

16-Inch Softball Manual



Introduction

Please review the included Terms & Conditions document for key program information, requirements, and rules and regulations as it relates to the 16-Inch softball season, to the Chicago Public League (CPL), and to the Illinois High School Association (IHSA).

Non-compliance with any of the following information may result in the forfeiture of a coach's season stipend. All questions can be directed to the Athletic Program Administrator (APA) listed below.

Athletic Program Administrator:

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OSA Mission Statement

The Office of Sports Administration (OSA) oversees the equitable implementation of sports programs across all elementary schools and high schools within the Chicago Public School District (CPS) and Chicago Public League (CPL). Through effective sports policy creation and program management, OSA helps create an environment for schools to provide essential athletic and academic development for each student-athlete. It is the goal of OSA to promote sportsmanship, teamwork, integrity, and a sense of community as we prepare students for the next level in athletics and in life. Our students will be able to learn the importance of Academic, Athletic and Social Awareness as they advance through our program and become leaders in their communities.

League Governance & Key Links

The official rules of the **National Federation of High School Associations (NFHS)** shall govern all Public League competitions. Any exceptions to these rules are listed in these Terms and Conditions. *The Chicago Public League is governed by the [Chicago Public Schools Athletics Constitution and By-laws](#). All coaches must read this document to be informed about CPL policies, procedures and expectations.*

Whereas the specific Terms and Conditions are listed in this document, the following links that make up the [General Chicago Public League Rules](#) is an appendix to this document, which lists issues of general governance, coach expectations, roster management/vertical movement/eligibility and eligibility certificates, and other issues of league contest management.

The [16-inch Softball Sheet](#) for 2025 contains other logistical information regarding the season for coaches and athletic directors including the coaches directory.

CPS Calendar – Regular Season Information

Season Starts - 1st Practice	8/25/25
Team Roster Loaded to ASPEN Deadline	8/25/25
First Contest Allowed	8/25/25
Hard Copy Central Office Record Sheets (CORS) Due	9/15/25
CPS Regular Season Competition Starts	9/08/25
CPS Regular Season Competition Ends	9/23/25
League Games must be completed by:	9/26/25

CPS Calendar - Post Season and Championship Information

CPL Playoffs Start	9/29/25
Playoff Dates	9/29-10/1-10/3
CPL Championships	10/3/25

Team Approval and Expectations

Team Approvals consist in a series of tasks that must be completed by the Athletic Director and Head Coach from each team. Failure to complete the following tasks will result in the resignation of coaching stipends or delayed payments. Anticipated team approval will be reflected in the [Inventory](#). It is the responsibility of the school Athletic Director (assisted by the head coach) to communicate with the appropriate OSA Athletic Program Coordinator regarding the confirmation of team approval.

Teams must have at least 12 student-athletes registered per team and submit a hard copy [Central Office Record Sheet](#) to the Office of Sports Administration by the specified deadline.

Teams must compete in all CPL sponsored contests, this includes conference games, and the CPL playoffs (*2 forfeits in a season result in loss of team approval*).

Teams looking to join the League for the 2026 season must complete the google form, [School Request to Add a Sport/Level](#).

Host Arrangements

- A. For Chicago Public League contests, it is the responsibility of the school that is designated to be the home team to procure the playing facility/field. A legitimate option if the school does not have a home field is to schedule the game at the opponent's home site.
- B. The host school is responsible for assisting the visiting team on their departure. The coach is responsible for all players until they have left the playing site.
- C. In the case where a school is playing at their home site, the home school must provide the following equipment in good condition:
 1. A field with 60' bases 84' 10" 1/4 from back of home plate to center of 2nd base.

2. A pitching distance 38' from the back of home plate to the front of the pitching rubber.
 3. A double first base placed side-by-side with an orange base positioned in foul territory.
 4. A new 16-inch clincher softball white or yellow for each game.
- D. Schools that do not have the specified regulation equipment will not be allowed to host home games and must travel until equipment is repaired or replaced and deemed safe.

Coach Expectations

- A. [Chicago Public League Coaches' Code of Conduct and General Expectations](#)
- B. Coaches must complete IHSA and CPS certification requirements before coaching student-athletes. [Certifications for all coaches](#)
- C. Unsportsmanlike conduct specific to 16-inch softball:
 1. Use of words or actions to incite or attempt to incite spectator demonstrations.
 2. Use of profanity, intimidation tactics, remarks reflecting unfavorably upon any other person, or taunting or baiting which the NFHS disapproves of in any/all forms.
 3. Use of any language intended to intimidate.
 4. Behavior in any manner not in accordance with the spirit of fair play.
 5. Any member of the coaching staff who was not head coach (or designee) that leaves the vicinity of the dugout coaching box to dispute a judgment call by an umpire.
 6. Confronting or directing unsportsmanlike conduct to the umpires after the game has concluded and until the umpires have departed the game site.
 7. Charging an umpire, using amplifiers, or bullhorns for coaching purposes during the game.
- D. Penalty for Unsportsmanlike Behavior: The umpire shall warn the offender unless the offense is judged to be major in which case an ejection shall occur. A warning may be verbal or written. If a coach has previously received a written warning, he shall be ejected for any subsequent offense. Any offense judged to be major in nature shall result in an immediate ejection from the game.
- E. The coaching staff is expected to organize and prepare athletes through consistent practice/workouts specifically designed to enhance their performance in 16-inch softball matches.
- F. The coaching staff is responsible for the following Game Management for every contest:
 1. The home team coach is responsible for notifying the 16-inch softball APA of any postponement by 1:00 p.m. on the day of the game. Failure to do so makes the home team responsible for the umpire's fee and bus fees for the visiting team. The opposing team must be notified by 1:00 p.m. Both coaches must agree upon the postponement of the game.
 2. Preparing a printout (preferably laminated) of emergency contact information identified for each student (name and jersey number) for quick reference by medical personnel.
 3. Possessing an ASPEN Generated Eligibility Certificate. *Only students listed on this certificate are eligible for that contest.*
 4. Possessing an accurate numerical roster identifying student-athletes by jersey number. This will generally be used as the lineup card.
 5. Reporting the score of the game to the Office of Sports Administration's designated score reporting mechanism within 24 hours of the contest.
 6. Coaches shall not use tobacco products or drink alcoholic beverages or be under the influence of alcoholic beverages or any illegal substance at any time while performing their coaching duties.

Playing/League Regulations

Contest Limitations	35
Minimum Contests for Team Approval	10

Length/Time of Contests	The game will be 7 innings or 75 minutes. There will be a "Mercy Rule": if a team is winning by 15 runs after 3 innings or 12 after 4 innings or 10 after 5 innings, then that team will be declared the winner and the game declared over. Shorter games may be played if both coaches agree. In case of a tie at the end of 7 innings or the time limit, extra innings will be played and the team with the most runs after each full inning will be declared the winner. In the extra innings, the last completed at bat from the previous inning will start at 2 nd base with no outs.
Maximum Students on the Roster	25
Minimum Students on Roster	12
Minimum Students Needed on Game Day	A team must start with at least ten (10) players but can start and finish with one less player (9)

A. Governance:

1. The official rules of ASA/USA Softball shall govern the competitions unless otherwise listed in these rules and regulations. Chicago Public League rules will then take precedence.

B. Equipment and Uniforms:

1. The team uniform consists of a school-issued uniform, shirt, pullover etc. Hats are not necessary.
2. The official ball used for all games is a 16-inch Clincher (white or yellow)
3. An AED must be onsite for all games with personnel trained to operate the device properly.

C. The official start time of contests is 4:45 pm, unless otherwise approved by the Office of Sports Administration.

D. Games shall be played as scheduled. Under no circumstances shall games be rescheduled without the sanction of the APA in charge of 16-inch softball, unless weather conditions, rain, etc., interfere. (Penalty for violation of this provision can result in a forfeit or double forfeit.)

E. General Protocol Prior to the Game:

1. Each team's captains and umpires will conduct a pre-game meeting on the ground rules at home plate.
2. No sunflower seeds can be consumed on the fields of play or in the dugout areas..
3. There should be a new ball for each game and the ball should be left in the original packaging until game time.

F. Forfeiture of Games:

1. A school forfeiting two or more conference games based on lack of players will lose team recognition. A letter to the principal, athletic director, and coach shall notify the school of the impending action, which will include forfeiture of the coaching stipend.
2. If a team and faculty representative is not ready to play within thirty minutes of the scheduled time of the contest, the host school must contact the Coordinating APA of 16-inch softball for a determination of the status of the game.

G. All non-conference games should be contracted with the opposing school.

H. For use in the instance of league discipline, the teams' remaining schedule will be determined as the immediate schedule upon access by Office of Sports Administration personnel. Any games added to the schedule after this time will not be considered pertaining to League discipline.

I. Games affected due to a work stoppage will be managed according to the IHSA Constitution and Bylaws.

J. All signage intended to be posted in CPS municipal stadiums must have approval from the Office of Sports administration prior to posting.

Officials

	Varsity	Varsity Playoff

Number of Game Officials	1	2
Fees	\$65.00 each	\$70.00 each for Semis and Final

Officials will be paid through Arbiter and confirmed for payment by the assignor.

A. Selection of Officials:

1. The APA for 16" Softball shall designate an assignor of referees for all Chicago Public League conference and playoff games.
2. No official is permitted to work a match in which one of the teams is from the school, which he or she is employed, coached in the past, or officiated any of the Varsity playoffs.
3. The coach shall rate and evaluate each official on the official eligibility certificate and on-line to the IHSA (www.ihsa.org – see Athletic Director for assistance) after each match. [IHSA Schools Center](#)

B What if officials do not show?

1. If umpire is not on time, the assignors as well as the Athletic Program Administrator in charge of 16 inch Softball must be contacted. If the umpires do not show, the game must be rescheduled.

Student Eligibility

A. A student is eligible to participate in a contest when listed as "Eligible" on an ASPEN generated Eligibility certificate (or otherwise documented pertaining to Charter Schools).

1. [Student-Athlete Eligibility](#)
2. [Home School Student Eligibility](#)
3. [Newcomer Student Eligibility](#)
4. Students that have transferred to your school since the end of the previous season are ineligible for interscholastic competition without a ruling from the Office of Sports Administration or the IHSA.

B. Competitive Levels:

1. Varsity teams shall consist of students in the first, second, third, or fourth year of attendance who will not reach their 20th birthday at any time during the sports season.

C. Contest results can be protested according to [Article XI – Infractions and Protests of the Chicago Public Schools Athletics Bylaws](#) if there is some irregularity or infraction of the rules occurring during the contest.

League Structure, Rules and Conference Standings

The League alignment can be found in the [2025 16" Softball Sheet](#)

- A. Once the league schedule begins any adjustments to the final schedule must be communicated to OSA, but Administrative responsibility will not fall on the Office of Sports Administration. The home team of the games in question must procure the alternative site, confirm the new date with the opposing team, and hire the officials.
- B. The playing format for all conferences shall be a single round robin with doubleheaders played on each competition date.
- C. In the event a scheduled game is not played, the game will be recorded as "no-contest" and neither team will be awarded a win or loss.
- D. Standings are determined by the best won lost record.
 1. The Score of a Forfeit is 7-0.
- E. In case of a tie in Division standings, the higher place shall be determined by:
 1. Head-to-head competition results.
 2. Greatest Run differential in games played between tied teams.
 3. Most runs scored vs. conference opponents.
 4. Least runs allowed vs. conference opponents.

5. Drawing lots by coaches" committee members.
- F. In case of a tie in Division standings between 3 or more teams, the higher place shall be determined by:
 1. The won-loss record of the tied teams against each other is first considered.
 2. If the teams are still tied, the team's record against the next highest seeded team after the three-way tie is considered, and so forth until the tie is broken.
 3. If there is still a tie, the seeded position of the teams will be determined by a draw conducted by the APA.
- G. General Playing Rules:
 1. Team members may coach both bases (1st and 3rd) provided their names appear on the eligibility sheet and they are in uniform.
 2. A legal bat is an official softball bat with a tape or rubber grip of at least 10" from the knob. The maximum barrel size is 2 ¼", and the maximum length is 34".
 3. No gloves are to be worn in the field; batting gloves are permitted.
 4. Uniforms and hats must be worn properly. No bandanas or jewelry are allowed on the playing field.
 5. Shoes must be worn by all players. Shoes with metal spikes (cleats) are not allowed.
 6. All participants, including coaches are to stay in designated areas: the dugout, on deck and/or the coaches' area.
 7. There is no designated hitter (DH) in the lineup. A team can use one extra player (EP) in the starting line-up batting (11) any (10) of the (11) can play defense at any time.
 8. Line-ups will be exchanged during the pregame conference and a copy must be provided to the opposing team and the umpire at which time the lineups become official and any changes after that exchange will be considered a substitution.
 9. Re-entry is only allowed for starters. In their original position. Upon re-entry, the player must resume their original spot in the lineup.
 10. A team must start with at least (10) players but can start and finish with one less player (9).
 11. An unannounced substitute will be called for an "out" if protested by the opponent before the next legal or illegal pitch.
- H. Pitching - A pitcher must start with one foot on the pitcher's plate.
 1. The pitcher may step from the pitcher's plate in any direction (one step drag) and does not have to remain in contact with the pitching plate. (Pitcher may not leap)
 2. The pitcher's back foot may not pass "the planted foot" before the release of the pitch.
 3. After no more than two hesitations, the ball must come to plate (penalty illegal pitch)
 4. The pitch must be delivered at moderate speed with a perceptible arch of at least 6 feet and not more than 12 feet in height from the ground (the pitcher may not pitch the ball between his legs or behind his back; penalty illegal pitch).
 5. The pitcher may take 3 warm-up pitches between innings within 1 minute from last out.
- I. Batting:
 1. The batter starts with a 1 ball, 1 strike count.
 2. Hitting a foul ball with two strikes on the batter is considered a strikeout and a dead ball.
 3. A grounded pitched ball may not be hit. It will be called a "ball" irrespective if the batter swings and if the ball is hit, it will be declared dead.
 4. The strike zone is under the back shoulder and above the front knee. A pitch that hits home plate may never be called a strike.
 5. In the act of swinging and hitting a pitch fair or foul, a batter may not step on home plate or in front or behind it before hitting the ball.
 6. Each batter has a one time re-entry to his original position in the batting order.
- J. Batter and Runner:
 1. A runner cannot advance on a pickoff attempt from pitcher or catcher on any base advancing to is unoccupied. There is no stealing of bases in 16" softball, however, lead offs are allowed.
 2. Fielders have all the rights to field a ball. Avoid contact with fielders where possible. The penalty for malicious contact is the runner called out and ejected from the game

3. Caught foul balls are live except when there are two strikes on the batter, in which case the foul ball will be declared dead.
 4. Overthrows to blocked (Dead ball area) runners are awarded 2 bases when the throw is the first throw from an infielder. It will be determined by the base occupied at the time of the pitch. On any second throw on the infield, the runner will be awarded two bases from the position of the runner at the time of the throw. This latter will also apply to an outfield throw.
 5. The process of appeals will be the traditional and the ASA verbal appeal.
- K. Umpire Protocol:
1. Umpires should wear a uniform powder blue shirt, navy blue pants or shorts, black pants or shorts with white socks and all black shoes. If something is worn under the shirt it must be white. A black belt, navy blue jacket and cap is also acceptable.
 2. Umpires should arrive at games 1/2 hour before game time to check the safety of the bases and the field. Make sure that the bats are legal.
 3. Umpires should conduct pre-game meetings 15 minutes before game time to exchange line-up cards, go over ground rules.
 4. Umpires should set the timer for 75 minutes. No new inning can start after time has expired. The current inning must be completed in its entirety if time expires during an inning (No Drop-Dead Rule)
 5. Teams are allowed Charged Conferences: Offense (1 per-inning game) In Extra innings - Offense and defense (1 per-inning)

Chicago Public League Championships

- A. Championship Tournament Structure
1. The CPL Varsity Championship Playoff will be a 16-team single-elimination tournament.
 2. Qualification for the Championship Tournament will be based on Conference record. The top 4 (four) teams in the Red North and Red Central, the top 3 (three) teams from the Red South and Red West, and the top teams in the Blue Division conferences will be seeded in the tournament.
 3. Seeding for the tournament will be at the discretion of the APA in charge of 16" Softball.
- B. Special Rules
1. If a team does not have its playoff roster, the game will be played under protest. The offending team MUST create a hand-written roster in front of their opponent and the referees. Each athlete will print and sign their name and write their date of birth and School ID number. This hand-written roster must be emailed to the APA in charge of 16" Softball for comparison with the field School team's Playoff Roster. If names on both rosters do not match, the offending team will lose the game by forfeit.

Media and Social Media Policies

The Chicago Public League (CPL) is proud to offer in-depth coverage of all our student-athletes across each sports season.

To continue to tell these stories, the CPL Sports Communications team asks the following of all participating coaches and student-athletes:

- Ensure all student media consent forms are signed via the standard CPS enrollment packet.
- Make coaches/players available as requested for pre- and post-game interviews.
- Share accomplishments and milestones with the CPS Sports Communications Team so they can highlight your school.
- Interact and follow all CPL athletics content via our website CPSAthletics.com or via Twitter [@CPLAthletcs](https://twitter.com/CPLAthletcs).

CPS Sports Communications Team:

- Communications Manager - Joey Gelman - jdgelman@cps.edu
- Communications Specialist- Dominic Scianna - dscianna@cps.edu
- Communications Specialist - Michael Wojtychiw - mmwojtychiw@cps.edu

Digital Citizenship Expectations

Being a good digital citizen means that athletic staff and student-athletes are positively contributing to the digital space, respecting other people's views even if in disagreement, and reporting issues that disrupt a positive digital environment.

A digital footprint and reputation is left online when videos and pictures are uploaded, and when posts and comments are made on websites and social media. Athletic staff and student-athletes must consider the temporary and/or permanent effect actions online can have for themselves and their community both in the digital space and in person.

That is why the Chicago Public League asks all athletic staff, coaches, and student-athletes to engage in respectful and positive social media interaction. Should there be any inappropriate social media being created or shared in your community, please report it to CPS administration within your school building so the situation can be properly assessed and appropriate action can be taken as necessary to ensure a safe environment for all those involved.