



As of April 20, 2018

NFCA Educational Material: DI Softball & the Changes to Early Recruiting

By now you know that it is not permissible to have ANY recruiting contact with a PSA prior to September 1 of the junior year...so what does that look like in action? Read on for a 360 degree view of the sweeping changes to the recruiting process and timeline from the perspective of a DI college softball coach.¹

Example 1

“VERBALLED” Prospective Student Athletes (“PSA”)

A PSA who has not yet reached Sept 1 of her junior year has already verbally committed to your institution.

You may want to talk to her for a number of reasons including, but not limited to:

- *Congratulating her on an achievement*
- *Wishing her good luck on an upcoming test*
- *Offering support due to a recent family tragedy*
- *Telling her about your next camp*
- *Finding out how her team did last weekend*

THESE ARE ALL EXAMPLES OF IMPERMISSIBLE CONTACT PRIOR TO SEPTEMBER 1 OF HER JUNIOR YEAR, REGARDLESS OF HER PRIOR VERBAL COMMITMENT.

The rule is that you cannot talk to any PSA prior to September 1 of their junior year in any way (call, text email, etc.). You cannot reply to an email, you cannot accept their call, you cannot talk to a travel or high school coach with that PSA on the line. You cannot pass messages to the PSA through the travel or high school coach. **YOU CANNOT HAVE RECRUITING CONTACT WITH ANY PSA PRIOR TO SEPTEMBER 1 OF THEIR JUNIOR YEAR.**

Example 2

EVALUATIONS:

You are recruiting a PSA who has not yet reached her junior year and you want to stay on top of her skill development, how do you do that with no recruiting contact?

The rule is intended to push back when offers are made. This rule is not intended to delay the evaluation process. You can evaluate as specified per the Division I recruiting calendar. You can ask travel ball coaches and high school coaches *their* opinion on a PSA's skill set. You can listen as they describe her character, academic interests and family dynamics.

The evaluation is one-way: from the travel ball/high school coach → to the college coach.

The evaluation is **NOT**: from the college coach → to the travel ball/high school coach

¹ This document is written and published by the NFCA to be used as a guide for coaches regarding 2018 NCAA legislation specific to the sport of softball. It is ALWAYS advisable to check with your institution's compliance office with any questions you may have. This document is for educational purposes only. This is not an NCAA-document.



What You CAN Say

Give a simple indication of your interest:

- 1) *YES, we are interested in her.*
- 2) *NO, we are not interested in her.*

What you CANNOT say

Examples of impermissible DI college coach evaluations:

- *“Typically for a player with her skill set we offer \$x as a scholarship.”*
- *“She is a gifted player. She is our first choice in a recruit for her graduating year.”*
- *“She is power hitter...quick base runner...[whatever].”*
 - You cannot provide any substantive comments on a PSA's ability.
- *“Yes, we are VERY interested.” “She is on the top of our A list.”*
 - You cannot use adverbs or adjectives or descriptive phrases.
- *“We will make her an offer on September 1.”*
- *“We see her as a....role player, starter, or any other description on how she would fit in to your team.”*

As a general rule, you can receive as much information as you would like, but you cannot signal where a PSA is/will be on your list or your intent to pursue a PSA outside of the simple interest indication: **YES** or **NO**.

Example 3

RECEIVING PHONE CALLS

Your phone rings and it is a PSA who is too young to talk to, what do you?

We all know that this is going to happen. All you need to do 1) confirm her age and 2) remind the PSA that you are not permitted to speak with her, re-iterate the rule and hang up.

Example 4

DEFINING A PSA

Can I talk with a 5th grader?

No. You may not have recruiting contact before September 1 of junior year.

This new recruiting contact rule defines when contact may begin: September 1 of junior year. It is not triggered by the definition of the PSA.

Despite what we've heard or seen, the rule has always been and continues to be...coaching staff members may **NOT** contact, telephone or send written correspondence to an individual (including an individual who has not started classes for the ninth grade) prior to the time period designated for such activity in accordance with NCAA recruiting regulations. **That time period is now September 1 of the PSA's junior year.**

Coaching staff members may observe an individual participating in an athletically-related activity prior to the ninth grade, provided such observation occurs during permissible contact or evaluation periods.



Additionally, effective with this rules cycle, A PSA in softball IS defined as a 7th grader or older for tryout and camp/clinic legislation (Proposal 2017-26). This means it is not permissible to operate or work camps that include 7th or 8th graders except during periods when it is permissible to operate or work camps that including 9-12th graders.

That should take care of most of these questions, but, if someone believes they can call a sixth grader because that is outside the scope of the PSA definition, that would be incorrect. The intent and the letter of the new rule state no recruiting contact before September 1, junior year.

Example 5

COACHING CHANGES

If I take a new job this summer, how do I communicate intent to honor the scholarship promises made by the coach before me to PSA's who have not yet reached September 1 of their junior year?

You may not contact any PSA before September 1, of her junior year.

The rule states that you cannot communicate any intent to recruit a PSA other than the aforementioned **Yes** or **No** interest indication. You are not permitted to inform a PSA parent, travel or high school coach, or any other third party if you will or will not honor a scholarship offer before September 1 of her junior year. Therefore, that PSA will not know anything other than your interest until September 1 of her junior year.

Example 6

PASS LISTS FOR HOME EVENTS

Can I still give complimentary admissions / put a PSA on our pass list?

No, it is not permissible for any PSA younger than September 1 of the Junior Year to receive complimentary admissions.

Example 7

ENFORCEMENT / PENALTIES

A coach I know is blatantly breaking the rules, how is this enforced and what are the penalties?

Like all other allegations of NCAA rules violations, the coach and/or program will need to be turned into the compliance office and penalties are determined based on multiple factors. Some penalties include no longer being able to recruit the student-athlete and, in some instances, can result in the termination of the offending coach. Many coaches have NCAA rules violations provisions in their contracts, so intentional or repeated recruiting violations could be cause for termination. This is serious.



Example 8

PERMISSIBLE ACTIVITIES AT CAMPS

What can I do at camp? And what can I not do at camp?

Camps are by definition instructional and are **NOT PERMITTED** to be used for the purpose of having recruiting conversations. In addition to instruction, camps may include:

- Evaluations (when offered to every camp participant or offered on a for-purchase option)
- A generic campus tour as part of your camp
- You may also give general, non-institution specific recruiting information session

You may **NOT** do any of the following at a camp:

- Tell a PSA “*how she would fit into your program*”
- Speculate as to “*what type of scholarship offer a PSA would receive from you/your institution*”
- Explain what a PSA needs to work on **to specifically be recruited by you**
- Engage in any form of recruiting conversation, unless it is past September 1 of the PSA’s junior year.

QUICK HITS

So what can I do, when?

Recruiting conversations: (Texts, emails, phone calls, social media, etc.)	September 1 - Junior Year
Unofficial Visits:	September 1 - Junior Year
Official Visits:	September 1 - Junior Year
Off campus Visits:	September 1 - Junior Year
Tell a travel ball/high school coach of your interest in a PSA?	Anytime, but see above for allowable terms
Ask a travel ball/high school coach about a PSA?	Anytime, but see above for allowable terms

*We hope this educational material has helped you to understand the new recruiting contact rule. This is not a comprehensive list of examples, but rather one that is intended to be a guide. If you have other scenarios, please share them with the NFCA. If you have specific questions, always check with your institution’s compliance office.

NATIONAL FASTPITCH COACHES ASSOCIATION

As of May 31, 2018

NFCA Educational Materials: DI Softball and the New Recruiting Contact Rule PART II

In an effort to continue to educate our membership on the recent NCAA rule changes to recruiting contact and visits, the NFCA is issuing its 2nd FAQ. Both of these documents may be found on our website, www.nfca.org under the “Early Recruiting Action Center.”

Below you will find questions that have been asked, some frequently, about what is permissible and what is impermissible contact, *particularly in the travel ball tournament environment*. The NFCA staff has worked in consultation with staff at the NCAA to provide clear and reliable answers. You will see a few NCAA Bylaw references in red to support the answers given.

We recognize that this new rule has brought tremendous change to the softball recruiting landscape. We believe this change is a great benefit for our sport and particularly for the prospective student athletes. We are excited about this new rule and we are committed to supporting and educating our members through this change.

If you have further questions, please reach out to the NFCA staff. DI college coaches are also encouraged to ask their institution’s compliance office.

QUESTIONS PARTICULARLY PERTINENT TO TRAVEL BALL TOURNAMENT RECRUITING *From the perspective of a DI College Coach*

1. Can I ask to see a PSA play in a certain position?

No, this was impermissible before the 2018 recruiting legislation and remains so.

You cannot ask a travel coach to play a PSA in a certain position or display a certain skill set.

Per 13.11.1 Prohibited Activities. A member institution, on its campus or elsewhere, shall not conduct (or have conducted on its behalf) any physical activity (e.g., practice session or test/tryout) at which one or more prospective student-athletes (as defined in Bylaws 13.11.1.1 and 13.11.1.2) reveal, demonstrate or display their athletics abilities in any sport except as provided in Bylaws 13.11.2 and 13.11.3. [D] (Revised: 8/5/04, 1/17/09)



2. Can I ask who is pitching this game?

Yes, but you may not request to see a PSA play in a certain position and/or in a certain game.

3. Can I communicate to a travel ball or high school coach that I need or would like to see a PSA play in a certain game?

No. This was impermissible before the 2018 recruiting legislation and remains so.

Example of a permissible question: “When is [name of PSA] pitching?”

This is a question, not a directive. Questions about a PSA are permissible, except for questions about the PSA’s interest in a school before September 1, junior year.

Example of impermissible question: “Can you play [name of PSA] in this game because I’m leaving after this?”

This is a directive, disguised as a question. Not permissible.

As in the question above 13.11.1 prohibits an institution’s coach from asking/directing a coach or other individual to direct a prospective student-athlete to participate in any physical activity. Asking for a team’s potential roster or line up for a contest would not be directing a coach, but rather seeking general information that is of interest to anyone who may want to attend the contest.

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4. Can I respond to a travel ball or high school coach who asks about my positional needs or roster spots?

No. This is impermissible recruiting contact, if the conversation includes a PSA who has not yet reached September 1 of her junior year. It exceeds the permissible simple expressions of interest in a PSA by the college coach: “yes, I am interested” or “no, I am not interested,” which is the only permissible information that can come from a college coach under the new rule.

Only after September 1 of the PSA’s junior year would it be permissible for a college coach to speak about positional needs or roster spots for that recruiting class.

An answer to this question from the college coach would be permissible if talking about positional needs or roster spots for a recruiting class that is after September 1 of that class’ junior year.

Examples of permissible conversation:

College coach: "Do you have a good outfielder?"

Travel ball coach: "Yes, I have 3. Let me tell you about each..."

Travel coach: "Are you interested?"

College coach: "yes/no."

Examples of IMPERMISSIBLE conversation:

Travel coach: "Do you need an outfielder for [20--, a class below Sept. 1, jr]?"

College coach: "Yes."

Or

College coach: "I need an outfielder in [20--, a class below Sept. 1, jr]."

We understand that this identification of spots has been a common practice and that people are used to hearing what a program needs in a given year. But that is recruiting information. And as such, should only be shared for PSA classes after September 1, junior year.

5. Can I ask a travel ball or high school coach about a PSA’s skillset?

Yes, you may ask questions to gather information about the skills of any PSA. The best approach is to ask open-ended, “reporter-like” questions.

Examples of permissible questions: "How does she hit?" "How does she handle pressure situations?" "How quick is she?" "What are her strengths/weaknesses?" "Tell me about her range." "What are her parents like?"

Examples of IMPERMISSIBLE questions: "Where does she want to play?" "What is her interest in [my school/another school]?" "Where are we on her list?"

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6. Can a college coach speak with a PSA before September 1, junior year if the conversation is not about recruiting?

No. A college coach may not have contact with a PSA or her family before September 1, junior year, unless such contact occurs in a camp or clinic setting and it is not recruiting contact.

A college coach may not have contact with a PSA before September 1, junior year, (see bylaw 13.02.4 below). The recruiting calendars restrictions do not apply to coaches employed at camps or clinics (see bylaw 13.12.1.5); however recruiting conversations are still prohibited prior to September 1 of the junior year per 13.12.1.5.1.

13.02.4 Contact. A contact is any face-to-face encounter between a prospective student-athlete or the prospective student-athlete's family members and an institutional staff member or athletics representative during which any dialogue occurs in excess of an exchange of a greeting. Any such face-to-face encounter that is prearranged (e.g., staff member positions himself or herself in a location where contact is possible) or that takes place on the grounds of the prospective student-athlete's educational institution or at the site of organized competition or practice involving the prospective student-athlete or the prospective student-athlete's high school, preparatory school, two-year college or all-star team shall be considered a contact, regardless of whether any conversation occurs. However, an institutional staff member or athletics representative who is approached by a prospective student-athlete or the prospective student-athlete's family members at any location shall not use a contact, provided the encounter was not prearranged and the staff member or athletics representative does not engage in any dialogue in excess of a greeting and takes appropriate steps to immediately terminate the encounter. (Revised: 1/11/94 effective 8/1/94, 4/25/18)

13.12.1.5 Recruiting Calendar Exceptions. The interaction during sports camps and clinics between prospective student-athletes and those coaches employed by the camp or clinic is not subject to the recruiting calendar restrictions. However, an institutional staff member employed at any camp or clinic (e.g., counselor, director) is prohibited from recruiting any prospective student-athlete during the time period that the camp or clinic is conducted (from the time the prospective student-athlete reports to the camp or clinic until the conclusion of all camp activities).

13.12.1.5.1 Exception -- Recruiting Conversations -- Sports Other Than Basketball and Football. In sports other than basketball and football, recruiting conversations during an institutional camp or clinic (including a camp or clinic that involves only individuals who are not yet prospective student-athletes) are not permitted between an institution's coach and a participating individual before September 1 at the beginning of the individual's junior year in high school. (Adopted: 6/9/17 effective 6/12/17, Revised: 4/25/18)



NATIONAL FASTPITCH COACHES ASSOCIATION

GENERAL QUESTIONS ABOUT THE DEFINITION OF A PSA, THE NEW RECRUITING CONTACT RULE

7. Who does this “new rule” apply to? Who is a PSA?

The new recruiting rule is that a Division I college coach cannot communicate with any prospective student-athlete (“PSA”) prior to September 1 of her junior year in any way (call, text, email, visit, etc.).

As a Division I college coach, this means for any PSA who has not reached September 1 of her junior year:

- You cannot reply to an email.
- You cannot accept her call, once you immediately know/ask how old the caller is.
- You cannot talk to a travel or high school coach with any PSA on the line.
- You cannot pass messages to the PSA through the travel or high school coach.
- **YOU CANNOT HAVE CONTACT WITH ANY PSA PRIOR TO SEPTEMBER 1 OF HER JUNIOR YEAR.**

8. What about the change in the definition of a PSA from a 9th grader to a 7th grader?

There have been a lot of questions on the definition of a PSA and what that means for this rule, i.e., since a PSA is defined as grades 9-12 can we still have recruiting conversations with those who are younger? The short answer is: NO.

The recruiting contact rule was written and passed establishing the date when contact may begin: **September 1, junior year.** Recruiting contact is impermissible before that date.

Additionally, effective with this rules cycle, a PSA in softball is defined as a 7th grader or older for tryout and camp/clinic legislation (proposal 2017-26). This means it is not permissible to operate or work camps that include 7th or 8th graders except during periods when it is permissible to operate or work camps that include 9-12th graders.

9. Can coaches talk to kids prior to September 1, junior year if they aren't talking about recruiting topics?

No. This rule is very simple: **NO CONTACT until September 1, junior year.** No telephone calls, emails, text messages, visits, social media conversations, Morse code exchanges, smoke signals etc...

Coaching instruction in a camp or clinic setting is permissible, provided that no recruiting contact occurs. Logistical communication about a camp or clinic is permissible, provided no recruiting contact occurs.

10. Can I have off-campus contact with a PSA in her junior year?

Yes, each institution is limited to seven recruiting opportunities (contacts and evaluations combined) per prospective student-athlete per year (see Bylaw 13.1.5.8). Beginning September 1 at the start of a prospective student-athlete's junior year of high school, not more than three of the seven opportunities may be off-campus contacts each year, including contacts with the prospective student-athlete's relatives or legal guardians. A contact made during an official visit per Bylaw 13.6 or an unofficial visit per Bylaw 13.7.4 does not count as a recruiting opportunity.

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11. How do programs handle autograph / meet the team sessions?

While in a permissible time period and if open to the public, team autograph sessions are allowed. However, no recruiting conversations should occur in these sessions, as there are likely fans who have not yet reached September 1 of their junior year.

12. Can a collegiate coach “like”, “follow”, “connect”, or “friend” a PSA prior to September 1 of the Junior Year on Social Media?

Social media rules remain the same.

Collegiate coaches can friend/follow at any time provided the only communication to the prospective student-athlete is an electronic notification automatically generated by the social media platform.

Actions of approval (favorite, retweet, share, etc.) remain permissible as long as no additional wording or emojis are added. ***Click, don't type!***

Once connected, all limitations governing recruiting correspondence, electronic communication and publicity remain in effect until the prospective student-athlete has signed a NLI with the institution.

13. Can DI Coaches still give lessons?

It is not permissible for a DI coach to give lessons to any individual in the 7th through 12th grade (previously that was restricted only to those in grades 9 -12).

14. Can we receive videos from prospects? (i.e., club coach sending videos of their players)

Yes. Collect all the info you want, however you cannot request a video to be sent to you.

15. Can we receive transcripts, test scores, etc. from prospects and their coaches?

Yes. Collect all the info you want, however you cannot request this information to be sent to you.

16. Can non-coaching staff members in compliance and academics reply to questions specific to academics?

Academic Advisors:

It is permissible for academic advisors who have dual roles both inside and outside of the athletic department to communicate with a PSA (or a PSA's family member) related to admissions or academic issues. However, these calls may not be at the direction of anyone in athletics and may not include discussions about athletics. These calls also may be subject to any applicable limitation on the number of telephone calls an institution may place to a prospective student-athlete.

It is impermissible for an academic advisor who works only in athletics to meet with a PSA who has not yet reached September 1 of her junior year.

Compliance Administrators:

It is permissible for a compliance administrator to make telephone calls to a prospective student-athlete (or the prospective student-athlete's family members) with no limit on the timing or number of such telephone calls, provided the calls relate only to compliance issues.

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17. Can we acknowledge to a coach that we received a message from a PSA?

No, it is not permissible (or necessary) to confirm receipt of information from a PSA.

18. Can a college coach ask a TB/HS coach or any other third party about a prospect's interest level?

No. It is not permissible to ask about a player's level of interest in your institution.

19. How should a TB/HS coach handle an impermissible recruiting question by a college coach?

If you are a youth, high school, travel ball coach or any other third-party advocate for a PSA and you feel that you are being asked to break or bend the rule by a collegiate coach, it is imperative that you are direct with the coach in your response.

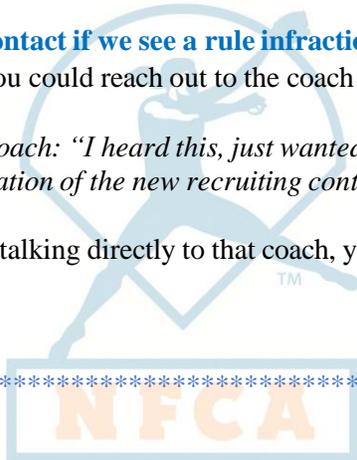
Simply state that you do not want to get the student-athlete, coach, program or yourself in trouble and that you do not think the question is appropriate to answer or that the conversation is appropriate to have.

20. As a college coach, who do we contact if we see a rule infraction?

As a professional courtesy, you could reach out to the coach directly, especially if he/she is young or new.

Examples of an approach: "I heard this, just wanted to reach out and let you know that this seems like a violation of the new recruiting contact rule."

If you don't feel comfortable talking directly to that coach, you should go to your compliance office and report it.



NATIONAL FASTPITCH COACHES ASSOCIATION

QUESTIONS RELEVANT TO CAMPS AND CLINICS AND THE NEW RECRUITING RULE

21. When contacted with a camp logistics question, can we reply?

Yes, you may reply about camp-related specifics only (i.e., equipment, hotel, weather policy, etc.)
This is not an avenue for any recruiting contact.

22. Are off-campus camps ok?

Yes, off-campus camps for softball are permissible, subject to bylaw 13.12.2.3.6 for non-institutional camps. For institutional camps, softball does not have a location restriction, so as long as the off-campus institutional camp meets the institutional camp rules, these are permissible. Any camp, of any kind, cannot be held/worked during a dead period.

23. How should a college coach handle questions from a travel ball coach about what he/she is looking for (positions / graduating classes)? This may arise as PSAs are choosing which camps to attend.

See earlier question, it is not permissible for a college coach to communicate positional needs for any class that has not reached September 1 of junior year. Division I college coaches are not permitted to relay recruiting information to or through a travel ball coach about their roster or positional needs before September 1, junior year. Nor can a Division I college coach ask or suggest that a PSA attend a camp.

Per NCAA rules, camps are instructional and not intended for recruiting.

- 13.12.1.1.4 Purposes of Camps or Clinics.** An institution's sports camp or clinic shall be one that: *(Adopted: 1/11/89, Revised: 1/10/90, 5/9/06)*
- (a) Places special emphasis on a particular sport or sports and provides specialized instruction or practice and may include competition;
 - (b) Involves activities designed to improve overall skills and general knowledge in the sport; or
 - (c) Offers a diversified experience without emphasis on instruction, practice or competition in any particular sport.

While we understand that PSA's funds and time may be limited, it is not permissible for a Division I college coach to indicate that a PSA should attend a camp or that the college team may have a roster or positional spot open for the graduating year of the PSA or that the PSA may be interested or qualified for until the PSA reaches September 1 of their junior year.

A college coach can be very specific with a camp description. As in, this camp is intended for catchers and pitchers. Or, this camp will focus on infield throwing, speed and base running. And camps must be open to all.

NATIONAL FASTPITCH COACHES ASSOCIATION

QUESTIONS ABOUT THIRD PARTIES AND RECRUITING

24. Can a collegiate coach assist with a “practice” of a HS/TB team?

No, this has never been permissible.

25. Are Private Instructors classified the same as a TB/HS coach relative to the application of the rules?

Yes, any third-party (i.e., not the player, her family or the college coach) is considered to be under the same umbrella for rule enforcement purposes. You may not use third parties to circumvent NCAA recruiting contact rules.

26. Are scouting services and their employees (ie: NCSA, NSR, College Bound Jocks) classified the same as a TB/HS coach relative to the application of the rules?

Yes, any third-party (i.e., not the player, her family or the college coach) is considered to be under the same umbrella for rule enforcement purposes. You may not send messages through recruiting services to a PSA.

Under these recruiting rules, substantive information about a PSA between a DI college coach and any third-party can flow only one way: from the third party → to college coaches. Topics may include the PSA’s skill set, academic achievement, playing experience, personality, parents, values and characteristics. Topics may not include direction of any kind to a PSA from a college coach or the PSA’s interest in a school.

The only permissible information about interest flows from the DI college coach → third party. No adverbs, adjectives or descriptions. Just a simple yes or no.

Examples of permissible interest:

Third party, “Are you interested in [player’s name]?”

College coach: “Yes.”

Examples of IMPERMISSIBLE interest:

College coach: “Is [player’s name] interested in [my school]?”

Third party: “How interested are you in [player’s name]?”

College coach: “Very interested.” “On my “A list/B list/C list....”

27. As a Private Instructor, is it ok for me to send a "heads up" email/call to a college coach regarding the skills of a player and/or that a specific player is attending their college camp so they may take note of her?

Yes, but this is one-way communication. The DI college coach cannot give you any information, outside of an indication of basic “yes, I’m interested” or “no, I am not interested,” in return.
