



2024 Spring/Fall Season CHARLES COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION, PARKS, AND TOURISM ADULT SOFTBALL LEAGUE GUIDELINES

I. THE LEAGUE:

- A. **Mission:** To enhance the quality of life for our residents and visitors by providing well rounded recreational and competitive sports programs focusing on building a sense of community and improving the overall quality of life for current and future generations.
- B. **Philosophy:** The Charles County Adult Softball Leagues are first and foremost recreational sports leagues. The purpose of these leagues is to provide an opportunity for Charles County residents to participate in an organized sanctioned Softball League.
- C. **Administration:** The leagues will operate under the jurisdiction of Charles County Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Office. (All guidelines are subject to review and changes may be made at the discretion of the League Coordinator). Items not specifically listed in these guidelines will be decided upon by the League Coordinator, and any questions or discrepancies should be brought to, Rachel Halmon the League Coordinator's attention; halmonr@charlescountymd.gov, 301-934-9305 ext. 5149.

League Format: Regular season play will be round robin format, whenever possible, teams will play double-headers. Each league is contingent upon having at least four teams. A single-elimination tournament for a minimum of the top four (4) teams of each division will be held at the conclusion of the regular season.

D. Division Breakdown:

- a. Team Classification: Teams may be placed in leagues at the discretion of the League Director.
- i. **Men's Division:** This division (when possible) will consist of a North and South league; with North being the highest level of play.
 - ii. **Co-Rec Division:** A competitive recreational atmosphere for both males and females simultaneously. This division may consist of a North (Friday Night) and a South (Sunday Afternoon) league.
 - iii. All teams are registered in the USA program; therefore, teams are sanctioned and are eligible for tournament play with USA Softball.

II. COACHES/MANAGERS:

- A. Each team must have a designated coach or manager who will be the team representative and will be responsible for the following:

1. Be the liaison between League Coordinator and team.
2. Attend all coaches/managers meetings. Ensure that phone numbers and addresses are **always** current and valid at all times.
3. Inform team members about all information about the league (rules, regulations, schedule, etc.).
4. The conduct of players and team spectators.
5. Obtain and return on time to the office of League Coordinator all league information required such as franchise fees, registration, rosters, etc.
6. Reinforce the recreation philosophy to all players.
7. Responsible for keeping team bench and surrounding area free of trash resulting from team members and team spectators (see Park Rules).
8. Responsible for reporting scores to the Facilities Attendant on site. If a staff member is not present, scores can be sent to via email to: halmonr@charlescountymd.gov.

III. TEAM MEMBERSHIP:

- A. A 20% administration fee is deducted for all refund requests 4 weeks prior to the league starting; a 50% refund if withdrawal requested 2 weeks prior to the league starting; no refund will be given inside of two weeks.
- B. Each team shall be limited to a minimum of 15 players and a maximum of 20 players (no exceptions).
- C. Additions and/or deletions to the roster must be in writing and submitted to the League Coordinator before player(s) are eligible to play in any game. **Last day to add/drop is by the third week of the season.**
 1. Adding or dropping players must be done by using the current add/drop form. **A verbal addition will not be accepted, nor will it be accepted at the game site.**
 2. Teams needing to add players (after last day to add/drop) may do so with the permission of the League Coordinator, but such teams are not eligible for regular season awards or tournament play.
 3. Teams may not hold players on their team past the add/drop date to avoid elimination in the program.
 4. **Add/Drops must be received by the League Coordinator before the start of the game by 5:00 p.m. (weekday), by 11am (weekend).**
 5. Completed team rosters (with names, addresses, phone numbers, etc.) must be submitted online to the League Coordinator before their team's first game.
- D. Team members on a particular team may not be held on a roster past the add/drop date to purposely eliminate their participation in the program. Note: Players may switch teams in the same division, only if they have not played in any games and it is before the add/drop deadline; players that have played in

games before the add/drop deadline can only switch teams if the new team is in a different division.

- E. If a player is on two (2) separate rosters and plays in a game, the team which the player first played for shall be their team for the remainder of the season.
- F. The first-place finisher of the regular season will be moved to the next higher level of competition during the next sport season in which the team participates. If 5 or more players of the first-place team return to that team or any team, then that team will be moved up as stated above. Teams will be reclassified during the next sports season, if necessary. We reserve the right to move down the bottom finisher, if necessary, to provide a competitive balance to the league.
- G. Out of County Players:
 - 1. Non-residents are welcome to participate, however, in the circumstance where a division has reached a full capacity of teams, rosters with Charles County residents will be given priority.

IV. **PLAYER ELIGIBILITY**

Players must be 18 years of age and not eligible to participate at the high school level.

EXCEPTION: a player who is 17 years old graduates during the current season can be listed on the team roster; however, that player is not eligible to play for his/her team until after graduation date.

- A. Any team that knowingly or unknowingly plays a non-roster or illegal player will automatically forfeit all games in which the illegal player participated.
- B. A player may only play in one league or division per season sponsored by the Department of Recreation, Parks & Tourism. If it's determined that the player played in two different leagues, he can be suspended up to four games.
- C. **Each team is required to have every player on their roster show a picture ID before playing in their first game.** At any time during the season, the Department of Recreation, Parks & Tourism reserves the right to ID any player whose eligibility comes into questions.
- D. The League Coordinator will provide the Facility Attendant with copies of team rosters for their onsite use. However, any administrative changes to rosters will only be conducted through the main office. Players are responsible for providing proof of identification to determine player eligibility to the Facility Attendant (if not, he or she will immediately be declared ineligible).
- E. Smoking and/or the possession and consumption of alcoholic beverages are strictly prohibited at Charles County Recreational Parks. Any player, coach, or spectator who violates the Parks Rules and Regulations regarding smoking and the possession and consumption of alcoholic beverages on Park Property will be subject to a thirty (30) day suspension and possible removal from the program. Any period of the suspension not served during the current season will be carried over to the next.
- F. Player participation in multiple leagues:
 - i. Women can participate on one Co-Rec Sunday league team and one Co-Rec Friday League Team.

- ii. Men can participate on one Co-Rec Sunday League team and one Co-Rec Friday league team.

V. EJECTIONS/SUSPENSIONS

- a. Consequences for suspensions/ejections will be decided by the Recreation, Parks, and Tourism office based upon a 3 Tier system. Any player, parent, coach, or spectator who is suspended may not attend any game or practice sites until their suspension has been fulfilled. If games are postponed or rescheduled, suspensions are indefinite until games are played.

1. Tier One: 1-game Suspension

- a) A tier one offense may be issued to any player, parent, coach, or spectator based on the following criteria, which includes but is not limited to:

- 1. Is ejected from a game or asked to leave a game or practice site by an official or Department of Recreation, Parks and Tourism staff member for harassment, obscene gestures or language, or any other unsportsmanlike behavior. The result of these actions will result in a 1-game suspension, effective immediately, starting with your team's next scheduled game.

- b) Any further ejections may result in suspension from the league.

2. Tier Two: Suspension for remainder of season

- a) Anyone may be suspended from the league and all Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism programs for the remainder of the season.

- b) A tier two offense may be issued, at the discretion of the League Director to any player, coach, or spectator based on the following criteria, which includes but is not limited to:

- 1. Committing multiple tier one offenses within the same season.
- 2. Strike, shove, bump, trip, or threaten an official, player, coach, spectator, Recreation, Parks, and Tourism staff member or league official during or after a game, on Charles County Community Center, Public School, or Park property.

3. Tier Three: 2 Year Suspension

- a) Anyone involved in a tier 3 offense may be suspended from the league and all Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism programs for a minimum of two years.

- b) A tier three offense may be issued, with discretion from the League Director to any player, parent, coach, or spectator based on the following criteria, which includes but is not limited to:

- 1. Committing multiple tier one or tier two offenses within a year of previous offenses.

2. Is involved in a severe incident that displays excessive, relentless, or malicious disobedience of our mission, including but not limited to; harassment, fighting, or conduct with intent to harm an official, player, coach, spectator, Recreation, Parks, and Tourism staff member or league official during or after a game, on Charles County Community Center, Public School, or Park Property.

VI. GAME RULES:

- A. Unless modified by these guidelines, all games of the league shall be played in accordance with current USA Softball Rules.
- B. **Technical Out:** As a sanction against those teams or individuals whose behavior is unacceptable, but the umpire judges that ejection is too severe a penalty, the umpire may invoke a technical out against the offending team.
 1. **Defense:** If the team in the field is guilty of unsportsmanlike conduct, the umpire may invoke the technical out rule by giving them an out when they come to bat.
 2. **Offense:** If the team at bat is guilty of unsportsmanlike conduct, the umpire may enforce an out against them. If this is the first or second out of the inning, the game continues with the batter and base runners being unaffected; an additional out is simply added to the team's total. If the technical out is the third out of the inning, the next inning will resume with the batter who would have batted had the out not been called. In this case, the batter will begin with a fresh one-and-one count.
 3. Two consecutive technical outs may not be assessed against the same team. At least one pitch (legal or illegal) must intervene. An ejection for any unsportsmanlike behavior must be accompanied by the charging of an out against the offending team.
- C. **Playing Field:**
 1. The baseball diamond is a square with equal sides of 70 feet with a base at each corner.
 2. The pitching mound is in the center of the diamond, 50 feet from home plate and directly aligned with the 1st – 3rd base diagonal.
 3. The batting box is a rectangle with the front of the box aligned with the front of home plate and is 4 feet wide by 7 feet deep.
- D. **Regulation Games:**
 1. **Legal Delivery:** The ball must be delivered with perceptible arc and reach a height of at least 6 feet from the ground, while not exceeding a maximum of **12 feet** from the ground. The pitch shall be released at a moderate speed. The speed is left entirely up to the judgment of the umpire.
 2. **Legal Position of the Pitcher's Feet:** The pitcher may take a position from the front edge of the pitcher's plate to six feet behind the pitcher's plate within the 24-inch width of the pitcher's plate with both feet on the ground. No part of the foot shall be outside imaginary lines extended from the two edges of the pitcher's plate to six feet behind it.

4. All games will be played using a 1-and-1 count (One ball and One strike) for each player with an additional foul. (If foul fly ball is caught, runners may tag and advance at their own risk).
5. All Co-Rec league and tournament games will be played using 12" softball for males and 11" softball for females. The first base coach for the team at bat will be responsible for the rotating of softballs during games.
6. **Grace period:** 15-minute grace period will be used for the first weeknight games only (6:30 p.m. start) Monday-Friday. The time used during the grace period will be deducted from your 60-minute time limit. **Note: the deducted time will not be added back to the game time.** NO grace period for weekend games or later weeknight games.
7. A team failing to field the minimum number of players within fifteen minutes for teams first scheduled game that night be ruled a forfeit. If a team can field the minimum number of players by the start of the second game, the game will be played.
8. Base stealing will not be allowed in league or tournament games.
9. Second team listed on the schedule is home team and shall have the official scorebook. The scorebook should list each player's complete name.
10. The home team provides the game ball for both teams to play with.
11. Any team ahead by twenty (20) or more runs after four (4) innings (3½ if the home team is ahead) and ten (10) or more runs after the fifth inning (4½ if the home team is ahead) or any complete inning, thereafter, shall be declared the winner.
12. If a team is winning after the top of the 7th inning and is set to kick in the bottom of the inning, the game ends and will be marked as a regulation game.
13. If no official umpire arrives for a game, the game may be played if both coaches agree and there is a volunteer umpire to umpire the game. If a game is started with a volunteer umpire, it must be completed. Both coaches are required to sign the scorebook as proof of agreement. Payment to volunteer umpires is at the risk of the teams and Charles County Parks and Recreation will not reimburse such payment.
14. A game that is called off by the umpire after four full innings of play shall be considered a regulation game. The game score at the end of the last full inning shall determine the winner. Regulation games called off that end in a tie shall be marked as a tie.
15. A game that is called off by the umpire for any reason before four full innings of play shall not be considered a regulation game and the rescheduled game will pick up exactly where the game left off. Same batter (or substitute), same count, same number of outs, base runners, etc.
16. **Courtesy Runner:** Any eligible player on official line-up including available substitutes may be used as a courtesy runner. A courtesy runner may be used once per inning. One per gender.

NOTE: Any courtesy runner used in Co-Rec must be gender specific.

- E. **Home Runs and Running Bases:** When a home run is hit out of the ballpark, the batter and all runners can go directly to the dugout. No appeals can be made for runners missing a base.
- a. **Home Run Restrictions:** A limit of over-the-fence home runs/per game will be used in all men's and co-ed slow pitch divisions. (There will be no limit to the number of in the park home runs.)
 - b. **Men's League (Monday Night):** Two. All homeruns from this point will be ruled as an out.
 - c. **Co-Rec Leagues (Friday & Sunday Night):** Two. All homeruns from this point will be ruled as an out.
- F. **Starting a Game & Lineups:**
- a. A team shall consist of (10) players to start the game.
 - i. **Co-Rec Play** - A team shall consist of five (5) men and five (5) women to start the game. A game may start and/or be played with a minimum of eight (8) or nine (9) players. There will be an out taken in the missing player's position. If the ninth and/or tenth player arrives after the start of a game, he/she shall bat in the ninth and/or tenth bating position.
 - ii. **Co-Rec Play** - If only eight (8) players are used, the team may consist of - 4 men & 4 women. If only nine (9) players are used, the team may consist of - 5 men & 4 women or 5 women & 4 men.
 - b. If a team chooses to bat extra players, they can bat up to 14 players. Note: Co-Rec - The extra batters will consist of one (1) male and One (1) female by 2's (12, 14).
 - i. Extra players must be present at game time to be included in starting line-up. Extra players may not be added after the game starts. Extra players listed in the starting line-up must be present at the game field at the beginning of the game.
 - ii. The extra players, if listed in the starting line-up, may rotate in and out of the game defensively.
 - iii. Players listed as substitutes may re-enter one (1) time.
 - c. If a team chooses to use an extra player(s), **Men's and Co-Rec can bat up to 14 players.** The extra players used in Co-Rec will consist of 1 male and 1 female **by 2's (12, 14).** If substitutes are available, with the following exceptions:
 - i. In case of any ejection or injury, a team may finish with one less than they started with. If a substitute is not available, there will be an out taken in the batting order spot of the missing player(s).
 - ii. The extra player may substitute in the field for any player at any time during the game (players must bat in their original order during the entire game).
 - d. In CO-REC PLAY, THE PITCHER AND CATCHER MUST BE OF OPPOSITE SEX AT ALL TIMES. Two males and two females - in both the infield and outfield - and in position, defined by the infield dirt for infielders and the grass for outfielders. **Note: maximum number of players allowed in the infield does not change when playing with eight (8) players.**

- e. **Co-Rec Outfield Throws:** No outfielder will be allowed to throw directly to first base for a force out. All throws from the outfield grass must be relayed by an infielder.
- f. **Co-Rec Batting Order:** The batting order shall alternate the sexes, with either a male or female player batting first. When a male batter is walked, be it intentionally or unintentionally, the male batter is awarded first and second base, and the following female batter will bat. **EXCEPTION:** With two outs, the female batter has the option to walk or bat. **Note:** If a male walks, he does not need to step on first base and can immediately go to second base.
- g. **Co-Rec Base Running:** Any runner who remains on his/her feet and crashes into a defensive player who has the ball or is about to catch a thrown ball will be ruled out. **Note:** If the act is determined to be flagrant, the offender shall be ejected. An errant throw drawing the defense into the path of the runner is not interference.
- h. **On Field Warm-up:** Thirty (30) minutes prior to the first scheduled game of the day, the visiting team has the field first for fifteen (15) minutes, for warm-up, while the home team has the field for the remaining fifteen (15) minutes prior to the start of the game. Second game and all subsequent games shall have no warm-up time on the field.
- i. **Time Limit:** For scheduling purposes, **all games will be one hour apart** however the length of each game will be seven innings (unless darkness, rain, time limit or run rule prevails), and then five innings constitute a completed game. **NOTE: Softball game shall have no new inning start after sixty (60) minutes of play, unless tied or that 5 innings have not been completed, then 1 pitch softball rules will be in effect to determine a winner (strike/foul = out: ball = walk).** Any game which reaches 60 minutes during the bottom of the 5th inning with the home team ahead shall be considered over at that point. The inning does not have to be completed. **IN THE EVENT THE GAME IS TIED AFTER SEVEN COMPLETED INNINGS; ONE PITCH SOFTBALL RULES (Strike/foul = out: Ball = walk) WILL BE IN EFFECT TO DETERMINE A WINNER.** Tournaments sponsored by Charles County Department of Recreation, Parks and Tourism will use one pitch rules for all extra-inning games until the championship game, which will revert to a 1-1 count.
- j. **Flip/Flop rule will be used for all leagues:** In the inning when the Run Rule for that particular program is exceeded (after the second inning) and the home team is losing, the home team will remain at bat and become the visiting team. If the new visiting team does not score enough runs to reduce the run difference below the Run Rule, the game is over. If they reduce the run difference to below the Run Rule, then the new home team will bat. If they subsequently score enough runs to exceed the Run Rule, the game will be over; if they do not the Game will continue under that format. If the situation reverses, the teams would flip/flop again.
- k. **Field Curfew:** No inning or overtime period may start after 11:15 p.m., in which case the **USA rule (Rule 5, Section 3-E)** concerning a "Regulation game," will apply which states; A regulation tie game shall be declared if the score is equal when the game is called at the end of the five or more completed innings, or if the team second at bat has equaled the score of

the first at bat in the completed inning.

VII. EQUIPMENT:

- A. All softball bats must be certified by USA Softball. For a complete listing of approved bats, go to www.teamusa.org. For the complete list of banned bats for the Charles County Adult Softball season, please go to www.charlescountyparks.com
- B. Game balls (12" Trump Optic Yellow, .52 cor, 275 compression - 11" Trump Optic Yellow, .44 cor, 375 compression) will be supplied by the League Director prior to the start of the season. Other equipment (face mask, chest protector, etc.) is optional and must be provided by teams.
- C. **Team Uniform Policy:** All teams are strongly urged to have all players wear same-colored shirts with at least a six (6) inch number on the front or back. No duplication of numbers will be accepted.
 - 1. If a player's eligibility to participate is challenged because of no team shirt or number, that player must present a picture ID to the umpire to confirm the player's true name. If a picture ID is produced, the player may remain in the game. The umpire will report the player's name to the League Office the next day for final determination as to the player's eligibility to play on that team.
- D. Players must wear athletic shoes. Rubber cleats are permissible. Metal cleats are prohibited.
- E. **Jewelry:** Exposed jewelry, which is judged by the umpire to be dangerous, must be removed and may not be worn during the game.
- F. Religious and medical-alert medals are not considered jewelry. A religious medal shall be taped and worn under the uniform. A medical-alert medal shall be taped and may be visible.
- G. Due to safety concerns, Charles County Recreation, Parks, & Tourism does not recommend wearing beads in the hair, however, if beads are to be worn, at the discretion of the referee, Department of Recreation, Parks, & Tourism staff, or league representative they must be securely fastened close to the head and covered with a soft covering so as to not increase the risk to athletes, teammates or opponents.
- H. Sweat bands for wrist and head are allowed if worn appropriately.
- I. Items worn for religious reasons must be brought to the attention of the Facility Attendant.
- J. No metal belt buckles allowed.
- K. Eyeglasses should be secured with a strap.
- L. Casts of any kind, even if padded, are not allowed.

VIII. LEAGUE REGULATIONS:

- A. Forfeiture
 - 1. Teams that forfeit three consecutive or a total of four games will be dropped from the league.
 - 2. Any team using an ineligible player or using a player under any assumed name shall automatically forfeit all games in which the illegal player participated. Any player guilty of this infraction will be suspended for the remainder of the season.
 - 3. Any coach using an ineligible player will also be suspended for the remainder of the season.

4. **Tournament Play:** Any team using an ineligible player will be disqualified immediately. **ID's will be checked before tournament games.**
5. Any repeat infraction of the above rule will result in that team being dropped from the league and all scheduled games not played shall be forfeited to the opponents.
6. When a team forfeits a game, the opposing team may use the field for practice or scrimmage (except the last scheduled game, the field will be closed upon forfeit). Teams must vacate the field five minutes prior to the scheduled start of the next game.
7. Teams that forfeit games before game day will not be allowed to make up games if regularly scheduled date is rained out

B. Protests

1. Rule interpretations must be protested at the time of the incident, and before play resumes (next pitch). If the umpire's decision is not accepted, the coach must immediately notify the opposing coach and umpire of their intention to protest. The protest will immediately be logged in the official scorebook including reason, inning, and score.
2. If by chance a situation cannot be resolved with the umpire, a written protest may be made. **IF THE COACH HAS NOT NOTED THE PROTEST IN THE OFFICIAL SCOREBOOK, THE LEAGUE COORDINATOR WILL NOT ACCEPT A PROTEST ON THE MATTER.**
3. Formal protests (including player eligibility) must be submitted in writing to the League Director within two working days of the incident.
4. All protest must be accompanied by a \$100.00 certified check or money order, made payable to Charles County Commissioners. If the protest is upheld, the fee will then be refunded. The coach or assistant coach shall be the only people permitted to protest.
5. No verbal complaints concerning umpires, other teams, etc., will be addressed---all complaints must be made in writing and there is no fee requirement.

C. Tie Break Procedures:

1. Tie Break Procedures. **The tie break procedures will only be used if teams are tied in regular season standings, and will be as follows:**
 1. Win/Loss record in head-to-head competition.
 2. Runs allowed in head-to-head competition.
 3. Runs allowed against the entire league.
 4. If necessary, a coin flip will take place.

* *If three or more teams are tied, prior to #2 Win/Loss record in head-to-head competition between all tied teams will be used. If teams are still tied, total runs allowed in head-to-head competition between all tied teams will be used prior to #2.

D. Awards: If a post season tournament is held, the tournament champion and runner up will receive a sponsor trophy.

1. The regular season championship may pick one of three awards options:
 1. Sponsor trophy or medals for players.
 2. Championship shirts w/numbers and names on the back.

3. \$150 discount off the next league the team registers for.
4. Choice of awards must be made immediately following the final game. Player name verification is required immediately following the game for all awards. Shirt sizes and numbers are required if the shirt option is selected.

IX. BLOOD RULE

- A. A player, coach or umpire who is bleeding or who has transferrable blood on his uniform shall be prohibited from participating further in the game until appropriate treatment can be administered. If medical care or treatment is administered in a reasonable length of time, the individual will not have to leave the game. The length of time considered reasonable is left to the umpire's judgment. Uniform rule violations will not be enforced if a uniform change is required. The umpire shall:
1. Stop the game and allow treatment if the injured person would affect the continuation of the game.
 2. Immediately call a coach, trainer or other authorized person to the injured player.
 3. Apply the rules of the game regarding substitutions, re-entry and shorthanded player if necessary.
 4. Coaches should have first aid supplies and extra uniforms available for every game.

X. INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

- A. In case of inclement weather, each park field will be evaluated individually as to playing conditions. Please remember that our parks are located in different areas of the county and that cancellation at one park does not necessarily mean that we are cancelling elsewhere. All coaches will be notified of any cancellations via email. Notices will also be posted on our website.
- B. For information **after 4:00 p.m.**, you can still call the park where your game is scheduled directly. A recording will announce which fields are canceled. White Plains Park office number is 301-645-2617 and Laurel Springs Park office number is 301-934-2541.
- C. Cancellations at the last minute or at game time will be handled by park staff at the field.
- D. All games to be rescheduled will be done by the League Director, and may be scheduled on various nights. Schedules will remain the same, only rainouts will be rescheduled. Coaches are responsible for checking the Department of Recreation, Parks & Tourism website at www.charlescountyparks.com (Outdoor Sports/Adult Softball/Make-up Games) for all rescheduled game dates.
- E. Lighting: Criteria for suspension and resumption of play:
- i. **Thunder and Lightning** - If thunder and/or lightning can be seen or heard, participants, spectators and staff are in danger. The contest must be stopped, and protective shelter sought immediately. If either situation should occur, 30 minutes will be allowed to pass after the last sound of thunder and/or lightning (before the contest may resume).

- ii. The 30-minute delay due to thunder and lightning will restart after each instance. If thunder or lightening is heard or seen any time after the first 15 minutes of the delay, the match will be considered cancelled.
- iii. If weather conditions change while a game is in progress, or the field is in unsafe playing condition--the umpire and sport attendant will make the decision to cancel games at the game site. Note: the cancelation of 6:30pm/7:30pm game doesn't automatically cancel the 8:30pm/9:30 pm game.

CONCUSSION FACT SHEET

WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A concussion is an injury that changes how the cells in the brain normally work. A concussion is caused by a blow to the head or body that causes the brain to move rapidly inside the skull. Even a “ding,” “getting your bell rung,” or what seems to be a mild bump or blow to the head can be serious.

Concussions can also result from a fall or from players colliding with each other or with obstacles, such as a goalpost, even if they do not directly hit their head.

The potential for concussions is the greatest in athletic environments where collisions are common. Concussions can occur, however, in any organized or unorganized sport or recreational activity. As many as 3.8 million sports and recreation-related concussions occur in the United States each year.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF A CONCUSSION?

If your player has experienced a bump or blow to the head during a game or practice, look for any of the following signs and symptoms of a concussion:

Signs Observed by a Coach or Teammates:

- Appears dazed or stunned
- Is confused about assignment or position
- Forgets an instruction
- Is unsure of game, score, or opponent
- Moves clumsily
- Answers questions slowly
- Loses consciousness (even briefly)
- Shows behavior or personality changes
- Cannot recall events prior to hit or fall
- Cannot recall events after hit or fall

Symptoms Reported by Athlete

- Headache or “pressure” in head
- Nausea or vomiting

- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double or blurry vision
- Sensitivity to light
- Sensitivity to noise
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy
- Concentration or memory problems
- Confusion
- Does not “feel right”

HOW CAN YOU HELP YOUR PLAYER PREVENT A CONCUSSION?

Every sport is different, but there are steps your players can take to protect themselves from concussion.

- Ensure that they follow their coach’s rules for safety and the rules of the sport.
- Encourage them to practice good sportsmanship at all times.
- Make sure they wear the right protective equipment for their activity. Protective equipment should fit properly, be well maintained, and be worn consistently and correctly.
- Learn the signs and symptoms of concussion.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU THINK YOUR PLAYER HAS A CONCUSSION?

- **Seek medical attention right away:**
 - A health care professional will be able to decide how serious the concussion is and when it is safe for your player to return to sports.
- **Keep your player out of play:**
 - Concussions take time to heal. Do not let your player return to play until a health care professional says it is okay. Players who return to play too soon – while the brain is still healing – risk a greater chance of having a second concussion. Second or later concussions can be very serious. They can cause permanent brain damage, affecting your players for a lifetime.
- **Tell your coach about any recent concussion:**
 - Coaches should know if your child had a recent concussion in ANY sport. Your coach may not know about a concussion a player received in another sport or activity unless you tell the coach.

Remember, you can’t always see a concussion and some athletes may not experience and/or report symptoms until hours or days after the injury. It is better to miss one game than the whole season.

For more detailed information on concussion and traumatic brain injury, visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/injury>

Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA)
Information for Parents and Student Athletes

Definition: Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA) is a potentially fatal condition in which the heart suddenly and unexpectedly stops beating. When this happens, blood stops flowing to the brain and other vital organs. SCA in student athletes is rare; the chance of SCA occurring to any individual student athlete is about one in 100,000. However, student athletes' risk of SCA is nearly four times that of non-athletes due to the increased demands on the heart during exercise.

Causes: SCA is caused by several structural and electrical diseases of the heart. These conditions predispose an individual to have an abnormal rhythm that can be fatal if not treated within a few minutes. Most conditions responsible for SCA in children are inherited, which means the tendency to have these conditions is passed from parents to children through the genes. Other possible causes of SCA are a sudden blunt non-penetrating blow to the chest and the use of recreational or performance-enhancing drugs and/or energy drinks.

Warning Signs of SCA

- SCA strikes immediately.
- SCA should be suspected in any athlete who has collapsed and is unresponsive.
- No response to tapping on shoulders
- Does nothing when asked if he/she is OK
- No pulse

Emergency Response to SCA

- Act immediately; time is most critical to increase survival rates.
- Recognize SCA.
- Call 911 immediately and activate EMS.
- Administer CPR.
- Use Automatic External Defibrillator (AED).

Warning signs of potential heart issues: The following need to be further evaluated by your primary care provider.

- Family history of heart disease/cardiac arrest
- Fainting, a seizure, or convulsions during physical activity
- Fainting or a seizure from emotional excitement, emotional distress, or being startled
- Dizziness or lightheadedness, especially during exertion
- Exercise-induced chest pain

- Palpitations: awareness of the heart beating, especially if associated with other symptoms such as dizziness
- Extreme tiredness or shortness of breath associated with exercise
- History of high blood pressure

Risk of Inaction: Ignoring such symptoms and continuing to play could be catastrophic and result in sudden cardiac death. Taking these warning symptoms seriously and seeking timely appropriate medical care can prevent serious and possibly fatal consequences.

Information used in this document was obtained from the American Heart Association (www.heart.org), Parent Heart Watch (www.parentheartwatch.org), and the Sudden Cardiac Arrest Foundation (www.sca-aware.org). Visit these sites for more information.

Frequently Asked Questions about Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA)

What are the most common causes of Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA) in a student athlete?

SCA is caused by several **structural** and **electrical** diseases of the heart. These conditions predispose an individual to have an abnormal rhythm that can be fatal if not treated within a few minutes. Most conditions responsible for SCA in children are **inherited**, which means the tendency to have these conditions is passed from parents to children through the genes. Some of these conditions are listed below.

1. *Hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM):* HCM involves an abnormal thickening of the heart muscle and it is the most common cause of SCA in an athlete.
2. Coronary artery anomalies: The second most common cause is congenital (present at birth) abnormalities of coronary arteries, the blood vessels that supply blood to the heart.
3. Other possible causes of SCA are:
 - a. *Myocarditis:* an acute inflammation of the heart muscle (usually due to a virus).
 - b. Disorders of heart electrical activity such as:
 - c. *Long QT syndrome.*
 - d. *Wolff-Parkinson-White (WPW) syndrome.*
 - e. *Catecholaminergic Polymorphic Ventricular Tachycardia (CPVT).*
 - f. *Marfan syndrome:* a condition that affects heart valves, walls of major arteries, eyes, and the skeleton.
 - g. Congenital aortic valve abnormalities.
Comotio Cordis: concussion of the heart from **sudden blunt non-penetrating blow** to the chest
 - h. Use of recreational, **performance-enhancing** drugs, and **energy drinks** can also bring on SCA.

How can we minimize the risk of SCA and improve outcomes?

The risk of SCA in student athletes can be minimized by providing appropriate prevention, recognition, and

treatment strategies. One important strategy is the requirement for a yearly pre-participation screening evaluation, often called a sports physical, performed by the athlete's medical provider. Since most of these conditions are inherited, **be aware of your family history**, especially if any close family member:

1. Had sudden unexplained and unexpected death before the age of 50.
2. Was diagnosed with any of the heart conditions listed above.
3. Died suddenly /unexpectedly during physical activity, during a seizure, from sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) or from drowning.

Take seriously the warning signs and symptoms of SCA

Athletes should notify their parents, coaches, or school nurses if they experience any of these warning signs or symptoms. Schools in Maryland have AED policies and emergency preparedness plans to address SCA and other emergencies in schools. Be aware of your school's various preventive measures.

If a cardiovascular disorder is suspected or diagnosed based on the comprehensive pre-participation screening evaluation, a referral to a child heart specialist or pediatric cardiologist is crucial. Such athletes will be excluded from sports pending further evaluation and clearance by their medical providers.