



## 2023 AJAA Rec. Softball Program Information

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### Avon Junior Athletic Association

AJAA has been providing youth sports programs to the community since 1963! Each year, AJAA provides recreational youth programs to over 3,500 athletes making us the largest sports program in Hendricks County. At AJAA, we are proud to offer sports such as baseball, softball, football, basketball, running, volleyball, cheerleading, and hope to continue to expand the horizons in youth sports activities. Youth sports are a great way to benefit our youth by aiding in their physical health, mental wellness, and overall cognitive development. By providing the opportunity for our youth to be physically active, we reduce the risk of many health concerns such as cancer, obesity, diabetes, depression, anxiety, etc.

### Mission Statement

The purpose of the AJAA Recreational Softball Program is to develop and teach fundamentals of softball to our athletes. We thrive to create a program that focuses not only on athletic development, but also character development on and off the field. Our primary goal and focus is to develop our athletes to become the best player they can be, based on their individual potential and goals.

### Softball Divisions

**6U Girls Softball:** This league is primarily for 1st year players; generally preschool and kindergarten-aged girls (AGE REQUIREMENT: Player must be at least 4 years old on January 1st of the current year). This league relies heavily on coach and parent involvement. Team sizes are kept to a minimum to provide plenty of batting and fielding opportunities for each girl. Coaches pitch to each batter and a parent or coach will play the catcher. After a designated number of missed swings, the player will hit off of a tee. There are no "strikeouts" in 6U. Each batter will swing until they hit.

This league will practice twice weekly for the first few weeks of the season and then once weekly once games start. Practices are 60-75 minutes long and held on weeknights. Practices will always be held at the AJAA Fields. Games are played once weekly on Saturday mornings and early afternoons. Games are 60 minutes long. The location of games will alternate between Avon and Danville (approximately 7 miles from the AJAA fields).



**8U Girls Softball:** This league consists of mostly 7 and 8-year-old girls. This league also relies heavily on coach and parent involvement. 8U is still coach pitch, but there is no tee and players can strike out. This league utilizes a player as the catcher. Teaching fundamentals and rules is still the focus in this league. This division is still considered an instructional league. Players are taught the rules of the game so they are prepared to move up to the next league. Coaches are encouraged to rotate players between infield and outfield positions so players can experience a variety of positions. Two coaches are permitted in the outfield during games to continue teaching and guiding their players during games.

This league will practice twice weekly for the first few weeks of the season, and then once weekly once games start. Practices are 75-90 minutes long and held on weeknights. Practices will always be held at the AJAA Fields. Games are generally held on Saturday mornings and early afternoons, and will be double headers (i.e. - two games in one day). Games are 75 minutes long and will NOT always be back-to-back so there may be a wait between games. If games are rained out on a Saturday, it's possible that make-up games will be scheduled on a weeknight. The location of games will primarily alternate between Avon and Danville; however, games may be played at other locations which can be up to 17 miles away (Tri-West).

**10U Girls Softball:** This league consists of mostly 9 and 10-year-old girls. Players will begin pitching in this league. Pitching distance is 35 feet. Coaches continue teaching fundamentals and game strategies, but are no longer allowed in the field during games. New rules are introduced such as bunting and base stealing.

This league will practice twice weekly for the first few weeks of the season and then once weekly once games start. Practices are 75-90 minutes long and held on weeknights. Practices will always be held at the AJAA Fields. Games are played twice weekly. Games are 75 minutes long and held on weeknights. The location of games will primarily alternate between Avon and Danville; however, games may be played at other locations which can be up to 17 miles away (Tri-West).

**12U Girls Softball:** This league consists of mostly 11 and 12-year-old girls. Girls pitch from a distance of 40 feet and the ball size increases from an 11" softball to 12" softball. ASA Softball governs most of the rules in this league. New rules that are introduced in this league are infield fly and dropped third strike.

This league will practice twice weekly for the first few weeks of the season and then once weekly once games start. Practices are 75-90 minutes long and held on weeknights. Practices will always be held at the AJAA Fields. Games are played twice weekly. Games are 75 minutes long and held on weeknights. The location of games will primarily alternate between Avon, Plainfield, and Danville; however, games may be played at other locations which can be up to 17 miles away (Tri-West & Cascade).



**13-18U Girls Softball:** This league consists of 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18-year-old girls. Girls pitch from a distance of 43 feet. ASA Softball governs most of the rules in this league.

This league will practice twice weekly for the first few weeks of the season, and then once weekly once games start. Practices are 75-90 minutes long and can be held on weeknights and Saturday mornings and early afternoons. Practices will always be held at the AJAA Fields. Games are played twice weekly. Games are 75 minutes long and held on weeknights. The location of games will primarily alternate between Avon, Plainfield, and Danville; however, games may be played at other locations which can be up to 17 miles away (Tri-West & Cascade).

#### **Important Dates**

Please see the AJAA Spring Softball Timeline in this handbook or online at [ajaaonline.org](http://ajaaonline.org).

#### **Rules**

A copy of the general rules are provided in the Coaches Handbook, however we recommend that you visit the rules section on the Softball website for the most up-to-date version.

#### **Equipment Needed**

- **Glove:** 6U/8U/10U uses an 11" softball sized glove that is properly fitted to the player's hand. 12U and 18U use a 12" softball sized glove.
- **Bat:** 6U/8U can use an ASA approved softball bat or T-ball bat. All other leagues must use an ASA approved softball bat. Bat should be the appropriate length and weight for the player.
- **Batting helmet with protective face mask:** Required for all leagues (Note: Players will not be allowed to bat without a helmet with an attached face mask. All batters and base runners must wear their helmets until they leave the field).
- **Fielders Mask / Face Mask:** 6U/8U/10U mandatory for all infield and outfield positions. 12U mandatory for all infield positions. 13U-18U optional for all positions, but suggested for infield positions.
- **Shoes:** Softball Cleats with plastic spikes (metal cleats are not allowed)
- **Softball size:** 6U uses an 11-inch soft core softball. 8U/10U uses an 11-inch hard core softball. 12U/13-18U uses a 12-inch hard core softball.
- **Heart Guard:** 8U pitcher's helper and 10U/12U pitchers are required to wear a heart guard. 13U-18U pitchers are encouraged to wear a heart guard. AJAA will provide one heart guard for each team to share. (Parents do not need to buy). If your child is a full-time pitcher, you may want to consider buying one of your own.



- **Catcher's Gear:** Catchers must wear the required catcher's gear per ASA rules. AJAA will provide one set of catcher's gear for each team to share (parents do not need to buy).

### **Attire**

6U/8U players may wear shorts or softball pants (whatever they are comfortable in for games and practices). 10U/12U/13U-18U players are encouraged to wear black softball pants (to protect legs when sliding). AJAA will provide each player with team jersey/shirt prior to the start of games. The color of your team's jersey will be picked by your coach at drafts. Jerseys are generally distributed the week before games start. Jerseys are only required to be worn at games. Any shirt can be worn during practices.

### **Practice/Game Overview**

The Recreational Softball season will consist of 1-2 practices per week and 1-2 games per week (varies by league – please see league specific information above). Practice times and days will be determined based on your coach's availability and the total number of teams in the league. Generally, the time slots are either 5:45pm-7:00pm or 7:00pm-8:15pm. AJAA will try to assign the earlier time slots to the younger leagues (6U and 8U) when possible.

All practices will be held at the AJAA fields located at 866 S. Co. Rd. 625 E. in Avon. Game locations will alternate between our fields and our partnering communities. Currently, the 2023 season is slated to play with Danville (6U-18U), Plainfield (12U-18U), Tri-West (6U-18U), and Cascade (18U).

### **Evaluations/Rostering**

Evaluations are an important part of the team rostering process. An evaluation day will be scheduled after registrations are closed, but prior to teams being formed. Players that attend evaluations will be tested on a variety of skill sets including throwing, catching, running, and batting (and pitching for those players interested in pitching). Each player will be evaluated by a group of qualified evaluators. AJAA will use each evaluator's score to create an overall average score for each player. This score should be an accurate representation of that athlete's overall skill level in their respective league. A list will then be compiled for each league with every player in that league and their evaluation scores. That list will then be shared with coaches for them to use during the drafting process.

The drafting process will work as follows. All Head Coaches for a league will be gathered in a room. Coaches with returning players will be assigned their returning players first. Pitchers will be picked next (each team, 10U and above, should have a pitcher). The rest of the players will then be divided into groups based on their evaluation score (highest to lowest). Coaches will begin picking from the first group of players starting with the coach in the first position and moving to the coach in last position. This process will repeat until all evaluated players have been



picked. Once all evaluated players have been picked, the names of the players that did not attend evaluations will be randomly drawn out of a hat following the same order as the draft.

Final rosters must be approved by the Commissioner. Sometimes it is necessary to make changes in order to make sure each team has the same number of players, and that one team does not have an obvious and overwhelming advantage over the others. Every attempt will be made to make sure all coaches in a league are in agreement and satisfied with the drafting process before the meeting is adjourned.

#### **Coaches**

Head Coaches are permitted to pick two Assistant Coaches. If the Assistant Coaches have children in the league, those players will be automatically drafted to their team. If a Head Coach does not have their own Assistant Coaches picked prior to the draft, they can pick from a list of volunteer Assistant Coaches at drafts. All coaches must pass a background check in order to volunteer. You should receive a background check form via email within 72 business hours of registering online as a volunteer. Please contact [softball@ajaaonline.org](mailto:softball@ajaaonline.org) if you do not.

#### **Team Rosters**

It is the goal of AJAA to have players assigned to teams by Spring Break, however we must have enough volunteer coaches at least one week prior in order to form teams.

#### **Coaching Commitment**

Each coach shall commit to the following:

- Be responsible for your words and actions throughout the season, on and off the field, to ensure that the code of conduct policy is followed
- Encourage good sportsmanship with all players, parents, fellow coaches, and umpires
- Focus on the development of each player and allow them all the opportunity to shine
- Be a positive role model for your players by having a positive and optimistic attitude at games and practices

#### **Parent Commitment**

Each parent will commit to the following:

- Be responsible for your words and actions throughout the season to ensure that the code of conduct policy is followed
- Encourage your child to practice good sportsmanship with their fellow players, coaches, and umpires
- Be involved and get your athlete to practices and games on time
- Show respect to all players, coaches, fellow spectators, and officials when at a game or practice



### **Athlete Commitment**

Each athlete will commit to the following:

- Be responsible for words and actions throughout the season, on and off the field, to ensure that the code of conduct policy is followed
- Encourage and practice good sportsmanship with your fellow players, coaches, and umpires
- Be a positive “team player” by putting yourself second to your team’s overall success
- Always practice and play at your full potential

### **Program Fees**

This expense, built into the registration fee, includes, but is not limited to: general expenses such as grounds materials, repairs on equipment or fields, AED rental expenses, rental space from Avon Community School facilities, liability insurance for each player and facility, depreciation of equipment purchases, etc. Many fees go into keeping our youth players healthy and safe. Some examples that may help explain the program fees are listed below:

#### **Examples of annual AJAA Costs:**

Liability Insurance: \$37,454

ACSC Rental Space: \$33,150

Ground Materials: \$20,334

Facility Mowing/Repairs: \$23,739

AED Lease: \$4,028

Equipment Refurbishment: \$8,358

Legal/Professional: \$17,603

Software/Subscriptions: \$2,016

Background Checks: \$9,999