

Guidelines and Recommendations for the Administration of Medical Exemptions

Please read carefully through the information that is included in the two separate Medical Exemption Forms that are provided by the NHPA. This information will give you a basic idea as to how the steps of this process should work, but there are many other suggestions, included below, that should be helpful in the creation of a system that will work more efficiently for your Charter and members. These suggested guidelines are based on the processing of over 35 Medical Exemption forms by the Ohio ME Committee since 2003 and has also resulted in a few slight revisions to the ME Forms since they were originally developed.

Managing the Medical Exemption Process

One of the major purposes of providing a medical exemption option for our members is to allow them to continue pitching when a medical condition may otherwise require that they retire from this activity. And while this opportunity is important for those who may be deserving, we want to be certain that all who are granted medical exemptions truly qualify, based on their medical records and the advice of their doctors. The completion of the NHPA Medical Exemption Forms and the subsequent decisions of the Charter ME Committees for individual cases will allow for more objective medical reviews while providing the opportunity for good communications and permanent records. Please consider the following recommendations as you create your Charter Medical Exemptions Committee.

Recommendations:

1 ó It is recommended that all States/Charters create a Medical Exemptions Committee consisting of three (3) to seven (7) members with one member serving as the Committee Chairman. These individuals don't necessarily have to be the State/Charter Officers, though the Chairman probably should be, and all Committee members should be current NHPA card-holders.

2 ó The Committee Chairman should be the official contact person, will send and receive all of the official correspondence, and will maintain and provide all of the official records for each applicant. For committee correspondence, it is helpful if all Committee members have e-mail capability and that the Committee Chairman has the use of a scanner/copier.

3 ó The applicant must contact the Chairman directly when requesting the Medical Exemption Form, which can be thought of as an application. These forms should not be made available via Charter websites (though the 'application' form is allowable), should not be published in Newsletters, and should not be sent to the applicant in an e-form. The applicant should receive this printed form only by US mail. The idea here is that these forms should not be readily available and that the person who thinks they may qualify for an exemption should call or write to the committee Chairman when making this request. Those in charge, who receive these forms from the NHPA, can make photo copies of them, as needed.

4 ó Upon receiving the Medical Exemption form, the applicant should complete Sections I and IV and then return it to the Committee Chairman.

5 ó Upon receiving the completed Medical Exemption application form, the ME Committee should complete the remaining steps of the process and provide the applicant with an answer of acceptance or denial within a period of thirty (30) days. If Committee correspondences require a lot of US mailings, this process may require some additional time.

6 ó ***Here are the recommended steps***, once the Committee Chairman has received the completed application form:

a. This application form is either scanned and e-mailed, or photocopied and sent by US mail, to each of the Committee members, for their review. **Note:** The use of a scanner, if available, makes this process much easier/faster, assuming all Committee members have e-mail capability.

b. After reviewing the application, each Committee member will vote, independently to the Chairman, on whether to accept or deny the application (based on the information), or may defer this vote until the second form has been sent to the attending doctor for a *medical* opinion/recommendation. Unless it is a

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special/obvious case, it is recommended that voting be deferred until after the doctor's form has been sent and received back by the Committee Chairman, so you may want to make this your standard policy. It is recommended that in *most* cases, it is best to have a medical opinion/recommendation on file, in case of later questions/complaints from others, about the granting of this Medical Exemption.

c. More on the doctor's form: It is recommended that this form should never be presented to the doctor by the applicant as there's way too much pressure here for the doctor to sign the form. Rather, this form should always be sent directly to the doctor (via US mail) by the Committee Chairman, after the application form and doctor's *release* has been received. This doctor's form includes the same basic questions as the application form, plus three very important questions/responses from the doctor that should be looked at very closely in making your final voting decisions. It is recommended that this final decision be based very heavily upon what the doctor indicates, though this is not a requirement. Also, most Charters have had 100% cooperation from all doctors for the return of this form. If a doctor should not cooperate, however, the next option is to require that the applicant request his/her medical records (the doctor must supply this information to his patient, according to law) and then the applicant will send the pertinent information to the Committee Chairman. This information would then have to be distributed to the committee members for review, before the final voting. It seems logical that most doctors would rather complete the form than photocopy and send all of the records to the patient/applicant.

d. The Chairman now scans or photocopies the doctor's completed form and sends it to the committee members for their final review. **Note:** Somewhere along this process, it is suggested that someone on the Committee contact one of this applicant's club officers, or some reliable individual who knows this pitcher. Based on their observations and discussions with this person, do they think that he/she may need a Medical Exemption to be able to continue pitching? It should also be noted that during any such discussion, the information on this application form should be kept confidential.

e. Independent voting follows. Please note that a Medical Exemption should only be granted if the medical condition is considered to be a permanent and/or degenerative condition. It is recommended that a 2/3rds majority vote be required for the approval of each medical exemption request. The Committee Chairman will later inform the Committee members of the voting results and will maintain the records for each applicant. Even if the Medical Exemption request is denied, these records should be kept on file.

f. The final step is to inform the Charter/State President of this decision. The Charter/State President will now send out a letter (this has also been developed into a standard form, available upon request) informing the applicant of the acceptance or denial of this Medical Exemption request. If approved, this pitcher should also be informed that they will now have to notify their State Secretary and re-establish their ring and/or point average at this shorter distance, based on the current playing rules for league and tournament play, and that they should have this letter available to show any Tournament Director who may request proof that the exemption has been granted. If the Medical Exemption was approved, the Charter ME Committee Chairman, President, or Secretary is also responsible for informing NatStats of this change in pitching distance.

7 ó **Additional Information:** A question often asked is, "For how long is this Medical Exemption valid?" The easiest answer is, "Until the person turns 70 years of age," but it's not always that simple. It states on the forms that the exemption status *may* be reviewed at any time, but this would normally only occur after corrective surgery and rehabilitation; a knee or hip replacement, for example. And so this exemption, once granted, does *not* have to be reviewed annually. Also, there is currently no provision for short term medical exemptions, such as during the time period required for a broken arm to heal. Medical exemptions may also be considered for special needs individuals.

Please Note: These guidelines/recommendations are based on the experiences of the Ohio Charter who has now successfully used these Medical Exemption Forms for nearly fifteen years. Over this period of time, the ME forms have been revised a bit and the process described here has been fine tuned, based on the many applications that have been submitted and processed during this time period. If you have any questions or comments, please contact Dan Sanders, NHPA 1st VP, at 614-596-5666 or by email at dsanderling@yahoo.com.