



TRAVEL SPORTS HANDBOOK

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ARTICLE I PURPOSE & PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

The Washington Park District Travel Sports Programs are designed to provide competitive athletic opportunities while maintaining a strong connection to community-based recreation.

Travel programs are intended to:

- Promote skill development and athletic growth.
- Encourage sportsmanship, teamwork, and respect.
- Enhance, not replace, Washington Park District recreational programs.
- Foster community pride and positive representation of the Washington Park District.

Participation in a travel program is a privilege. All players, parents, coaches, and volunteers are expected to uphold the standards outlined in this handbook.

ARTICLE II GENERAL PROGRAM POLICIES

Section 2.1 Residency Priority

Team selections will be based on player evaluations, roster balance, and the best interests of the program. Washington Park District residents will receive preference when player evaluations and roster considerations are comparable. Non-residents may be considered based on available roster space and program needs. The Park District reserves the right to limit non-resident participation.

Section 2.2 Player Eligibility

- Players must participate in official Park District tryouts unless otherwise approved.
- Players must participate at their age-appropriate division unless otherwise approved.

Section 2.3 Team Commitment

- Acceptance of a roster position constitutes a season-long commitment.
 - Players withdrawing after roster acceptance must notify the coach and Recreation Manager.
- Registration fees are non-refundable once team expenses have been incurred, including but not limited to uniforms, league fees, tournament entry fees, equipment, or other team-related expenses.

Section 2.4 Attendance Expectations

- Players are expected to attend all practices, games, tournaments, and team activities.
- Coaches must be notified of absences as early as possible.
- Unexcused absences may affect playing time, roster status, or future team selection.
- Participation in multiple sports is encouraged. The In-Season sport takes priority.
- Coaches shall not require exclusive participation.

Section 2.5 Travel Program Partnership Expectations

- Travel Baseball and Softball are designed to complement and strengthen the Washington Park District's recreational baseball and softball programs. The success of the travel program depends on a strong recreational program, and all travel coaches are expected to support the overall mission and goals of the Park District.
- Travel coaches and teams may be asked to assist with recreational program initiatives throughout the year. Examples may include player evaluations, player drafts, instructional clinics, opening day activities, tournaments, special events, mentoring volunteer coaches, or other activities that promote and strengthen the baseball and softball program. Specific expectations will be communicated by the Park District each season.
- Because recreational programming serves the greatest number of participants and fulfills the Park District's primary mission, recreational leagues and programs receive scheduling priority for fields and facilities. Travel teams should expect occasional adjustments to practice schedules, field assignments, or game locations when necessary to accommodate recreational programming, weather conditions, tournaments, maintenance, or other Park District needs. Every reasonable effort will be made to provide advance notice and minimize disruptions

ARTICLE III COACHING, CONDUCT & COMMUNICATION

Section 3.1 Coach Selection

All coaches shall:

- Complete required background screenings.
- Comply with all Park District policies.

- Complete any required certifications or training.

Head coaches are appointed annually by the Park District after completing an application and interview process. Parent feedback and evaluations will be reviewed and considered when evaluating returning coaches.

Section 3.2 Coach Expectations

Coaches are expected to:

- Promote sportsmanship.
- Foster player development.
- Demonstrate professionalism.
- Respect officials, opponents, players, and parents.
- Serve as positive role models.

Section 3.3 Parent Expectations

Parents and guardians shall:

- Display sportsmanship at all times.
- Support all participants and officials.
- Refrain from coaching from the stands.
- Respect coaching decisions.
- Follow the 24-Hour Rule before discussing concerns regarding games or playing time.
 - This means that parents/guardians are not allowed to confront a coach, Park District staff, or referee to discuss any “negative” game or practice situation with the coaching and management staff until at least 24 hours has passed from the completion of the game or practice. After 24 hours have elapsed, the parent/guardian may address their concern with the Head Coach or Team Manager.

Violations may result in:

- Warning
- Removal from an event
- Suspension
- Removal from the program

Section 3.4 Player Code of Conduct

Players are expected to:

- Demonstrate respect.
- Display sportsmanship.

- Follow team and Park District rules.
- Represent the Park District positively.

Section 3.5 Communication Expectations

- Coaches shall maintain frequent communication with families.
- Facility-related schedule changes must be approved by the Park District.
- Electronic communication with minor athletes should include a parent or guardian whenever practical.

Section 3.6 Conflict Resolution Procedure

Parent concerns about individual player/team issues should generally be addressed in the following order:

1. Coach
2. Athletic Coordinator
3. Recreation Manager
4. Executive Director (when appropriate)

The Park District reserves the right to redirect concerns to the appropriate staff member.

Concerns regarding safety, discrimination, harassment, or policy violations should be reported immediately to Park District staff.

Section 3.7 Park District Staff Roles & Responsibilities

Athletic Coordinator

- Assists with day-to-day program administration.
- Coordinates scheduling, facilities, officials, and logistics.
- Supports coaches and volunteers.
- Serves as the primary contact for overall program questions and concerns.
- Over sees travel sports operations.
- Enforces policies and procedures.
- Oversees budgets and program administration.
- Resolves unresolved concerns. Interprets handbook policies.
- Makes determinations regarding program operations and eligibility.

Park District Administration

- Maintains final authority over all Park District programs.
- Reviews appeals and administrative matters.
- May approve exceptions to policies when appropriate.

ARTICLE IV SAFETY & RISK MANAGEMENT

Section 4.1 Concussion & Injury Policy

- The Park District follows all applicable Illinois youth sports concussion laws.
 - All Coaches are expected to complete the following training:
CDC Heads Up to Youth Sports Coaches: Online Concussion Training
- Players suspected of sustaining a concussion shall be removed immediately.
- A doctor's note is required before returning to participation.

Section 4.2 Weather & Facility Closures

- The Park District maintains final authority regarding facility closures.
- Coaches may not relocate practices or games without approval.
- Weather cancellations will be communicated through the Athletic Coordinator.

Section 4.3 Equipment Responsibility

Players and families are responsible for:

- Proper care of equipment.
- Returning issued equipment.
- Replacing lost or damaged equipment beyond normal wear.

Section 4.4 Social Media

- Online conduct should reflect positively upon the Park District.
- Inappropriate social media activity may result in disciplinary action.

ARTICLE V PLAYING TIME PHILOSOPHY

Section 5.1 Playing Time

Travel sports programs are competitive.

- Equal playing time is not guaranteed.
- Playing time decisions are made solely by the coaching staff.
- Factors may include:
 - Attendance
 - Effort
 - Attitude

- Sportsmanship
- Skill development
- Safety
- Team needs

Coaches are encouraged to balance player development with competitive opportunities.

ARTICLE VI BASEBALL & SOFTBALL TRAVEL PROGRAM POLICIES

Section 6.1 Team Structure

Baseball: 7U-17U

Softball: 7U- 18U

The number of teams will be determined based on participants and coach interest & skill at each level. “B” teams may be formed when participation levels support multiple teams.

Section 6.2 Tryouts

- Conducted annually following the recreational season.
- Independent evaluators may be utilized when available.

Baseball Specifics

- Players are only **required to attend one tryout date** to be considered for a team.
- Attending the **second tryout is optional**, and can only **positively impact a player’s assessment**—it will not lower their evaluation.
- Our goal is to field a competitive team at each level; however, this is contingent upon the availability of qualified coaches as well as the number and skill level of participating players. A second team could be considered.
- A dedicated **7U team** will only be formed **if enough 7U (and under) players register** and we are able to field a full roster. If not, there is potential for an **8U “B” team** including both 7 and 8-year-olds.
- Tryout Criteria
 - **Batting:** Evaluated on stance, rhythm, hand position, hitting approach, and bat power.
 - **Infield Fielding:** Focus on mechanics, range, throwing technique, and fielding success.
 - **Outfield Fielding:** Assessed on fly ball tracking, fundamentals, throwing accuracy, and cutoff execution.

- **Pitching:** Measured on accuracy, velocity, movement, mound presence, poise, and potential.
- **Catching:** Judged on receiving, blocking, pop time, and throwing ability.
- Team Selection
 - **7U–14U Evaluations:** Conducted by a panel of coaches and impartial baseball-minded evaluators. Head coaches lead the tryouts, observe and provide input, but do not evaluate at the tryouts.
 - **Team Formation Process**
 - Our priority is first to form the **Orange (A) Teams**, which will consist of 11–12 players. These rosters are determined based on player evaluations and overall team needs.
 - **Black (B) Teams** may be formed **if there is sufficient talent, coach availability, and roster size** to support a competitive second team at that age level. Final decisions are made with input from the Baseball Committee to ensure the integrity and quality of the program are maintained across all teams.
 - **15U–17U Evaluations:** Modeled after high school/college-style tryouts, emphasizing game-readiness, advanced skills, and positional depth.
 - **Final Selections:** Based on skill, effort, baseball IQ, and attitude, with team values and long-term potential as guiding principles.

Cobra Softball Specifics

- Players are only required to attend one tryout date to be considered for a team.
- Attending the second tryout is optional and can only positively impact a player's assessment—it will not lower their evaluation.
- Our goal is to field teams at each age level when participation, player development, and coach availability support doing so.
- Teams may be offered at the 7U-18U age levels. The number of teams at each age level will be determined based on registration numbers, player evaluations, and qualified coach availability.
- Additional teams at an age level may be formed if there is sufficient talent, roster size, and coaching support to ensure a positive and competitive experience for all players.

Tryout Criteria

- **Hitting:** Evaluated on stance, swing mechanics, bat control, hitting approach, contact consistency, and power potential.

- **Infield Defense:** Focus on fielding fundamentals, footwork, glove work, throwing mechanics, range, and overall defensive awareness.
- **Outfield Defense:** Assessed on fly ball tracking, first-step reactions, route efficiency, throwing accuracy, and defensive fundamentals.
- **Pitching:** Measured on accuracy, velocity, movement, mechanics, composure, coachability, and overall potential.
- **Catching:** Judged on receiving, blocking, framing, throwing mechanics, pop time, communication, and leadership behind the plate.
- **Speed and Athleticism:** Evaluated through running, agility, body control, and overall athletic potential.

Team Selection

- **8U–14U Evaluations:** Conducted by a panel of coaches and impartial softball-minded evaluators. Head coaches lead the tryouts, observe, and provide input but do not evaluate their own children or relatives during the tryout process.
- **Team Formation Process**
 - Our priority is to form the primary Cobra teams at each age level with roster sizes that best support player development and team competitiveness.
 - Additional teams may be formed when there is sufficient talent, coach availability, and roster size to support multiple competitive teams at an age level.
 - Final roster decisions are made with input from coaches and the Athletic Coordinator to ensure the integrity, competitiveness, and long-term success of the program.
- **16U–18U Evaluations:** Modeled after high school and college-style tryouts, emphasizing game readiness, advanced skill development, positional depth, softball IQ, and competitive mindset.
- **Final Selections:** Based on skill, effort, athleticism, softball IQ, coachability, attitude, and commitment, with team values and long-term player development serving as guiding principles.

Section 6.3 Roster Guidelines

Recommended roster sizes:

- 7U–18U: 10–13 players

Section 6.4 Scheduling & Facility Use

- Teams may host up to 12 home games annually.
- Additional home games require approval.
- All facility scheduling shall be coordinated through the Park District.

Section 6.5 Tournaments

- Participation in approved tournaments is permitted.
- Tournament hosting requires Park District approval.

Section 6.6 Parent Volunteer Expectations

Parents may be asked to assist with:

- Field preparation
- Field cleanup
- Concession operations
- Tournament operations
- Scorekeeping
- Pitch count tracking
- Fundraising activities

Volunteer support is an important component of successful tournament and team operations.

Section 6.7 Guest Players

- Guest players may be utilized with approval.
 - Guest players must meet eligibility requirements.
 - Guest player usage shall not unnecessarily reduce opportunities for rostered players.
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ARTICLE VII BASKETBALL TRAVEL PROGRAM POLICIES

Section 7.1 Team Structure

Boys: 3rd–6th Grade

Girls: 3rd–8th Grade (when participation allows)

Additional teams may be formed as participation warrants.

- The Park District reserves the right to establish participation requirements that support healthy in-house enrollment. This includes requiring “B” level players or lower to play in-house. These players will be evenly distributed amongst in-house teams.

Section 7.2 Tryouts

- Conducted annually prior to the winter season.
- Players must participate at their grade level.

Section 7.3 Roster Guidelines

- Minimum: 8 players
- Recommended: 9–10 players
- Maximum: 12 players

Section 7.4 Facilities

- Practices and games will be held at Park District and school facilities when available.
- Scheduling is dependent upon facility availability.

Section 7.5 Equipment

- Teams may be issued equipment as determined by the Park District.
- All issued equipment must be returned at season end. Any equipment not returned must be paid for by the team.

Section 7.6 Events

Team schedules are built by the Athletic Coordinator. Each team will get 30-40 games each season. These games are through shootouts, tournaments and single games.

Section 7.7 Parent Volunteer Expectations

Parents may be required to assist with:

- Gate admissions
- Concessions stand operations
- Scorekeeping
- Clock operation
- Tournament setup and cleanup
- Team fundraising activities

Volunteer assignments will be required for participation in Park District-hosted tournaments.

ARTICLE VIII REGISTRATION, FEES & FINANCIAL POLICIES

Section 8.1 Registration

Players must register through the Washington Park District registration system.

Selected players shall:

- Accept or decline roster offers within 48 hours.
- Complete registration and required payments within designated deadlines.

Section 8.2 Financial Oversight

- All travel programs operate under Park District financial policies.
- Coaches may not independently manage funds without authorization.

Section 8.3 Baseball & Softball Revenue Distribution

Revenue generated through:

- Registration fees
- Sponsorships
- Fundraising

The Park District will provide you with the necessary tools to play baseball or softball as a travel team.

PLAYER FEES PAY FOR:

- Uniform: Two jerseys, pants and a hat
- Home tournament
- Three-four away tournaments (15U + gets 6 tournaments)
- Two dozen baseballs or softballs
- Catcher's equipment (excluding glove) for 7U, 8U and 9U. If previous equipment can be used, no new equipment will be purchased.
- Winter training facility for hitting.
- Program Administration and Operations
- Maintenance of fields (mowing, equipment, staff, infield dirt, chalk, diamond dry, bases as needed, etc.)
- Up to 12 home games
- Umpires (1 for 8u-10u and 2 11U+)
- Team Insurance
- Team Banner
- Tax Exempt (must order through the Park District)
- Use of Washington Park Fields and affiliate fields

NEED TO FUNDRAISE, GET SPONSORSHIP or a SEPARATE FAMILY PURCHASE

- Alternate Jersey
- Alternate Hat
- Bat Bag
- Personal Helmet
- Extra tournaments
- Other team equipment

If a team would like to provide additional items, prior approval from the Athletic Coordinator is required. Teams must contact the Athletic Coordinator before purchasing or ordering any additional items.

The request must include:

- The item(s) being requested and the amount of the purchase.
- Whether the funds have already been raised by the team or whether families will be purchasing the items separately.

The Athletic Coordinator will review the request and provide a decision within seven days.

After all approved team and program expenses have been paid, 50% of any remaining fundraising and sponsorship revenue will be deposited into the Baseball/Softball Foundation Fund to support future program and facility improvements.

MONEY CANNOT BE USED FOR THE FOLLOWING

- Team Party
- Gift Cards
- Hotels
- Personal Items
- Gas for travel

Coaches that go over budget will be required to balance their budget prior to the end of the season. Not doing so, may result in being removed as the coach for the following season.

Section 8.4 Fundraising & Sponsorships

- All fundraising requires prior approval.
- Sponsorships must comply with Park District standards.

Section 8.5 Payment Policies

Upon accepting a roster position, families may be required to submit a deposit to secure their player's place on the team. The deposit amount and payment deadlines will be established by the Park District prior to each season.

Payment plans may be offered at the discretion of the Park District. Families participating in a payment plan are expected to make all scheduled payments on time and keep their account in good standing.

Failure to remain current on financial obligations may result in the loss of payment plan privileges, suspension from team activities, or removal from the team until the account is brought current. The Park District reserves the right to determine appropriate action based on the circumstances.

Section 8.6 Refund Policy

Registration fees and fundraising proceeds are non-refundable once team expenses have been incurred, including but not limited to uniforms, league fees, tournament entry fees, equipment, or other team-related expenses.

Section 8.7 Financial Assistance

Limited financial assistance may be available based upon funding availability.

Section 8.8 Outstanding Balances

Participants with outstanding balances may:

- Be withheld from participation.
- Be denied future registration.
- Experience delays in uniform ordering or distribution.

ARTICLE IX AUTHORITY & POLICY INTERPRETATION

The Washington Park District reserves the right to interpret, modify, enforce, and apply these policies as necessary to ensure the safe, fair, and successful operation of its travel sports programs.

Situations not specifically addressed within this handbook shall be resolved by the Recreation Manager and/or Park District Administration.

Administrative decisions regarding program operations, eligibility, and policy interpretation shall be final.

**WASHINGTON PARK DISTRICT TRAVEL SPORTS
PARENT AGREEMENT**

1. I will encourage my son to practice at baseball so he can improve his skills.
2. I will let the Coach know well in advance if my son will not be at a practice or game.
3. I will not put excessive pressure on my son concerning the way he performs at games. I understand that his effort is the most important thing. I understand failure is a big part of the game and of life, and I understand he will fail at times.
4. I will not teach, coach, preach or yell at my son during a practice or game.
 - At games or practices, allow the coaches to coach.
 - Players have a tough enough time without trying to follow multiple directions.
 - If you attend practices, the expectation is that you will sit and watch without comment.
 - At games feel free to cheer and encourage your son to play hard, but please do not offer your son instructions. He may be doing exactly what we want. Learning to think and act without assistance is a skill we expect them to demonstrate.
5. I will not argue with any umpire or any other fan during games.
6. I will encourage my son to be a great teammate who displays good sportsmanship.
7. I will bring my son to practice and games on time unless there is an unforeseen problem. If there is a problem, I will contact the Coach.

Violations may result in a written warning, removal from an event, restriction from practices, games, team activities, or Park District facilities, removal from team communication channels, suspension, or removal from the program. Consequences apply to the individual who violated the policy — my child's roster spot and playing time will not be reduced because of my conduct, except where Park District Administration determines in writing that a documented safety concern exists.

Parent / Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

Second Parent / Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____ Printed Name: _____

Player Name: _____ Team / Age Level: _____

**WASHINGTON PARK DISTRICT TRAVEL SPORTS
PLAYER AGREEMENT**

I understand that I have been selected to play on this team and will give my very best effort at practices and games.

1. I will be a good sport no matter where I play on the field, where I bat in the lineup, when I sit on the bench, or whether I or the team succeeds or fails.
2. I will be encouraging to my teammates at all times and will do or say nothing to bring them down.
3. I will not argue with, complain about, or blame the umpires at any time.
4. I will be respectful to all coaches at all times and will address them as "Coach".
5. I will listen to the coaching staff, and I am willing to change or make adjustments in my game if asked to.

I have read these responsibilities and I agree to them for the full season.

Player Signature: _____

Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

Team / Age Level: _____

WASHINGTON PARK DISTRICT TRAVEL SPORTS
PLAYER RESPONSIBILITIES
15U – 17U AGREEMENT

This agreement applies to players at the 15U–17U level. Being on a travel team is a privilege you earned. Keeping it means showing up the right way — for yourself, your teammates, and your program.

Effort & Commitment

1. I will give my very best effort at every practice, game, and tournament.
2. I will be on time and ready to go.
3. I will let my coach know as early as possible if I am going to miss.
4. I am willing to change or adjust my game when a coach asks me to.

Being a Teammate

1. I will be a good sport no matter where I play on the field, where I bat in the lineup, when I sit on the bench, or whether we win or lose.
2. I will encourage my teammates and will do or say nothing to bring them down.
3. I will treat my teammates and my opponents with respect — in person and online.

Respect

1. I will be respectful to all coaches at all times and will address them as “Coach.”
2. I will not argue with, complain about, or blame the umpires at any time.
3. I will follow team and Park District rules and represent the Park District positively.

Speaking Up

1. If something is bothering me, I will bring it to my coach — not to other players or other families.
2. If I am hurt, or if something feels unsafe, I will tell a coach right away.

I have read these responsibilities and I agree to them for the full season.

Player Signature: _____

Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

Team / Age Level: _____

WASHINGTON PARK DISTRICT TRAVEL SPORTS
PARENT & GUARDIAN RESPONSIBILITIES
15U – 17U AGREEMENT

This agreement applies at the 15U–17U level to every parent, guardian, and adult family member of a rostered player. One signed copy is required from each household before the first practice.

Supporting My Player

1. I will encourage my child to practice and improve and will get them to practices and games on time.
2. I will notify the coach in advance of any absence.
3. I will not put excessive pressure on my child about how they perform. Effort is what matters, and failure is part of the game.

At Practices & Games

1. I will let the coaches coach. I will not teach, coach, or yell instructions at my child during a practice or game.
2. If I attend practice, I will sit and watch without comment.
3. I will cheer and encourage, but I will not give instructions from the stands.
4. I will not argue with any umpire, official, coach, or spectator.

Respect for Other Families

1. I will treat every player, family, coach, and volunteer in this program with respect, and I will assume the best of them.
2. I will communicate with other families through the parents or guardians rather than contacting their child directly, and I will keep what I say about other families true and fair.
3. If I have a concern about another player or family, I will bring it to Park District staff rather than to other parents, team channels, or social media.
4. I will support the coaching staff's roster and playing time decisions, and I will let the park district staff handle disagreements between families.

Raising Concerns

1. I will wait 24 hours after a game or practice before raising a concern about it.
2. I will follow the order: Head Coach, then Athletic Coordinator, then Recreation Manager, then Executive Director.
3. Safety, harassment, or threats I will report to Park District staff immediately — no waiting, no chain.
4. I understand roster and playing time decisions are made by the coaching staff and Park District staff, and are not subject to parent petition or group action.

Violations may result in a written warning, removal from an event, restriction from practices, games, team activities, or Park District facilities, removal from team communication channels, suspension, or removal from the program. Consequences apply to the individual who violated the policy — my child's roster spot and playing time will not be reduced because of my conduct, except where Park District Administration determines in writing that a documented safety concern exists.

Parent / Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

Second Parent / Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____ Printed Name: _____

Player Name: _____ Team / Age Level: _____