1, 2020. ViaSport then asked each Provincial Sport Organization (PSO) to develop their own Return to Sport Plan.

Baseball BC, the PSO for baseball, first developed the plan for our sport in June and July of 2020. This plan was updated regularly throughout the fall and these updates have now been merged with the original document to provide for these updated Return to Play Guidelines for baseball. The plan was drafted to be consistent with the federal and provincial health guidelines, and the provisions of the viaSport Return to Play guidelines. However, while Baseball BC has consulted with viaSport in developing our guidelines, viaSport does not provide approval for individual sport guidelines. We emphasize that the Baseball Return to Play guidelines include a requirement to respect the rules and advice of the responsible federal, provincial and municipal authorities.

We strongly encourage baseball organizations to review both the Baseball BC Return to Play guidelines and the overall viaSport Return to Play guidelines before developing their own written plan. Please note, that just as the Baseball BC guidelines have been approved by the Baseball BC board of directors, individual organizations also need to have their own written Return to Play plans approved by their board of directors. Further, the viaSport directive is clear that these plans must be in compliance with all orders and guidelines from the Provincial Health Officer and must be either posted on the wall of a facility or on the organization's website.

## OTHER GUIDELINES

With a situation that evolves daily and may differ by area, Baseball BC requires all organizations to follow the guidance from all levels of government and the BC health authorities. We also understand that each municipality has potentially different restrictions and limitations for on-field bookings and activity, therefore, we advise organizations to work with all the stakeholders relevant to your own organization and adhere to any appropriate requirements to ensure you are providing a safe environment for all participants.

The information from other authorities in this document is current to the date of the release of this document.

The sport specific guidelines provided by Baseball BC are meant to supplement the requirements and recommendations from the various levels of government, and the viaSport Guidelines.

- ViaSport Return to Sport Guidelines for BC: <https://www.viasport.ca/return-sport>
- BCCDC Covid-19 Resources: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19>
- WorkSafeBC: <https://www.worksafebc.com/en/about-us/covid-19-updates/covid-19-returning-safe-operation>
- Government of Canada COVID-19 Resources: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html>

- For additional links to information and other applicable guidelines, see Appendix F of the viaSport Guidelines.

## ADMINISTRATIVE STEPS

Government and viaSport require several steps to be completed prior to the return to play. These are essential in managing risk and ensuring a safe restart of sport for all involved.

*Note: When Baseball BC refers to an “organization” in this document, it is meant to be inclusive of each of the Baseball BC members AND their affiliated leagues, local associations, clubs, teams, and any other affiliated entity that offers organized baseball in BC.*

## POLICY

In addition to anything required by other authorities, organizations who choose to offer organized baseball at any level must develop the following policies (see viaSport Guidelines for further details):

1. COVID-19 Safety Plan (**Appendix G – viaSport Guidelines**)
2. Illness Policy and Wellness Screening (**Appendix C – viaSport Guidelines**)
3. Outbreak Plan (**Page 20 – viaSport Guidelines**)
4. First Aid Plan (**Page 20 – viaSport Guidelines**)

## APPROVAL TO RESTART

Baseball BC does not approve individual plans from organizations. Organizations who belong to other governing bodies (BC Minor, PBL, Little League, etc.) also need to ensure returning to play is authorized by their respective body.

Return to play plans and policies for each organization must be authorized by its Board of Directors or equivalent decision makers.

The board or senior management of an organization is responsible for the oversight of risk. Each Board member or manager should review the viaSport Guidelines in detail, including the section on Risk Management.

Offering a baseball program of any scope is not mandatory – each organization must assess and decide for itself whether, when, and in what form it is appropriate to offer programming.

When determining if your organization is ready to resume it is important to note that Baseball BC insurance **will not** cover any claims relating to communicable diseases or pandemics and that most policies, including Directors and Officers Insurance, now include specific pandemic exclusions.

Organizations are encouraged to update and use appropriate waivers for registration purposes when conducting baseball activity. It is important organizations understand the limitations of using waivers and are encouraged to obtain legal advice as necessary.

## BASEBALL BC GENERAL HEALTH AND PERSONAL HYGIENE GUIDELINES

*Please note that all of the below Personal Health and Hygiene Guidelines are intended to be required for anyone involved in youth or amateur baseball which includes, but is not limited to; athletes, coaches, umpires, administrators, volunteers and spectators.*

**These guidelines apply to both phase two and three described in this document.**

- Refer to PHO or local health authorities for current restrictions.
- Attendance must be taken and kept at every event for all people in attendance. These records must be kept for 30 days before being destroyed.
- Anyone displaying ANY illness symptoms **MUST NOT** attend.
- No sharing of water bottles.
- No sharing of food of any kind.
- No spitting.
- No chewing gum or sunflower seeds.
- No sharing of any personal equipment or items

<u>Baseball BC RTP Summary</u>				
	<u>Phase 1</u>	<u>Phase 2</u>	<u>Phase 3</u>	<u>Phase 4</u>
<u>Restrictions</u>	No community programming	Maintain Social Distance No non-essential travel	Maintain Social Distancing	Refer to PHO & local health Authorities
<u>Programming</u>	No community programming	In club programming permitted	Cohort Game Play Permitted	Tournaments and provincial play possible
<u>Equipment</u>	No community programming	No shared personal equipment	Minimal shared equipment	Some shared equipment
<u>Activity / Competition</u>	No community programming	Team practice only at Stage 1  In club game play permitted in Stage 2	Interclub or Regional game play permitted within Cohorts	Provincial Competitions and larger scale events may return (TBA)

## RETURNING TO BASEBALL - PHASES

**Any movement between phases will be decided through collaboration with viaSport and the Provincial Health Office and announced by Baseball BC. Individual organizations may not move from one phase to another without approval from Baseball BC. (See also Appendix A – viaSport Guidelines).**

### VIASPORT PHASE 2

**Phase 2 in the viaSport Guidelines is referred to as “Transition Measures.”**

This phase applies to Baseball and informs the baseball specific measures in the “Baseball BC Phase 2”. Important to note about this viaSport phase is the following:

- Refer to PHO or local health authorities for current restrictions.
- Physical distance required between participants
- No non-essential travel
- Increased hand hygiene
- Symptom screening in place
- Preferred outdoor activity only
- No or limited spectators
- No contact-type activities
- Minimal shared equipment – if shared need to disinfect before, during, and after

See the viaSport Guidelines for all the requirements of this phase.

### BASEBALL BC PHASE 2

#### **Phase 2 Guidelines and Recommendations (Stage 1)**

- **Full team training and development sessions permitted.**
- **Refer to PHO or local health authorities for current restrictions.**
- viaSport Phase 2 guidelines are required to be adhered to in all programming.
- All Baseball BC Personal Health and Hygiene Recommended Guidelines to be reviewed and enforced as outlined above.
- Three (3) meters physical distance is required between participants at all times. This includes during drills, activities, and team discussions/huddles. This requirement applies before, during, and after an event.
- Please note that athletes are only permitted to participate on one team at any one time.
- No dugout use permitted.
- No shared use of personal equipment.
- Baseballs should be sanitized prior to every event and every effort given to limit the number of athletes using one ball in a practice environment.
- Any team issue bats should be sanitized prior to every event and between every use by different athletes. No other team equipment should be shared.
- No changing or dressing rooms permitted.
- Indoor practices are permitted so long as the facility is operating in accordance with Provincial, Regional, and Municipal COVID-19 regulations. Anyone practicing indoors must

amend their COVID-19 safety plan to detail how they will continue to abide by all other requirements of Phase 2 when practicing indoors.

#### Spectators

- All bleachers and stands should be closed to spectators.
- If an organization allows spectators, they must implement a strategy to ensure that physical distancing is maintained and minimize opportunities for interaction between athletes and the spectators while at the venue.
- The number of spectators permitted must be consistent with current PHO orders considering maximum group size permitted.

#### Phase 2 Guidelines and Recommendations (Stage 2)

- **All guidelines listed above are applicable with the following notable changes.**
- **Modified and in club game play is permitted.**
- **Refer to PHO or local health authorities for current restrictions.**
- Only game play between teams from the same club are permitted in this phase
- Any modified or in club game play permitted in this phase to follow Baseball BC Phase 3 Game Play Guidelines and Recommendations during game play.
- Participants do not need to maintain physical distancing during brief game related interactions occurring during the normal course of play; however, minimized physical contact is still advised. Intentional physical contact not related to game play, such as high fives, is not permitted. Physical distancing should be maintained between all participants when off the field of play.
- All players to sanitize their hands when returning to the dugout from the field, after each at bat and as required.
- Baseballs need to be new or disinfected every time they are entered into play.
- Umpires must comply with social distancing requirements and may need to use alternate positioning to comply
- On field pre-game home plate meetings should adhere to physical distancing requirements.
- The BC Baseball Umpires Association (BCBUA) Line Up Exchange Protocols should be utilized if on field pre-game home plate meetings are held.
- No mound visits by catcher or coach unless physical distancing requirements are adhered to.
- No postgame handshakes.
- All scorekeeping, announcing and scoreboards operation to be performed outside and not in buildings or booths with social distancing requirements in mind.
- All bleachers and stands should be closed to spectators.
- Practices and training are still expected to follow all Phase 2 requirements and Guidelines as listed above.

#### Phase 2 Guidelines and Recommendations (Stage 3)

- **All guidelines listed above are applicable with the following notable changes.**
- **Intra Club game play now permitted for any team that doesn't have an equivalent in club playing partner.**
- **Refer to PHO or local health authorities for current restrictions.**

- Teams defined by the above may schedule a maximum of 1 team from a neighbouring community to play games against.
- Please note that athletes are only permitted to participate on one team at any one time.
- Teams are not permitted to interact with teams outside of their club or interim partner.

*The recommendations and guidelines in this phase are subject to change.*

### VIASPORT PHASE 3

#### **Phase 3 in the viaSport Guidelines is referred to as “Progressively Loosen.”**

Important to note about this phase is the following:

- Refer to PHO or local health authorities for current restrictions.
- Group sizes may increase.
- Limited spectators.
- Interclub or Regional Play is permitted within a Cohort group.
- Increased hand hygiene.
- Some shared equipment.

See the viaSport Guidelines for all the requirements of this phase.

### BASEBALL BC PHASE 3

#### **Phase 3 Guidelines and Recommendations -**

- **All guidelines listed above in Phase 2 are applicable with the following notable changes.**
- **Refer to PHO or local health authorities for current restrictions.**
- **Game play permitted within cohort groups.**  
*(A cohort is a group of participants who primarily interact with each other within the sport environment over an extended period of time.)*

#### **Cohort Formation**

- Each cohort can be comprised of multiple teams in order to form a mini league. Maximum number athletes allowed to be based on viaSport Guidelines.
- Cohorts should be made up of individuals/teams of similar age and skill level.
- Coaches who are counted outside the total cohort number should consider wearing a non-medical face mask while participating in game play.
- Athletes are only permitted to participate in one cohort at any one time.
- Teams are not permitted to interact (practice or play) with teams outside of their designated cohort.
- Cohorts should remain together for an extended period. If looking to change cohorts, a two-week break, during which teams only practice without contact with other teams, is recommended.

*The recommendations and guidelines in this phase are subject to change.*

#### VIASPORT PHASE 4

##### **Phase 4 in the viaSport Guidelines is referred to as “New Normal”**

Important to note about this phase is the following:

- Refer to PHO or local health authorities for current restrictions.
- Large groups allowed.
- No restrictions on spectators.
- No restrictions on activity types.
- Provincial competitions and larger scale events may return
- Shared equipment permitted.

See the viaSport Guidelines for all the requirements of this phase.

#### BASEBALL BC PHASE 4

Traditional programming, including league and provincial play, tournaments and championships may resume.

Refer to PHO or local health authorities for current restrictions.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS AND GUIDELINES – FACILITY ADAPTATIONS

**The following guidelines and recommendations are provided for organizations, local associations and clubs and are suggested to be considered and incorporated in every phase of Return to Play.**

**These recommendations and guidelines are in addition to the viaSport guidelines for facility access and use (see page 10)**

- Signage advising and educating on COVID-19 wellness, hygiene, and social distancing measures should be in place at every field and facility utilized.
- Use cones and other equipment or markings to ensure appropriate spacing is in place to support distancing.
- All bleachers and stands should be closed to spectators to allow for athlete's safe use while dugouts are closed.
- Directional traffic flow plan and markers may be required in high pedestrian traffic areas
- Field allotments must be modified to allow for all events to stay under the 50-person social gathering limits. It is suggested that you move to 1.5 times the traditional allotment window.
- No gathering should be permitted around the park until the scheduled start time of any event (please consider having arriving participants wait in their car until after the group ahead has vacated).
- Athletes should leave the park immediately after the practice or game.
- Concessions should only be opened or provided through approval of the respective health department.



- Washrooms (if the responsibility of the club or local association) need a defined cleaning schedule at a minimum of twice daily. **See municipal and health authority requirements for washrooms.**
- Water fountains (if present) should be used for only filling of water bottles. Signage should be placed advising not to drink from. **See municipal and health authority requirements for water fountains.**

## DISCLAIMER

While we aim to provide relevant and timely information, because information known about the COVID-19 coronavirus and recommended health and safety measures can rapidly change no guarantee can be given as to the accuracy or completeness of any information provided.

It is important to note that the Guidelines are not a legal document and is to be used as a guide only. It is not a substitute for actual legislation or orders of the PHO. In the event of an ambiguity or conflict between the Guidelines and the Public Health Act, regulations or orders thereunder, the Act, regulations and orders prevail. Each Organization should comply with the requirements of the provincial and local government and health officials in terms of public gatherings and sporting events when determining when it is safe to return to activities.

Nothing in this document is intended to provide legal advice. Do not rely on this document or treat it as legal advice.

Anyone using the Guidelines does so at his or her own risk. Baseball BC shall not be responsible for any loss or damage of any kind arising directly or indirectly from the use of the Guidelines including, without limitation, reliance on the completeness or accuracy of the information provided.