



TEXAS ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT  
ATHLETIC ORGANIZATIONS  
(TAIAO)

SUBCHAPTER U  
Softball Athletic Plan  
June 1, 2024

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART A	Rosters, Tryouts, & Club Participation .....	3
PART B	Region & Division Assignment .....	5
PART C	Off Season, Fall Training, & Summer .....	6
PART D	Regular Season .....	8
PART E	Game Administration .....	9
PART F	Uniforms & Equipment .....	10
PART G	Postseason Play .....	12
PART H	Postseason Honors and All-Star Game .....	14
PART I	Removal from Contest .....	15
PART J	Coach Training & Concussions .....	16
PART K	Videotaping & Filming .....	17
PART L	Middle School Softball .....	18

Except to the extent otherwise provided, the Softball Plan is governed by and subject to the General Rules of TAI AO.

## PART A – Rosters, Tryouts, & Club Participation

### Section 600 – Player Eligibility Roster

- A. Teams participating in TAI AO must register with TAI AO and submit a Player Eligibility Roster through the TAI AO website by **March 1st**.
- B. The roster submitted to TAI AO must include:
  - player first and last name
  - age
  - grade level
  - date of birth
- C. Softball follows TAI AO Eligibility guidelines as stated in the General Rules (*see Subchapter G, Section 236*).

### Section 601 – Official Team Roster

- A. Teams participating in TAI AO postseason play must submit an Official Team Roster to the TAI AO Softball Committee by **March 15th**.
- B. The High School Official Team Roster must include all expected softball players who will participate at the High School level during the current Year of Participation. All varsity and junior varsity players must be included on the Official Team Roster.
- C. The Middle School Official Team Roster must include all expected softball players who will participate at the Middle School level during the current Year of Participation.
- D. The Official Team Roster must include the link to the team page in MaxPreps (high school level only) and the following information for each player:
  - player first and last name
  - age
  - grade level
  - date of birth
  - number of seasons of club/travel softball experience
  - jersey number
- E. The Official Team Roster is the final roster for the remainder of the season. This roster will be used to determine Region and Division assignments for postseason play. Players who are temporarily ineligible for academic or other reasons must be included on the Official Team Roster.
- F. High School level teams participating in TAI AO postseason play must also post a roster in MaxPreps (*see Part E, Section 626*).

### Section 602 – Tryouts

- A. Member organizations are prohibited from holding tryouts in which players are cut from the team or roster.
- B. Teams must accept registered players and not close registration early in an attempt to prevent athletes from participating.
- C. Member organizations may hold “position tryouts” to determine player positions and/or to determine which players will play at the Varsity level and which players will play at the Junior Varsity level. Position tryouts may not be used to cut players from the team or roster.

### **Section 603 – Club/Travel and School Team Participation**

- A. A Club/Travel team is defined as a softball team which requires tryouts and is not sponsored by a member organization. No more than 6 players from any one member organization may play together on a club/travel team.
- B. A School team is defined as a member organization sponsored softball team.
- C. Players may participate on Club/Travel teams during the Off Season and Summer. At no time may players participate on a School team outside of the Regular Season and Fall Training.

### **Section 604 – Compliance**

- A. TAI AO expects each Member Organization to abide by the TAI AO rules, policies, procedures, and guidelines. Each Member Organization is expected to act with integrity and to self-regulate in accordance with the TAI AO General Rules, policies, and procedures.
- B. Failure to submit rosters by the stated deadline will result in disciplinary action up to and including non-qualification for postseason player honors including Regional and State Tournament participation.
- C. Violations of TAI AO policies regarding tryouts, club participation, and school team participation will result in disciplinary action up to and including non-qualification for postseason player honors including Regional and State Tournament participation.
- D. Softball follows TAI AO compliance guidelines as stated in the General Rules (*Subchapter I – Discipline, Protests & Appeals, sections 246-247*).

**Section 605 to 609 is reserved for expansion.**

## PART B – Region & Division Assignment

The Rules in Subchapter J “Classifications” also apply to this Subchapter N, Part B.

### Section 610 – Region & Division Assignment

- A. Region and Division assignment will be determined by the Softball Committee following the **March 15th** deadline for Official Team Roster submission.
- B. Region assignment will be determined by the member organization’s geographic location.
- C. Division assignment will be determined by the Official Team Roster.
  - **Division 1:** A roster count of  $X+1$  players or more, or 7+ seasons combined player experience in club/travel play.
  - **Division 2:** A roster count of  $X$  players or fewer.
  - **JV Division:** All Junior Varsity teams will play in the JV Division.
- D. Division assignment for a member organization’s inaugural season of a softball team will be Division 2 regardless of the roster count (assuming fewer than 7 seasons of combined player experience in club play). This exception is made only for the first year of the organization’s softball program.

*The roster count for division assignments will change from year to year. Each year the committee will determine the value of  $X$  based on roster submissions. For example, if  $X = 12$ , then D1 is 13 or more players and D2 is 12 or fewer players.*

### Section 611 – New Member Organizations

- A. Upon admission to TAI AO, each new member organization will be assigned to a region and division by the Softball Committee.
- B. Roster Data for any organization applying for membership in TAI AO must be submitted with its league application.

**Section 612 is reserved for expansion.**

## PART C – Off Season, Fall Training, & Summer

The Rules in Subchapter K – “General Plan” also apply to this Subchapter N, Part C.

### Section 613 – Calendar

The TAI AO calendar for Softball outside of the Regular Season is as follows:

- **Off Season:** From the conclusion of the Regular Season through **December 31st**.
- **Fall Training:** Beginning **September 1st** and ending **November 30th**.
- **Summer:** Beginning **June 1st** and ending **July 31st**.

### Section 614 – Off Season (*See Section 264 of the General Rules*)

- A. Off Season workouts can be held anytime other than Fall Training or the Regular Season.
- B. Off Season workouts may include individual softball skills, strength training, and conditioning.
- C. Workouts may be conducted starting no earlier than 6:00 AM and concluding no later than 9:00 PM. Off Season workouts shall not exceed a total of 300 minutes per week.
- D. Coaches should explain to players that participation in Off Season activities is strictly voluntary and never required. Participation must not be a prerequisite for participation on a softball team or getting more playing time.

### Section 615 – Member Organization Facilities Use (Off Season) (*See Section 262 of the General Rules*)

### Section 616 – Fall Training

- A. Fall Softball Workouts (“Fall Training”) must be an optional activity.
- B. Organized practices may include team and individual instruction in sport specific skills.
- C. A team is permitted:
  - No more than 18 total practice days
  - Only one practice session per day
  - No practice which exceeds 3 hours
  - A maximum of 12 hours per week
- D. No contests (games or scrimmages) with other schools are allowed.
- E. No Sunday activities unless authorized by TAI AO.
- F. Coaches should explain to players that participation in Fall Training is strictly voluntary and never required. Participation must not be a prerequisite for participation on a softball team or getting more playing time.

### Section 617 – Summer Activities (*See Section 265 of the General Rules*)

- A. Summer activities must be optional.
- B. Summer activities may include individual softball skills, strength training, and conditioning.
- C. Summer activities may be conducted starting no earlier than 6:00 AM and concluding no later than 9:00 PM. Summer activities must not exceed 2 hours per day and a total of 8 hours per week.
- D. Coaches should explain to players that participation in Summer activities is strictly voluntary

and never required. Participation must not be a prerequisite for participation on a softball team or getting more playing time.

**Section 618 – Member Organization Facility Use (Summer)** (*See Section 262 of the General Rules*)

**Sections 619 to 620 are reserved for expansion.**

## PART D – Regular Season

### Section 621 – Calendar

- A. Organized Practices may begin **January 1st**.
- B. Regular Season games may begin as early as the first Monday of January.
- C. No games will be scheduled on Sunday.

### Section 622 – Organized Practice Definition & Schedule

- A. Beginning **January 1st** and continuing until **January 15th**, a member organization may schedule up to two organized practices per day. From **January 15th** until the end of Postseason play, only one organized practice per day may be scheduled.
- B. The maximum length of an organized practice cannot exceed 3 hours.
- C. Except for player participation on Club/Travel teams, organized practices are only allowed during Fall Training and the Regular Season (to include postseason playoffs).
- D. Softball organized practice is defined as team and individual instruction in sport specific skills.

The following are typical “practice activities” included in organized practices:

- Actual on-field practice
- Sport specific skill instruction
- Mandatory conditioning

The following are not considered “practice activities”:

- Meetings
- Injury treatment
- Weight training
- Water breaks / Rest breaks
- Film study
- Voluntary conditioning (may not be coach directed)

### Section 623 – Pre-Season Scrimmages

- A. No member organization shall participate in more than 5 scrimmages.
- B. No scrimmages are allowed after the 1st official game has been played.

### Section 624 – Game & Tournament Participation Limits

- A. **Tournaments:** Member organizations may participate in softball tournaments during the regular season. Each tournament will count as 2 games toward the season limit.
- B. **Season Limit:** The number of regular season games in which a member organization and player may participate is limited to:
  - 0 tournaments and 27 games
  - 1 tournament and 25 games
  - 2 tournaments and 23 games
  - 3 tournaments and 21 games
  - 4 tournaments and 19 games
- C. **Weekly Limit:** No member organization or player may schedule or participate in more than 3 games in one calendar week (Monday through Saturday).
- D. **Junior Varsity Participation:** JV players may dress out for varsity games as long as they do not exceed the weekly 3 game limit.



## **PART E – Game Administration**

The Rules in Subchapter K – “General Plan” also apply to this Subchapter N, Part E.

### **Section 625 - Game Rules**

- A. All softball games are governed by the National Federation of High Schools Softball Rules.
- B. Regulation Play will follow UIL Rules (<https://www.uiltexas.org/softball/rules-guidelines>).

### **Section 626 – Game Reporting Requirements**

- A. Posting of game results (opponent and final score) must be kept current. Game results must be posted to MaxPreps no later than 1 week following the date the game was played.
- B. Failure to keep game results current will result in disciplinary action up to and including non-qualification for postseason player honors including Regional and State Tournament participation.

### **Section 627 – Pre- and Post-Game Prayer**

- A. At each contest between TAIIO member organizations, pre-game and post-game prayer is encouraged (not required).
- B. When a TAIIO member organization is playing a non-TAIIO opponent, the TAIIO member organization is encouraged to offer to pray before or after the game with the non-TAIIO opponent.

### **Section 628 – Tickets & Admissions – Regular Season Games** (*See Section 267D of the General Rules*)

### **Section 629 - Game Officials – Regular Season Games**

- A. All game officials must be UIL Certified/TASO Certified. Organizations wanting to use non-certified officials must petition TAIIO and must notify opponents prior to the game.
- B. A minimum of 1 official is required. If officials do not show and the visiting coach elects to play the game, the game can proceed without forfeit.

### **Sections 630 – 640 are reserved for expansion**

## **PART F – Uniforms & Equipment**

### **Section 641 – Player Uniform Requirements**

#### **A. General Uniform Requirements**

#### **B. Uniform Top**

#### **C. Uniform Bottom**

#### **D. Undergarments**

#### **E. Uniform Numbers**

### **Section 642 - Equipment**

#### **A. Additional Gear**

#### **B. Softballs**

- All varsity game balls must be NFHS-approved. Game balls are subject to the approval of the game official.
- Home team will provide game balls unless otherwise agreed by both coaches.
- Home team is not required to provide pre-game warm-up balls or water to visiting teams.

**Sections 643 - 644 are reserved for expansion.**

## PART G – Postseason Play

### Section 645 – Postseason Playoff Schedule & Seeding

- A. The TAIIO Postseason schedule will be determined by the Softball Committee on an annual basis.
- B. The Softball Committee is responsible for determining the member organization teams participating in the playoffs for each Division.
- C. The Softball Committee is responsible for seeding each Divisional Playoff bracket.

### Section 646 – Middle School, JV, and Varsity Participation

- A. Middle School teams will compete in the Regional Tournament for a Regional Title. Middle School teams will not compete in the State Tournament.
- B. Junior Varsity teams will compete in the JV Division of the Regional Tournament for a Regional Title. Junior Varsity teams will not compete in the State Tournament.
- C. Varsity teams will compete at the Division 1 and Division 2 levels of the Regional Tournament. The top 2 teams from each division at each Regional Tournament will advance to the State Tournament.

### Section 647 – Minimum Game Requirement

- A. Member organizations are required to play a minimum of 6 Regular Season games to qualify for Postseason play.
- B. Players are required to participate in a minimum of 6 Regular Season games to qualify for Postseason play.
- C. Member organizations are not required to play TAIIO opponents during the Regular Season in order to qualify for Postseason play.

### Section 648 – Regional Tournaments

- A. The format of the TAIIO Regional Tournaments will be determined annually by the Softball Committee.
- B. The Regional Tournaments will be played at North and South locations as designated by TAIIO.
- C. TAIIO will manage all game day activities.
- D. The TAIIO Steering Committee must make every effort to choose playoff locations that can accommodate the expected crowd.
- E. The TAIIO Steering Committee will determine a reasonable ticket price for the Regional Tournament. The Committee will consider the venue, the expense of the event, the impact on expected spectator population, and the overall TAIIO organizational welfare in determining admission. This policy is consistent with those procedures used by like organizations and is the guidance that will be applicable to all TAIIO activities.
- F. Coaches, players, team trainer, team manager (one per team) and officials are exempt from paying admission. The Softball Committee may not exceed the number of free admissions granted in the General Rules.
- G. All game and season passes issued by any member organization are suspended for the Regional Tournaments.

## **Section 649 - State Tournament**

- A. The format of the TAIIO State Tournament will be determined annually by the Softball Committee.
- B. The State Tournament will be played at a central location designated by TAIIO.
- C. TAIIO will manage all game day activities.
- D. The TAIIO Steering Committee will make every effort to choose playoff locations that can accommodate the expected crowd.
- E. The TAIIO Steering Committee will determine a reasonable ticket price for the State Tournament. The Committee will consider the venue, the expense of the event, the impact on expected spectator population, and the overall TAIIO organizational welfare in determining admission. This policy is consistent with those procedures used by like organizations and is the guidance that will be applicable to all TAIIO activities.
- F. Coaches, players, team trainer, team manager (one per team) and officials are exempt from paying admission. The Softball Committee may not exceed the number of free admissions granted in the General Rules.
- G. All game and season passes issued by any member organization are suspended for the State Tournament.

**Sections 650 to 659 are reserved for expansion.**

## PART H – Postseason Honors and All-Star Game

### **Section 660 – Player Eligibility and Statistics**

- A. The purpose of awarding Postseason Honors is to recognize exceptional talent and performance of an individual player as consistently demonstrated throughout the season.
- B. A player must have played in at least 6 regular season games in order to qualify for this recognition.
- C. Statistics for the individual player should be maintained in MaxPreps. Individual player statistics should be kept current and as accurate as possible, as player stats are helpful when assessing all-star selections.
- D. No JV player may be considered for All Star nominations.

### **Section 661 – All-Star Honors**

- A. TAI AO Softball Honors will recognize All-Star honors for Division 1 and Division 2.
- B. The player selection process will be determined by the Softball Committee.
- C. There may be up to 12 players on each team.

### **Section 662 – All-Star Game** (*See Section 274 of the General Rules*)

- A. The format of the TAI AO All-Star Game will be determined annually by the Softball Committee.
- B. The teams will be selected and balanced by the Softball Committee to provide fair and competitive play.
- C. Each All-Star Coach accepting the invitation is expected to fulfill the guidelines provided in the General Rules. Coaches should make every effort to play each athlete on the roster (if not equal time, at least meaningful time).

**Sections 663 to 664 are reserved for expansion.**

## PART I – Removal from Contest

The Rules in Subchapter I – “Discipline, Protests & Appeals” also apply to this Subchapter N, Part I.

### Section 665 - Removal from Contest

- A. **Incident Report:** If a coach or player is ejected from a contest, the Member Organization must file an Incident Report with TAIIO on the TAIIO authorized form.
1. The Incident Report is due by noon the second school day following the game.
  2. The Member Organization must provide the opposing team’s head coach with a copy of the filed Incident Report.
  3. Member organizations who fail to properly report an ejection are subject to further sanctions.
- B. **Discipline of Players**
1. Any player ejected from a contest will be suspended from the next contest as shown on the schedule submitted to TAIIO prior to the season.
  2. Any player ejected from a contest for a 2nd time within the same season will be suspended from the next 2 contests.
  3. Any player ejected from a contest for a 3rd time within the same season will be suspended for the remainder of the season (including postseason).
- C. **Discipline of Coaches**
1. Any coach ejected from a contest will receive a private reprimand and will be suspended from the next contest as shown on the schedule submitted to TAIIO prior to the season.
  2. Any coach ejected from a contest for a 2nd time within the same season will receive a public reprimand and will be suspended from the next 2 contests.
  3. Any coach ejected from a contest for a 3rd time within the same season will be suspended for the remainder of the season (including postseason).
- D. The TAIIO Chairman will determine appropriate discipline in addition to the minimum sanctions listed above.
- E. If a total of three ejections, coaches and players combined, are received by a member organization during the season, the athletic director and coaching staff of the member organization must meet with the TAIIO Softball Committee Chairman and TAIIO Commissioner.

### Section 666 - Dispute with an Official

- A. A coach who deliberately comes into physical contact with or threatens to harm an official will receive a minimum five (5) game suspension.
- B. A player who deliberately comes into physical contact with or threatens to harm an official will receive a minimum five (5) game suspension.

**Sections 667 to 680 are reserved for expansion.**

## PART J – Coach Training & Concussions

**Section 681 - Coach Training & Certification** (*See Section 272 of the General Rules*)

### **Section 682 - Concussions**

- A. In addition to required training, every TAI AO head softball coach will follow the UIL mandated protocol related to any student who shows signs, symptoms, or behaviors associated with a concussion.
- B. UIL Concussion Protocol mandates:
  - 1. Player is immediately removed from the contest or practice.
  - 2. Player may not return to play on the same day.
  - 3. Player may not return until cleared to play by an appropriate health-care professional.
- C. Return to Play protocol must, at a minimum, include the following:
  - Day 1** – 24 hours symptom free
  - Day 2** – Light aerobic exercise (5-10 minutes of light workout)
  - Day 3** – Moderate aerobic exercise (15-20 minutes of running at moderate intensity)
  - Day 4** – Non-contact training drills, weight training, resistance training
  - Day 5** – Full contact practice and training
  - Day 6** – Eligible for game play

## PART K – Videotaping & Filming

**Section 683 – Media, Videotaping, and Filming** (*See Section 275 of the General Rules*)



## PART L – Middle School Softball

Rules in Sections 600-604, 613-618, 621-624, 641-642, 645-648, 665-666, 681-683 also apply to Middle School Softball.

### Section 684 - Season Calendar

- A. Organized Practices may begin **January 1st**.
- B. Regular Season games may begin as early as the first Monday of January.
- C. No games will be scheduled on Sunday.

### Section 685 - Eligibility

- A. Participation in TAI AO Middle School softball is open to students who:
  - 1. Will reach their 10th birthday no later than September 1st of the calendar year of participation.
  - 2. Will not reach their 14th birthday prior to May 31st of the calendar year of participation.
- B. Players may have up to four consecutive years of eligibility at the Middle School level (5th through 8th grade).
- C. Players who turn 14 between June 1st and September 1st have the option to play Middle School or High School softball. If the member organization and family agree to advance the student to High School play, this is acceptable, but will begin the student's four years of High School participation.
- D. A member organization may adopt eligibility rules related to Middle School participation that are more stringent than TAI AO rules for eligibility (including academic eligibility).

### Section 686 - Games

- A. A maximum of 23 regular season games are allowed.
- B. Member organizations may participate in softball tournaments during the regular season. Each tournament will count as 2 games toward the season maximum.

### Section 687 - Game Officials

- A. All game officials must be UIL Certified/TASO Certified. Organizations wanting to use non-certified officials must petition TAI AO and must notify opponents prior to the game.
- B. A minimum of 1 certified official must call the game. If the visiting coach elects to play the game without certified officials, the game will count without forfeit; otherwise, a scrimmage can be played.

### Section 688 - Postseason

- A. The format of the Postseason will be determined annually by the Softball Committee.
- B. Seeding for the postseason tournament will be done by the Softball Committee based on the following, in this order:
  - 1. Win-Loss record
  - 2. Head-to-Head competition (if applicable)
  - 3. Common opponents (if applicable)
  - 4. Coaches agreement