



## UMPIRE RECRUITMENT HELP REQUESTED

Alberta Softball Umpires Association (ASUA) engages in thousands of hours of volunteer work annually on umpire development.

This includes work on and off the diamond by dozens of umpire leaders across the province as instructors, clinicians, and mentors to provide the best possible experience for all stakeholders in games, tournaments and provincial championships each year.

This year, ASUA and its zone Branches have been focused on recruitment of new umpires and retention of our members from 2022. Efforts are ongoing on websites, via social media, through communications with associations and leagues, media stories, and personal interactions.

**But, as we look towards the quickly approaching 2023 season, it's not enough. Despite the volunteer efforts being undertaken at the provincial and branch levels to recruit and retain umpires, there simply are not enough umpires to manage the amount of softball being played across the province. And we need your help.**

In 2019, ASUA had 400 registered umpires, and athlete registration was trending upwards in registration numbers each year. Then the pandemic hit and, while athlete and umpire numbers are trending upwards again, our umpire numbers are not increasing at a rate to meet the regular season, tournament and provincial championship requirements of the sport.

ALBERTA	2019	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
LEVELS	Registration	Registration	Registration	REQUEST	FORECAST	FORECAST
LEVEL 1	224	104	125	156	187	247
LEVEL 2	86	70	79	91	100	116
LEVEL 3	34	41	41	41	43	47
LEVEL 4	43	37	37	37	39	43
LEVEL 5	13	11	11	11	12	14
TOTAL	400	263	293	336	381	467
ATHLETES	9504	7963	11135	13919	17398	21748
Umpires to Athletes	4.2%	3.3%	2.6%	2.4%	2.2%	2.1%

The growth of the sport, especially in rural Alberta, has resulted in more regular season weeknight games, and more associations wanting to host regular season tournaments in May & June. A lot of this growth is at the C/D levels, but it is also accompanied by record numbers of A/B level teams participating in weekend events (many starting mid-day on a Friday) hosted by GPLS.

GPLS weekends require 30 or more umpires for each event. At the same time, local associations are hosting tournaments for C/D teams, with most of those tournaments also requiring a minimum of 25 umpires for each event. For associations, those tournaments are opportunities for their teams to play, but they are also fundraising events. Some of those funds are used to help offset the costs of equipment (minimum \$250 for gear and clothing per umpire) and registration for young umpires (minimum \$100 per umpire) from their associations. These young umpires work regular season games, and often work the association's home tournament.

In 2022, there were five weekends of tournaments staffed by ASUA umpires where more than 60 per cent of the 293 umpires registered were required on a diamond somewhere in the province. That level of participation by umpires is not realistic, for the following reasons:

- a significant percentage of young umpires are also players
- a number of umpires also coach
- the small number of experienced umpires (Levels 3-5) are needed to work as UICs and mentors, but also are needed to work on diamond at older age divisions
- all umpires are not going to be available every weekend in May, June and July

**We need your help to recruit new umpires THIS MONTH so that we can start their training during our clinics which start on April 1.**

**Specifically, ASUA is asking that every coach, on behalf of his/her team, recruit two people to attend a local umpire clinic offered during the month of April.**

**We need umpires of all ages – former players, older siblings of players on your team, parents, neighbours, friends. Give some special consideration to people who will be attending your team's games who would likely end up being "volen-told" to umpire if no umpires were able to be assigned.**

ASUA is offering online theory sessions via video (link will be available by mid-March), and local Branches will be teaching mechanics and on-diamond skills during in-person mechanics sessions.

What happens without your help? ASUA, and its zone Branches, may not be able provide umpires for regular season games and tournaments, or GPLS events. This could include not signing off on a local tournament sanction request, or having to make difficult decisions regarding levels or age divisions to which umpires cannot be assigned. It could also require utilizing officials from other areas of the province, which would increase substantially the costs for travel and accommodations for the host.

We all know the largest unknown cost to host is travel! How do we STOP the madness and continued growth for the cost of travel – add local umpires. To repeat the most important point. **In 2019 at 400 umpires the ASUA did not have enough umpires to cover tournaments and GPLS weekends properly. (Game play has been growing since 2019)!**

These are decisions we do not want to make, but without your help, these are possible outcomes that may be our only alternatives.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and your assistance in recruiting umpires for the 2023 season.

If you have questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact your local umpire branch or the ASUA: <https://asua.ca/contact-us/>



BECOME AN UMPIRE