



# RETURN TO PLAY

SOFTBALL ALBERTA

# Presentation Outline

- Introduction
- Process
- Key Findings
- Recommendations



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# Introduction

# Goal

Softball Alberta's goal with the Return to Play protocol is to focus on softball development while providing mental and physical health benefits.

This Return to Play plan is subject to change at any time.

# Guiding Principles



Guided by Gov of Alberta & AHS requirements, especially:

Number of people  
Ability to track/trace contacts



Voluntary – no-one should feel pressured to participate and take chances



Universal – can be applied by everyone and everywhere across the Province and in a wide variety of circumstances



Inclusive – trying to get as many players back to playing softball as possible



Inexpensive – minimizing costs as much as possible without sacrificing safety



Realistic – has to be something people are willing and able to do



Not able to eliminate risk entirely – will need to have plans in place for when there IS a transmission event

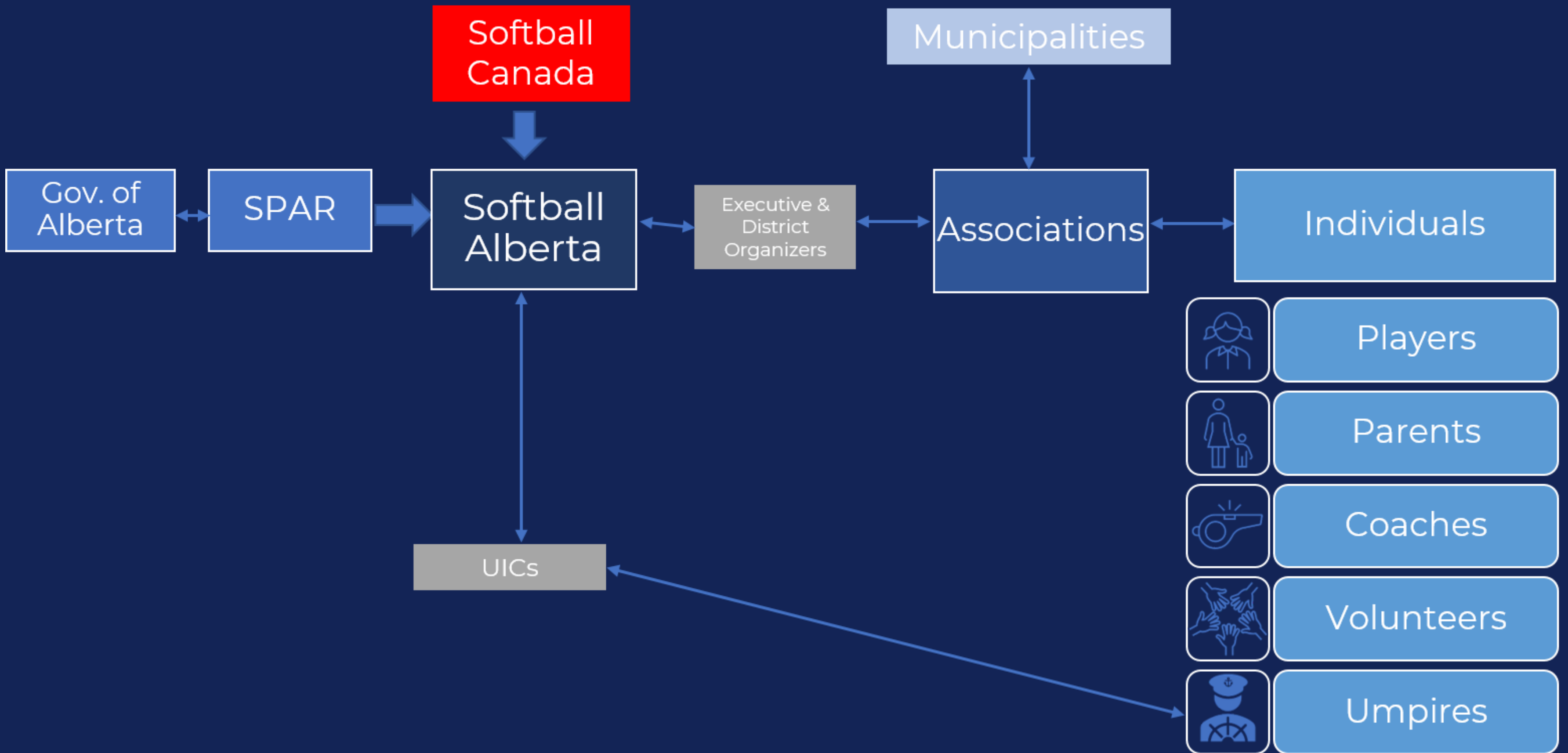


Risk Management and Quality Control approach

# Key Constraints

- Government of Alberta Restrictions
  - Social Distancing
  - Maximum number for gatherings
  - Protocols for contact tracing for transmission events
- Municipal restrictions
  - Field permits
  - Use of facilities
- Resources available at the Softball Alberta and Association level
  - Financial
  - Human
- Impact on everyone involved (physical, mental, etc.) and impact on our communities

# Softball Alberta Ecosystem



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# Process



# Softball Alberta Ecosystem

## Prevention

- Reduce chances of it spreading from one to another

## Transmission

- Transmission from one to another

## Containment

- Once transmission has occurred, reducing spreading it to others

### PREVENTION

- Risk Identification
- Risk Mitigation Strategies
- Risk Management
- Training & Education
- Monitoring & Enforcement

### TRANSMISSION



### CONTAINMENT

- Identification of case(s)
- Isolation of case(s)
- Communication and Contact Tracing
- Review of factors that lead to Transmission
- Corrections made and communicated

# Prevention



Risk  
Identification



Risk Mitigation  
Strategies



Risk  
Management

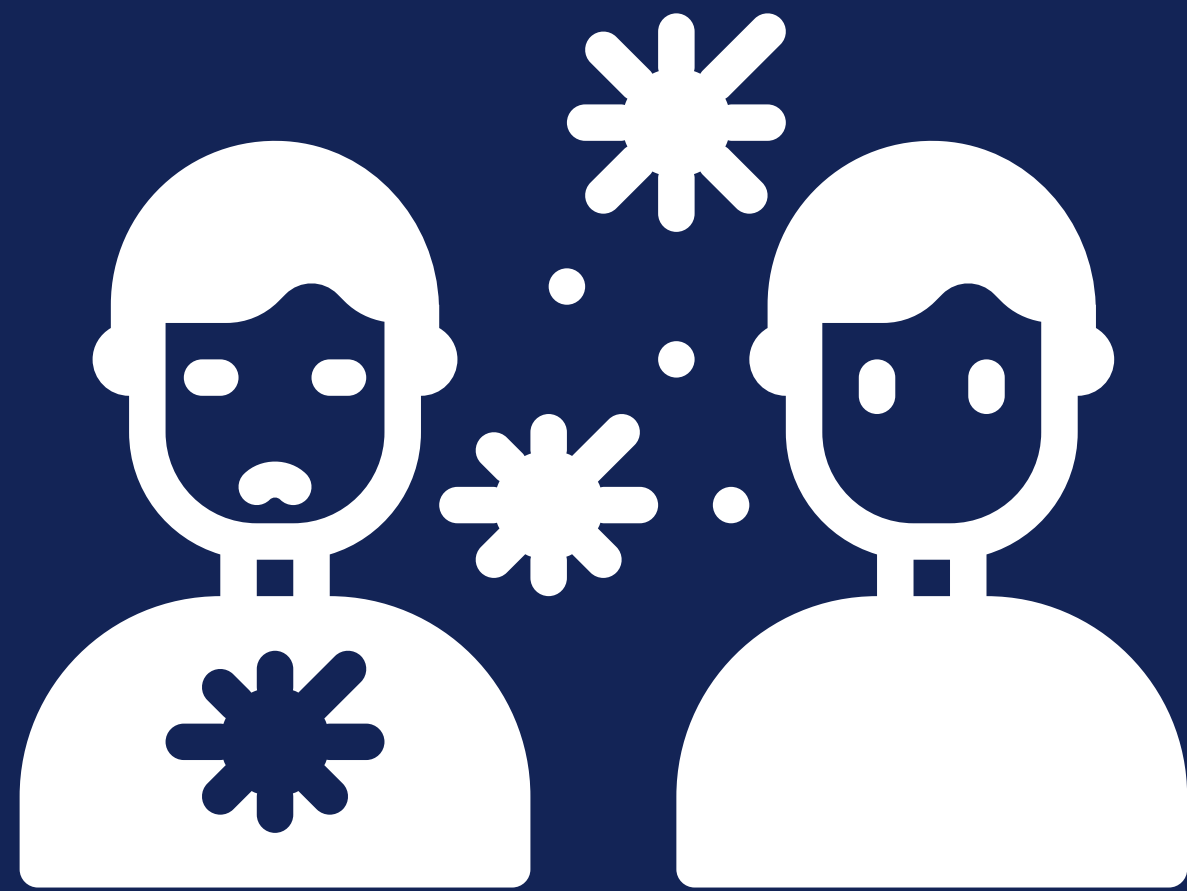


Training &  
Education



Monitoring &  
Enforcement

# Transmission



Must be acceptance that there will be transmission in our communities

Risk management can reduce these but many things are not within our control and we won't be able to eliminate all risks

# Containment



IDENTIFICATION OF  
CASE(S)



ISOLATION OF  
CASE(S)



COMMUNICATION  
AND CONTACT  
TRACING



REVIEW OF  
FACTORS THAT LEAD  
TO TRANSMISSION



CORRECTIONS  
MADE AND  
COMMUNICATED

# Risk Identification & Mitigation



Brainstormed all possible risks in all areas of activity

Grouped risks into main categories and then came up with mitigation strategies for each

- Dugouts, warmup areas, playing areas
- Washrooms and changerooms
- Field prep and team volunteers
- Practices, facilities, clinics and meetings
- Umpires



# Risk Management

Identify who is responsible for overseeing at the:

- Provincial level
- Association level
- Team level



Translate Risk Mitigation strategies into tangible protocols that every level can follow

# Training & Education

- Investigate how to communicate protocols to all members at every level
- Ensure understanding
- Recommendations for training materials needed and how to deliver material



# Monitoring & Enforcement

There are responsibilities at every level:

- Softball Alberta
- Association
- Team





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# Key Findings

# General

- Restrict access
  - where possible, limit access/use to limit chances of transmission
- Challenges of shared spaces (ex. washrooms)
- Hand sanitizer vs hand washing
  - hand washing more complicated at diamonds
- Activities defined by number of people in attendance
  - practices - lowest number
  - games - difficult to keep under 50
  - tournaments - largest number of people

# Outdoor Field Use

- EAP completed by team prior to use
  - Teams must decide if the area/facility they plan to use is safe and risk can be minimized
- Distancing requirements in all areas (dugouts, bench, field, etc)
- Pre-activity meeting and safety review for all (for every event until further notice)
- Minimize non-essential attendees to keep numbers down
- Need considerations for extreme weather (heat or cold/wet) as huddling together in dugout is not an option
- Spectators to stay away from dugouts or anywhere coaches and players are

# Practices, Clinic & Camps

- EAP complete for every site to be used
- No indoor facilities to be used until further notice
- Practices:
  - practice plans need to be mindful of minimizing risk
  - pre-screening MUST be completed before every practice
  - volunteers needed to sanitize equipment and balls throughout
  - keep everyone out of dugouts for practices
  - need for parents to be at older player's practices is less (ex. U16 and up)
- Clinics & camps:
  - delivered by 3rd parties - need to have waivers and protocols in place and will have to provide a copy of their Return to Play plans

# Washrooms, Changerooms & Facilities

- Controlled by association vs municipal level
  - association - can close access to others, association responsible for cleaning
  - municipal - open to public
- Wide range of facilities from location to location
  - strong need for EAP for each different facility to be used
- Eliminate need for washroom/changerooms
  - change at home or before activity
- Clubrooms, equipment rooms or storage rooms (if applicable)
  - consider limiting access to only a small group of authorized people
- Facilities that offer food or beverage services must adhere to the Guidance for Restaurants, Cafes, Pubs and Bars

# Player Safety

- Players must bring their own equipment (glove, batting helmet, batting gloves, water bottle, etc.)
- No sharing of any equipment (exception: bats)
  - if bats are shared, sanitization must occur between each user
- No food, gum, sunflower seeds, etc or any spitting of any kind
- Players should not wear masks when actively participating. Only when they are not actively participating should they wear a mask (ex. on the bench)
- No sharing of any catcher's gear
- Players must bring their own hand sanitizer, sunscreen, hand soap, etc.

# Designated Sanitization Volunteers

- Must have 1-2 (at minimum, can have more) designated people at every team activity who:
  - complete pre-screening and attendance before activity starts
  - monitor physical distancing and numbers and ensure participants are adhering to protocol
  - complete sanitization of any shared equipment throughout activity (ex. bats and balls)
- Must have at least one of these volunteers present at all times (ideally would be the same people every time)
- Responsible for upkeep of sanitization supplies
- Submits pre-screening and attendance sheets to Softball Alberta after every activity
- Team should have a designated first aid attendant (this would be their only role) who is responsible for upkeep of first aid kit and attends to any injuries or first aid needs of the team

# Field Prep Volunteers

- 2-4 people per team (ideally same people all season)
- Can overlap with designated sanitization volunteers
- Clean field equipment before and after use
- For games, need to stay up to date with any rule additions or changes to field layouts



# Umpires

- Starting in Phase 2
- Considerations:
  - positioning of umpires during games
  - entry and exit from field and maintaining physical distance at all times
- Junior/youth umpires - parents should be in attendance, must count towards total numbers
- Senior umpires - concerns about vulnerable/high risk population
- Transfer of lineup cards
- Umpires will have to stay up to date with rule additions/modifications

# Spectators

- Minimize number of spectators whenever possible
  - U16 and up - consider not allowing parents to stay at practices
  - U14 and under - consider limiting each player to one parent
- Attendance and pre-screening must be recorded for spectators as well
- Restrict access to bleachers or areas where spectators may congregate
- Spectators should sit around the outfield if possible and are expected to stay within household and maintain physical distance from other households in spectator areas
- Must stay away from all player and coach areas at all times
- Spectators are encouraged to wear masks as cheering and yelling are higher risk activities of spreading respiratory droplets

# Association, Leagues & Teams

- Recommend that associations, leagues and teams have a Return to Play Committee
  - sanitization supply manager
  - booking liaison - facility use, municipal restriction awareness
  - record keeping - attendance and pre-screening tracking at team's activities
  - training and education - communicating the current protocols in place to every member
  - monitoring and control - ensuring protocols are being followed
  - leadership and communication - with other organizations
- Associations, leagues and teams must adopt the Softball Alberta plan
- Education and communication to all members about protocol in place is critical

# Other

- Staggered arrival to facility
  - minimize overlap with previous users
  - if possible, wait in vehicles until previous group has left the facility
- Meetings or any social events should take place online only
- All participants (players, coach, spectator, volunteer) should follow proper hand hygiene at all times
  - 20 second hand washing (if possible)
  - hand sanitize frequently with sanitizer that has at least 60% alcohol content
- All participants should follow proper respiratory etiquette
  - sneezing or coughing into the crook of the elbow, no clearing of nasal passages
- Download of the ABTraceTogether contact tracing app is encouraged

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# Recommendations

# Key Recommendations

Phased approach

Checklist for associations/teams in order to be sanctioned to participate

Association level Return to Play Committees

Centralized training and education

Screening and tracking procedures

# Phased Process

## Phase 1

in place until  
July 5

### Training

- Small group training only
- NO INDOOR TRAINING
- Controlled training to adhere to protocol

## Phase 2

can start July 6

### Gameplay

- Introduce gameplay between 50 person sport cohorts
- NO INDOOR TRAINING

## Phase 3

dates TBD

### Tournaments

- Would have to have all restrictions lifted to get to this Phase

Additional protocol will be forthcoming regarding indoor training and tryouts

# Sport Cohorts

- Beginning in Phase 2, teams can participate in games within 50 participant maximum cohorts
- Cohort is defined as a closed, small group of no more than 50 individuals who participate in the same sport or activity, and remain together for the duration of Phase 2.
- Where sports and activities cannot be modified to maintain distance, it is essential to limit the number of contacts between different participants. This is done by playing within set cohorts with a fixed number of participants.
- This number includes those participants, officials, trainers and designated sanitization volunteers who cannot maintain two metres of distance from others at all times. This number does not include parents and spectators.
- U14 and above coaches do not have to be part of the cohort only if they can maintain distancing at all times. U12 and under coaches have to be part of the cohort
- Cohorts will remain together during Phase 2 of Return to Play and only play within the same geographical region (Activities will be restricted to local community opportunities, unless specifically sanctioned by Softball Alberta to do otherwise).



# RTP Committee

Thank you to the following committee members who spent countless volunteer hours putting together Softball Alberta's Return to Play plan:

Peter Gogich  
Will Spreadbury  
Kathy Worthington  
Lanky Johnson  
Terry Richter  
Glen Hyshka  
Shelley Rudd

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