



Australian Little League Championships

COVID Tournament Protocols

2021 Baseball Australia Championships

March 2021

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A Guide to Reading This Manual

The protocols set out in this document aim to establish an appropriate level of risk management and public health protection to mitigate risks associated with COVID-19. The Baseball Australia Covid Protocols (Protocol), whilst very comprehensive, cannot mitigate all risks associated with COVID-19 and are reliant on compliance by all relevant stakeholders.

This document has been developed in consultation with medical experts who have worked with other sporting leagues throughout the rapidly evolving COVID-19 pandemic. It considers the current COVID-19 landscape and aims to provide practical solutions for Baseball Australia, State and Territory Organisations, and participating teams to execute throughout the season and during the tournaments.

A set of guiding principles has been relied on in developing this document, with a priority of safety for players, staff, supporters and the wider community. It takes into account the contents of the 'Major League Baseball Supplemental Agreement', and processes that have worked effectively with other sports. Consideration has been given to developing protocols that limit unnecessary financial burden on Baseball Australia, State/Territory Organisations and teams.

Preparing for a season throughout a worldwide pandemic has been a monumental task for all involved.

Although some protocols listed within this document will cause inconvenience throughout the season, compliance by SSO and teams should display the same level of commitment that has been shown by Baseball Australia in ensuring the 2021 Australian Championships became a reality.

This Protocol must be read in conjunction with State/Territory protocols. Any non-compliance with this Protocol may jeopardise the 2021 Australian Championships.

Section 1: Definitions and Interpretations

1. Definitions

In this Protocol:

Australian Championships means the Australian Little Leagues' championships conducted by Baseball Australia.

BA Chief Executive Officer is the BA staff member representing the leadership of the organisation. (Cam Vale)

COVID Compliance Manager is the volunteer member appointed to the role to administer, implement, and ensure compliance of this Protocol during the event at the host venue. (Tournament Director)

Chief Medical Officer means the independent medical practitioner employed by BA. (Dr. Anik Shawdon)

BA Manager of Competition Operations means the administrative officer of the Little League tournaments who has been delegated responsibility to act on behalf of BA in relation to operational matters of the events. (Sharon Butty)

BA Staff means any employee or volunteer of BA whether full-time, part-time or a contractor.

TEAM Support Staff means any non-playing member of the team. This includes, Head Coach, Asst coaches, E.O, etc.

Accredited Entry Point means the dedicated entry point to enter the Venue through, this includes but is not limited to Players, Team Support Staff, Umpires and Game Day Staff.

Close Contact is defined for the purpose of this Protocol by the Australian Government Department of Health. A close contact is:

- face-to-face contact in any setting with a confirmed or probable case, for 15 minutes or more. This is cumulative over the course of one week. It starts from 48 hours before the onset of symptoms in the confirmed or probable case.
- sharing of a closed space with a confirmed or probable case for a prolonged period (e.g., more than 2 hours). This is in the period extending from 48 hours before onset of symptoms in the confirmed or probable case.

Game Day Staff means BA Staff, Host Venue Staff, Game Officials, Grounds Crew, Broadcast, Media, and various other essential contractors.

Game Officials means the umpires, umpire coaches, technical officials, and Scorers.

Player means a person as a baseball player in the participating team.

Protocol means this document, the BA COVID Protocols.

Screen or Screening means a medical assessment which shall include a temperature check and questions determined by the Chief Medical Officer from time to time which may include but are not limited to the below:

- Do you have a fever or recently had a fever (including night sweats or chills)?
- Do you have a cough?
- Do you have shortness of breath?
- Do you have a sore throat?
- Do you have loss of smell or loss of taste?
- Have you had close contact with someone who has returned from overseas in the last 14 days?
- Have you had close contact with someone who works in healthcare, aged or residential care, who has had direct COVID-19 patient contact?
- Have you been notified by a state or territory public health authority that you are a close contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19?

- Have you been in close contact with someone with symptoms of COVID-19 that is awaiting a test result?
- In the last 14 days, have you been in a hotspot?
- In the last 14 days, have you been overseas?
- In the last 14 days have you been a cleared case of COVID-19?
- Are you aware of anyone in your home that would “yes” to any of the above?

The answers to all of the above questions must be “no” to pass the Screening.

Team Biosecurity Officer is the team staff member appointed the role outlined in clause 10.

Host Venue means the venue(s) where Australian Championships are played.

2. Interpretations

In this Protocol, except where the context otherwise requires:

- (a) the singular includes the plural and vice versa, and a gender includes other genders,
- (b) another grammatical form of a defined word or expression has a corresponding meaning,
- (c) a reference to a clause, paragraph, schedule, or annexure is to a clause or paragraph of, or schedule or annexure to, this Protocol, and a reference to this Protocol includes any schedule or annexure,
- (d) a reference to a document or instrument includes the document or instrument as novated, altered, supplemented, or replaced from time to time,
- (e) a reference to time is to the time in Victoria, Australia,
- (f) a reference to a party is to a party to this Protocol, and a reference to a party to a document includes the party's executors, administrators, successors and permitted assigns and substitutes,
- (g) a reference to a person includes a natural person, partnership, body corporate, association, governmental or local authority or agency or other entity,
- (h) a reference to a statute, ordinance, code, or other law includes regulations and other instruments under it and consolidations, amendments, re-enactments or replacements of any of them,
- (i) a word or expression defined in the Corporations Act has the meaning given to it in the Corporations Act; and
- (j) the meaning of general words is not limited by specific examples introduced by including, for example, or similar expressions.

Section 2: Background

3. COVID-19

4. The Novel Coronavirus, SARS CoV2 was first identified in November/December 2019 in Wuhan, China and is responsible for the clinical illness referred to as COVID-19. From the first cases it has now infected well over 125 million individuals and caused over 2.7 million deaths. There has been a massive impact on both domestic and international sport resulting from border closures and restrictions and responses to local outbreaks. The virus belongs to the family of Coronaviridae which includes MERS and SARS, both of which have had devastating health outcomes in the past 20 years. COVID-19 is highly infectious and causes significant illness with damage to multiple organs, suppresses antiviral immune responses and predisposes to the development of blood clots in the lungs and brain. Multiple new variants of the COVID-19 are emerging which appear to spread more rapidly and may have a mildly different clinical presentation. Two COVID-19 vaccines are currently approved for use in Australia and the vaccination rollout started in mid-February 2021, with priority to aged care residents, quarantine workers and frontline healthcare workers. The full vaccine rollout, which includes two doses, in Australia will take up to 10 months. As such, the current strategy remains to control its spread through the implementation of prevention measures through social distancing, isolation, hand, and respiratory hygiene to assist the health care effort.

5. Purpose

- (a) The purpose of this Protocol is to provide a framework to enable the safe return and delivery of the 2021 Australian Little Leagues Championships.
- (b) For the avoidance of doubt, this Protocol applies to all little league program teams.
- (c) As outlined above, this Protocol will be deemed to form part of the Tournament Operations, and any non-compliance is unacceptable.
- (d) This Protocol will be reviewed by BA based on government and medical advice and community transmission rates of COVID-19, and adjusted as necessary, with all subsequent information to be sent to teams and State/Territories Organisations.
- (e) This Protocol is subject to updates, all Little Leagues teams will be issued with a revised update of the Protocol at the time of publication. If any team is uncertain of the application of a Protocol at any time, they must contact the COVID Compliance Manager (Tournament Director) or Manager of Competition Operations (Sharon Butty) for clarification.
- (f) BA, teams, and State/Territories are also required to keep themselves up to date with the National and State/Territory Guidelines on the Department of Health Website:
<https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/cdna-song-novel-coronavirus.htm>
- (g) This Protocol has been developed in line with:
 - I. The 'National Sport Principles and Framework for Resumption of Sport' and the 'AIS Framework for Rebooting Sport in a COVID-19 Environment' released by the Australian Government and the Australian Institute of Sport on 1 May 2020. This Protocol will be adapted to align with the relevant State and Territory COVID-19 directives.
 - II. The National COVID-19 safe workplace principles released on 29 April 2020 following agreement by governments through the National Cabinet process; and
 - III. Advice from Dr Anik Shawon – BA Chief Medical Officer and other health professionals consulted under guidance from Dr Shawdon.

6. Guiding Principles

- (a) The health and wellbeing of its staff, players, supporters, and wider community is paramount to BA, as is the obligation to ensure that no additional risk to the community is created by the start of the 2021 Australian Championships.
- (b) BA continues to closely monitor the situation with respect to COVID-19 and will only return to competition in accordance with advice from government and medical experts.
- (c) Government consultation and State jurisdiction approval, where required, will be sought for the return to competition model, including but not limited to travel logistics and the conduct of Games.
- (d) In conducting the tournaments, BA and its stakeholders will take greater measures than may be currently required of the public as the BA acknowledges it is both a privilege and enormous responsibility to be conducting sport in the current climate.
- (e) The ability to conduct the tournaments with our current resourcing relies on the joint responsibility and ownership of these guidelines by every person referred to in this document.
- (f) The BA Chief Medical Officer has a key role in guiding and implementing infection risk mitigation processes and actions.
- (g) BA will use its best endeavours to ensure third party providers that are essential to the delivery of the tournaments such as broadcasters, media, and venue staff comply with this Protocol where expressly referenced.
- (h) Where relevant, Players, Team Support Staff, Officials and Venue Staff must ensure they comply with Australian, State and Territory Declarations, Directions and Orders.
- (i) A person must not provide any false or misleading statement in connection with the administration of this Protocol.

7. Amendments and Additions

BA may amend or add to this Protocol from time to time, to the extent that any such guidelines impose increased restrictions or obligations on Players, and Officials when imposed by a government authority.

Section 3: Hygiene and Compliance

8. General Hygiene Practices

In line with government advice, Players, Team Support Staff, Umpires and Game Day Staff must maintain good hygiene practices as outlined below:

- (a) wash your hands often and before eating with soap and water for at least 20 seconds,
- (b) if soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser,
- (c) avoid touching your face, eyes, nose, and mouth,
- (d) avoid close contact with people who are sick, and avoid any contact with people who have Covid-19 or are symptomatic and in the testing process,
- (e) cover your mouth to cough or sneeze (using your elbow),
- (f) do not share towels, water bottles or food,
- (g) do not have communal food access i.e., lolly bowls, team buffet style meals etc.
- (h) do not share headsets, computers or laptops, handheld whiteboards, unless they have been wiped with antibacterial wipes or alcohol-based sanitiser prior to and after each use,

- (i) minimise the amount of close contact between all players and individuals at the tournament venue, avoiding huddles, handshaking, high fives, and team meetings in confined spaces,
- (j) maintain social distancing, and limit physical contact where feasible,
- (k) no spitting or clearing nasal secretions; and
- (l) if you are feeling unwell, immediately remove yourself from the proximity of others and notify the COVID Compliance Manager (Tournament Director) or Manager of Competition Operations (Sharon Butty).

9. Increased Hygiene Focus

The following increased hygiene measures for Players, Team Support Staff, Umpires and Game Day Staff should also be practiced:

- (a) frequently touched surfaces such as door handles, light switches, benchtops, phones, the interior of motor vehicles and any other high touch areas should be wiped down with appropriate disinfectant wipes or alcohol-based sanitiser on a regular basis,
- (b) when outside of accommodation, all players and staff should keep personal items and clothing in a bag,
- (c) extra diligence should be taken when staff, players, and officials partake in non-essential activities such as visiting public places, cafes, restaurants.
- (d) When in social settings remain mindful of:
 - I. adhering to current social distancing recommendations and all State/Territory regulations on numbers of people allow in various social situations.
 - II. Avoiding unnecessary physical contact such as hugs, handshakes, and high fives,
 - III. ensuring no one has had any contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19,
 - IV. ensuring no one has been unwell or displayed COVID-19 symptoms in the past 14 days,
 - V. ensuring no one has been in a COVID-19 hotspot as declared by the relevant State Health Department in the past 14 days,
 - VI. encouraging others to adopt the hygiene practices set out in this Protocol.

10. Team Biosecurity Officer

- (a) Each team must nominate one person who will act as the Team Biosecurity Officer whose role is to ensure all players and staff required in attendance at training and game day, comply with this Protocol. The Team Biosecurity Officer can delegate responsibilities as required.
- (b) Depending on roles and responsibilities, the Team Biosecurity Officer might be the same or a different person to the team biosecurity officer.
- (c) The BA COVID Compliance Manager (Tournament Director) and Team Biosecurity Officers will be the point of contact for the tournaments and have the responsibility to champion and implement this Protocol.
- (d) The BA COVID Compliance Manager will communicate with the Team Biosecurity Officers together on a regular basis.

11. COVID Compliance Manager – Tournament Director

- (a) The COVID Compliance Manager will monitor the compliance by teams and their personnel in respect of this Protocol.
- (b) The COVID Compliance Manager:

- I. must be given reasonable access to the teams on Game day immediately on request; and
 - II. may do all things reasonably necessary in order to monitor compliance with this Protocol. Including without limitation investigate any matter in connection with this Protocol.
- (c) For the avoidance of doubt, the COVID Compliance Manager will be considered Game Day Staff for the purpose of case management outlined in section 7.
 - (d) The COVID Compliance Manager will liaise directly with the Team Biosecurity Officers.
 - (e) The COVID Compliance Manager has the ability to report back to the BA Manager of Competition Operations on any suspected breaches of this Protocol.
 - (f) Some State governments require specific reporting, which teams must identify and comply with under the state / territory public health order.

12. Exemptions

- (a) Any person seeking an exemption from compliance with one or more rules of this Protocol, must apply through their team to the BA Manager of Competition Operations (Sharon Butty) providing the full reasons for the request for exemption and identify the provisions of the Protocol for which the exemption is sought. Supporting medical or other information should be included where necessary.
- (b) For the avoidance of doubt, any person seeking exemption under this Protocol must continue to comply with all aspects of the Protocol until in receipt of written exemption from BA.
- (c) Exemptions will be granted at the sole discretion of the BA CEO or Manager of Competition Operations and may be subjected to restrictions that he/she, or the BA Chief Medical Officer deem as appropriate to the request. Decisions under clause outlining non-compliance with this protocol are not eligible for appeal.

Section 4: COVID-19 Testing and Case Management for Players, Team Support Staff and Umpires

For the purpose of Section 4:

- (a) Umpires are subject to the process outlined in this Section in line with Players and Support Staff.
- (b) The Tournament Umpires Coordinator will act as the Umpire Biosecurity Officer for Umpires

13. Case Management

- (a) Any suspected case of COVID-19 in the context of this Protocol will primarily be managed by the BA Manager Competition Operations (Sharon Butty) and may involve consultation with the BA Chief Medical Officer about the potential risk posed to others.
- (b) Management of confirmed cases of COVID-19, including those meeting the definition of 'close contacts' will be under the direction of the relevant State Health Departments and with the assistance from the BA Chief Medical Officer and BA
- (c) After consulting the BA Chief Medical Officer and relevant State Health Departments, the BA CEO will give final approval, which will not be unreasonably withheld, regarding a team's ability to participate in a Game in the event of a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19 of a Player or Team Support Staff.

14. Suspected Positive Case Management

- (a) If a Player, Team Support Staff member or Umpire has symptoms consistent with COVID-19:

- I. they must be presumed to have the virus.
 - II. should seek immediate testing through local hospital, Covid-19 Testing station, or medical practitioner and remain in isolation until the results of the test are known.
- (b) In the case of a negative test, the Player, Team Support Staff member or Umpire must not attend training or Game until they have been cleared by a Medical Practitioner.
- (c) If there are ongoing symptoms, and a diagnosis of COVID-19 is still suspected, the Player, Team Support Staff member or Umpire may require a repeat test as advised by medical practitioner.
- (d) In the case of a positive test, the process must be followed as set out in clause 15.

15. Positive Case Management

- (a) If a Player, Team Support Staff member or Umpire is a confirmed case of COVID-19:
 - I. they must isolate in accordance with the government guidelines.
 - II. They must immediately report to the local public health authority.
 - III. the Team Biosecurity Officer is responsible for notifying the COVID Compliance Manager as soon as possible.
 - IV. the COVID Compliance Manager will escalate as required to the BA Manager Competition Operations who will in turn escalate as required to the BA CEO and Chief Medical Officer.
 - V. the relevant State Health Department will commence contact tracing and will be supported by BA.
 - VI. The COVID-19 confirmed case will not be allowed to resume training or take part in any team activities until cleared by a qualified medical practitioner and signed off by the BA Chief Medical Officer

Section 5: Risk Mitigation

16. General Protocols

- (a) It is very strongly recommended that all Players, Team Support Staff and Game Day Staff always have the Australian Government COVIDSafe App installed and in use, with Bluetooth engaged, to support the National Cabinet's COVID-19 response.
- (b) All Players, Team Support Staff, and any other individuals as identified by BA and Chief Medical Officer will be subject to restrictions as outlined in these protocols.
- (c) Players, Team Support Staff and Game Day Staff are expected to minimise their risk of community exposure of COVID-19 by following Federal and State/Territory COVID-19 regulations at all times.
- (d) If there is a return of community transmission of COVID-19 in any State/Territory, then the following should apply,
 - I. maintaining strict hygiene measures, regular hand washing and social distancing,
 - II. minimising the amount of time, they spend indoors with other people (does not apply to those they currently live with),
 - III. where possible avoid group gatherings, even in outdoor spaces and practice social distancing,
 - IV. attend public places such as shopping areas for minimal time,

17. Game Day Protocols

17.1 Venue Access Control

- (a) Entry to the playing field, clubhouse and dugouts on a Game day will be limited to essential staff only and will be strictly controlled.
- (b) Any individual who requires access to restricted areas on Game day, must:
 - I. be an Accredited Person,
 - II. enter the Venue via the Accredited Entry Point,
 - III. successfully completed the electronic Screening via the check-in/screening link,

Section 6: Travel

18. Interstate Travel and Local Travel (Intrastate)

- (a) The BA is working closely with its partners to ensure risk of COVID-19 infection is always minimised during travel and accommodation sites, and strict hygiene and cleanliness standards are upheld.
- (b) Whilst travelling, each member of the travelling party should continue to practice the hygiene measures outlined within clause 8 of this Protocol.
- (c) All members of the travelling party must always:
 - I. limit their movements to remain within the airport, hotel, venue, and transport where it is practical to do so,
 - II. travel in team organised hire cars to and from Games and the airport,
 - III. Always have individual alcohol-based sanitiser with them,
 - IV. ensure surfaces on hire cars (such as steering wheel, seat belt buckles, hand brake, gear stick), coaches and on planes (arm rests and tray tables) are wiped clean with antibacterial wipes or alcohol-based sanitiser on entry,
 - V. Always minimise contact with hotel staff,
 - VI. comply with social distancing requirements; and
 - VII. use antibacterial wipes whilst at the accommodation to wipe all frequently touched surfaces upon arrival and on a regular basis during their stay.

18.2 Game Day Staff

- (a) When travelling to a Game, all Game Day Staff should:
 - I. travel in their own vehicles to and from the Game with a maximum of three passengers who must also be Game Day Staff
- (b) Should any Game Day staff park their car in a public carpark, they must minimize any interactions with the public when walking from their car to the Venue.
- (c) Where a buffet style is used, a staff member from the hotel must individually serve the travelling party and be wearing a face mask and gloves.
- (d) Whilst staying at accommodation, all members of the travelling party must:
 - I. limit their interactions with hotel staff and guests,
 - II. avoid elevators and use staircases where practical,

- III. practice social distancing measures when utilising private rooms or break out areas; and
- IV. arrange private rooms or break out areas to be cleaned before and after use.

19. Flights

- (a) Flights will be on commercial domestic carriers,
- (b) All individuals of the travelling party will:
 - I. Always maintain social distancing,
 - II. not disperse throughout the airport lounges or terminals whilst waiting for flights.
 - III. avoid interaction with the public,
 - IV. wear face masks whilst in the airport and on the aircraft; and

20. Medical Treatment

- (a) Should external medical treatment be required at the accommodation whilst travelling, the visiting medical practitioner is required to wear appropriate PPE.
- (b) Should any Player require urgent medical treatment at a hospital or other treatment facility such as X-Ray or MRI, the Player and any accompanying staff are required:
 - I. to wear a face mask,
 - II. practice social distancing in any waiting rooms.

Section 7: Venue Protocols

21. General

- (a) COVID-19 is a notifiable disease and Local Public Health Authorities must be informed if there is a confirmed case of COVID-19. Venues may be closed on the instruction of the Local Public Health Authority or the ABL Independent Medical Officer. Re-opening of the Venue should only occur after close consultation with the Local Public Health Authority.
- (b) The BA Staff, Officials and Teams must adhere to individual Venue requirements to ensure that everyone complies with local health, safety and COVID-19 regulations when conducting the competition.

22. Entry Process

- (a) Prior to entry to the Venue, all persons must use the check-in link provided by the Host Venue. It is the Host Venue's responsibility to ensure the required staff are in place at the dedicated entry points.
- (b) In accordance with Section 4: any Accredited Person who is feeling unwell, must not arrive at the Venue and should seek medical advice immediately from their medical practitioner.

23. Hygiene

In addition, the following hygiene measures must also be implemented at the Venue:

- (a) alcohol based sanitiser must be available in any PMOA and in dugouts,
- (b) strictly no sharing of towels, water bottles and food,

- (c) Host Venue to take steps to adequately clean and disinfect player facilities pre-Game (prior to Player arrival) unless the Game is a double header in which clause 21 applies,
- (d) if ambulance paramedics or emergency physicians are required to attend the Venue or treat a Player during the Game, they will be under the direction of the Covid Compliance Officer or Team Biosecurity Officer,