

HISTORY OF SOFTBALL IN ALASKA

As more schools began having softball teams, ASAA created the first state tournament in 1996. All schools were in one classification and, since it was an emerging sport, qualification to the state tournament was dependent on a team's season record. If a team had a .500 average or higher, regardless of the number of games they played, they qualified for a berth. This meant that no one knew how many teams would actually compete until the last week. Sometimes as few as eight but as many as fourteen teams might attend the state tournament. The tournament bracket was a double elimination format which might require some teams to play as many as four or five games within 24 hours.

In 2005, with twenty-five schools having softball as a varsity sport, it was time to divide into a Large Schools Classification (851+ enrollment) and a Small Schools Classification (under 850 enrollment). This change not only addressed the growth in the number of smaller schools playing softball, but also the inequity of playing in one tournament against schools much larger. Schools could still qualify by having a .500 record against teams only in their own classification. However, in 2006, schools were grouped into conferences with a certain number of berths assigned to each conference. At that time, there were 15 schools in the large school classification with eight berths to state. And there were eleven schools in the small school classification that with six berths.

In 2015 schools because of declining enrollments several schools changed classification. Presently the state tournament consist of Division I schools (enrollment of 851 and above) and Division II schools (enrollment of 850 and below) with each having a 6 team double elimination tournament.