



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.