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VISION

HOCKEY FOR LIFE.

MISSION

TO CREATE POSITIVE OPPORTUNITIES AND LIFE EXPERIENCES
FOR **ALL PLAYERS** THROUGH INNOVATIVE LEADERSHIP AND
EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE.

Hockey Alberta has adopted an Initiation Program as the formal structure for the operation of hockey for players six years and under, and is to be implemented by all Minor Hockey Associations in Alberta. The Hockey Alberta Initiation Program was formed from a combination of Hockey Canada’s Initiation guidelines, Hockey Quebec’s MAHG guidelines, and specific modifications to reflect Hockey Alberta’s player first approach.

- PHILOSOPHY AND OBJECTIVES:**
1. Create a safe and positive environment for players to experience the sport.
 2. Incorporate physical literacy, fair play, co-operation and FUN into the sport.
 3. Teach basic hockey skills so players can enjoy the sport.

An Initiation Program’s success will be measured by the levels of enjoyment and development achieved by the players. To optimize those levels of enjoyment and development, it is necessary for dedicated adults to play a large role as effective leaders and teachers who will create a safe, fun, learning, challenging and motivating environment for the player.

| HOCKEY ALBERTA INITIATION PROGRAM GUIDELINES | |
|---|--|
| Category Name | All hockey open to players 6 years of age and younger will be classified as Initiation. |
| Playing Surface | All ice sessions (practices and games) are to be cross-ice, half ice or third ice of the regulation playing surface. For practices station work is encouraged. |
| Surface Dividers | It is <u>not mandatory</u> , but recommended to divide the ice with small boards, or other rink dividers. Note: A few cones or other objects are sufficient to divide the surface. |
| Puck | Recommend the blue 4 oz. puck to be used and other implements such as tennis balls, soccer balls, rubber chickens etc. |
| Modified Game Rules | No offsides or icing will need to be called. |
| Game Operations | No timekeepers, scorekeepers or goal judges are needed. |
| Officials | The use of officials is optional as it is recommended the coaches be on ice for all sessions. |
| Goalies | No goalie equipment is required other than a goalie stick. |
| Curriculum | Hockey Canada Initiation Skill Development Manual. |
| Coach Support | Recommended to identify a Coach Mentor and support system for coaches. |

LOCAL MINOR HOCKEY ASSOCIATIONS – THE KEY TO SUCCESS

The Hockey Alberta Initiation Program is designed for five and six-year old players, but is suitable for any entry-level hockey player. The program clearly lays out specific guidelines based on human growth and development to ensure a youngster's start in hockey consists of having fun, learning skills while developing confidence.

Local Minor Hockey Associations must commit to the Initiation Program and be prepared to support it. The commitment involves creating an implementation plan and maintaining that plan as the way of operating Initiation hockey in your community.

The structure for an Initiation Program is different from those normally offered, because it does not focus on playing "standard" games. As a result, there will be critics who will challenge the Minor Hockey Association and advocate a more traditional approach. However, it is important to remind all "doubters" that the Initiation Program has been designed by subject matter experts who specialize in child development; therefore, the format will be different than that utilized for older players and adults. An effective Initiation program must be designed with the best interest of the players and should not be used as a form of adult entertainment.

Support must come in a number of sources and from a variety of people. For the Minor Hockey Association, it is essential that support is provided:

- Identify and recruit volunteers to manage and run the programs. ***A ratio of one volunteer per five participants is ideal.***
- Appoint an experienced administrator, and hold information/update sessions. ***Coaches and other volunteers should not be expected to administer the program for themselves.***
- Training and support for the instructors beyond the required Coach 1 Clinic.
- Identify an experienced technical person (mentor) or committee to help with follow-up training throughout the season. ***The mentor should have experience in developing and delivering such programs.***
- Ensure communications exists between the Initiation Program and other areas of the association. ***The players, coaches and other volunteers in the Initiation Program are the future of your association; make sure to include them from the outset.***
- Develop a plan to sell the program to parents. Get them on your side. ***Options could include information sessions, newsletters, and player surveys.***

RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS

Because the Initiation Program deals with children who may not have even entered the school system, the need for quality leadership is critical. For some children, the Initiation Program may be the first time they have attended an organized event outside the home. Therefore, the coach may be the first authority figure, other than a parent, the child has encountered.

Coaches and other volunteers must be positive, energetic, creative, fun-loving and patient. The Coach 1 Clinic will emphasize many of the attributes necessary to conduct the program successfully. It is not necessary that the potential coaches have previous experience in teaching hockey skills, although that would be an asset. At the beginning level, on-ice coaches may range from an interested parent who offers to come out to offer encouragement to a seasoned coach who can demonstrate the skills covered in the manuals.

Associations must be innovative in their recruitment of Initiation Program volunteers. It can be a grooming area for the association's future coaches as well as players. A strong nucleus of volunteers is essential as a number of roles must be filled to effectively operate the program and deliver the curriculum. However, a single individual may be able to fill one or more roles. The basic framework or structure of the personnel required to implement the Initiation Program is: Program Administrator, Head Instructor (Coach), Support Instructors (Coaches), and Coach Mentor.

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR

This position is directly responsible for planning, organizing and administering the implementation and delivery for the Initiation Program. The program administrator may be an executive member of the minor hockey association or may simply be the liaison to the association's executive.

The administrator has a number of responsibilities to fulfil which require a number of administrative skills, including: budgeting, liaising with the minor hockey association's executive, recruitment and placement of instructors, coordinating the evaluation of the program, undertaking special events and recommending changes to the program and its delivery. They must work closely with the Head Instructor, and thus it is wise to select people for these two roles who both complement one another and who are capable of working together.

The qualifications within a typical recruitment advertisement for a Program Administrator may contain the following requirements:

- Understand the fundamental elements of the Initiation Program
- Possess a commitment to the established goals of the Initiation Program
- Possess strong organizational, interpersonal and communication skills
- Have the ability to conduct group presentations
- Have the ability to liaise with volunteers, board members, administrators, instructors and parents
- Has demonstrated ability to provide adequate time to the delivery of the Initiation Program

POTENTIAL JOB DESCRIPTION

A typical job description for the program administrator may contain these responsibilities (some may be shared with the Initiation Program Mentor if there is one):

Pre-Season

- Prepare operating budget for review and adoption by the minor hockey association's board. This budget may contain estimates for expenditures and revenues for:
 - Ice Rental
 - Equipment (Pucks, Pylons, Instructor Warm-Up Suits, Whistles, Etc.)
 - Supplies (Paper, Pens, Envelopes, Binders, Lesson Manuals, Etc.)
 - Training Fees (To Conduct Instructor Training Sessions)
 - Room Rentals (To Conduct Meetings)
 - Promotion Supplies (Posters, Photocopying, Pamphlets,)
 - Advertising (In Local Media Vehicles)
 - First Aid Supplies And Kits
 - Instructor Recognition
 - Sponsorship
- Secure ice time in conjunction with the minor hockey association for practices and modified games.
- Prepare and implement recruitment procedures for participants, instructors and head instructors.
- Co-ordinate the registration of participants.
- Assist in the selection and training of head instructor(s).
- Promotion of Coach 1 Clinics to instructors.
- Conduct a PARENT ORIENTATION MEETING to familiarize parents of prospective participants with the objectives of the Initiation Program, and how it is to be implemented.
- Conduct or acquire a presenter to deliver a Long Term Player Development Parent Presentation to the parent group.

On-Ice Delivery

- Co-ordinate the initial evaluation of participants for the purpose of grouping in the appropriate skill level if desired by the association.
- Confirm arena facilities/schedule and provide copies to all parties.
- Liaise with the minor hockey association's board, the Initiation Program Mentor and/or Head Instructor and on-ice instructors, the parents of the participants.
- Co-ordinate special events (photo sessions, mini-games, festivals, jamborees etc.)

Post Season

- Submit recommendations to the board of the minor hockey association with respect to any changes that could be made to improve the Initiation Program.
- Prepare equipment and supplies for storage.
- Undertake necessary actions for preparation for the next season.

ON-ICE INSTRUCTORS

On-ice instructors are generally recruited from the Initiation Program' parent group. In some situations, the on-ice instructors may also be volunteers from other segments of the community including students (a minimum of 16 years of age), post-secondary students and other adult volunteers. (See the section on recruiting). Instructors deliver the Initiation Program curriculum on the ice to the participants as scheduled by the Administrator.

The qualifications within a typical recruitment advertisement may contain the following requirements:

- Possess a coaching and/or hockey background OR a strong desire to begin to learn instructional techniques in the delivery of fundamental ice hockey skills
- Possess an enthusiastic attitude and desire to work with beginning hockey players
- Possess strong communication skills
- Possess a commitment to the goals and philosophy of the Initiation Program

POTENTIAL JOB DESCRIPTION

A typical job description for On-ice Instructors may contain these responsibilities:

Pre-Season

- Successfully complete the Coach 1 Clinic requirements.
- Successfully participate in the supplementary training sessions as co-ordinated by the minor hockey association.

On-Ice Delivery

- Deliver the program's curriculum to the assigned groups.
- Exemplify fair play and co-operation.
- Provide instruction in a manner that motivates and challenges the participants while respecting where each player is developmentally.
- Demonstrate effective leadership on and off the ice, for example, providing effective feedback to the participants.
- Provide feedback to parents of the participants when required.
- Assist in the evaluation of the participants and the Initiation Program in general.
- Demonstrate necessary risk management skills at all times with the arena safety checklist at each ice session.
- Assist in assigning players to their respective groups.
- Effectively explain and demonstrate drills and games to the participants.
- Co-ordinate the orderly entrance and exit to/from the ice surface by the participants.

NCCP TRAINING FOR INITIATION INSTRUCTORS

To ensure a positive experience for the children, a specific coach clinic (Coach 1) has been designed for the on-ice instructors (coaches). The Coach 1 clinic focuses on communication, teaching skills, leadership, skill development, lesson organization and safety and risk management.

The Coach 1 Clinic is part of the NCCP Coaching Program and consists of three sections:

1. Online Module (to be done prior to attending in person session)
2. Classroom Session
3. On-Ice Session

| | COACH 1 INTRO TO COACH | RESPECT IN SPORT | SAFETY |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| INITIATION * | 1 TEAM OFFICIAL/ 10 PLAYERS | ALL TEAM OFFICIALS | 1 TEAM OFFICIAL/ 10 PLAYERS |

* As Coach 1 was not offered prior to the 2015-16 season Initiation Coaches who have taken Coach 2 prior to the 2015-16 season will not be required to take Coach 1. Coach 1 will be required for any new Initiation coaches starting in the 2015-16 season and beyond.*

SEASONAL PLAN

The Initiation Program is a curriculum of skill development designed to introduce beginning players to the skills of the game of hockey. One of the keys to running a successful Initiation Program is to build this curriculum into a complete seasonal plan. The seasonal plan for an association with 400 players in the Initiation Program will differ considerably from that of an association having only 15 players.

The local constraints of the program will play a role in the unique design of an association's seasonal plan. Elements to consider include:

- Association size
- Allotted ice time
- Number of instructors
- Age levels of hockey entry
- Numbers of entry level players

Proposed Initiation Seasonal Chart

| Number of Practices | Start Date Practices | Developmental Season | Start Date Games | Regular Season | Tournaments /Festivals |
|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| 35-40 | September/ October | 20 practices | December | 20 practices 10 game sessions | 2-3 |

Every association building an Initiation Program will have its own design. The goal, however, is the commonality of using the curriculum of the Initiation Program along with Hockey Alberta's guidelines to build a strong foundation of skills that allow players to enjoy hockey for a lifetime.

INITIATION REGISTRATION REGULATIONS

General Regulations 1.3 o) "Hockey Team" or "Team" means a group of persons comprised of:

(E) For Teams within the Division of Initiation, there is no maximum number of players;

Minor Hockey 3.7 Number of Players on a Hockey Team

(a) All Hockey Teams may register at one time a maximum of nineteen (19) Players. Of those nineteen (19), 2 must be goaltenders.

Exception: Teams within the Division of Initiation do not have a maximum number of players that can be registered at any one time.

In order to properly administer the Initiation Program, an MHA must be able to focus on skill development by continually moving players into groups of similar skill levels. This will provide an opportunity for ideal skill development conditions. It has also been identified that players of this age group should not be participating in games that are operated under the official Hockey Canada Playing Rules. Currently those rules restrict any age Division to a properly registered roster that contains a maximum of nineteen players and does not provide the opportunity noted above. This provides the opportunity for MHA's to register all of their Initiation players on one listing and operate as a "program" rather than being confined to the same roster requirements as all other groups (i.e. – Midget AAA). It recognizes the fact that Initiation programs should be playing by different rules and adapting the game to their size and skill level.

GROUPING OF PLAYERS – PROGRAM DESIGN

In a Program Design, players are instructed as one large group. Instructors are responsible for all the players in the program, rather than only a pre-selected number. Instructors may be responsible for station work involving their areas of expertise. During the session the instructors would instruct all the players as they moved through his/her station.

Modified games would take place with a random selection of players. These "teams" would constantly change.

The benefits of this design are:

- All players receive instruction from a variety of instructors.
- Players get to associate with a maximum number of other players on the ice.

Associations may group players of approximately the same skill level on the ice at the same time OR have players with a mixture of skill levels who use station work for a particular skill. The latter scenario is a perfect design for a small community.

By splitting the ice effectively and using station work, associations will be able to accommodate up to 60 players on the ice at one time.

GROUPING OF PLAYERS – TEAM DESIGN

In Team Design, an instructor or group of instructors is assigned a number of players (a "team") in the early part of the season. The instructional group would then be responsible for conducting the Initiation Program curriculum to their group of players. The player groups would, for the most part, be intact for the season. Ice schedules may have a number of these "player groups" on the ice at the same time but when attending to the curriculum, the players are instructed by the same instructor.

Example: A simple model would be 45 players on the ice with groups of 15 dressed in green, yellow and red. After warming up together, the 15 yellow players would be instructed at their end of the rink by "their" instructor (as would the other colours).

The benefits of this design are:

- Player groups are easier to organize.
- Players form a more intimate identity to a smaller group.
- Players receive consistent instruction from their identifiable leader(s).
- Easy transfer into mainstream hockey where this player group becomes a "team."

As you read the two groupings just presented, you can probably imagine a number of designs that would be a combination of the two models. As with many of the ideas presented, the options must be thought of as a continuum, rather than one or the other. In this case, the two ends of the continuum are Program and Team. You might choose some midway design.

For example:

Program Design <----->Team Design

Sample A: Your association may also choose to operate a Program Design with first-year players and progress to Team Design as players ready for entry into mainstream hockey. This is a common practice.

Sample B: Program Design could be used for the early part of the season, and then at a suitable time players could be regrouped into team groups. The transition could be made at different times for different groups, depending on age and/or ability.

BALANCED TEAMS - GAMES

When more than one team is made up such teams should be balanced and play against each other throughout the season to favour fair competition between teams in the same association and neighbouring associations. The responsibility lies with the involved association(s) and when a significant difference appears amongst teams a rebalance of the teams should take place.

EXAMPLES OF WAYS TO MODIFY THE GAME

Modify the Ice Surface

- Play 1/2 ice (ice divided at the red line)
- Play 1/2 ice (ice divided end to end line)
- Play 1/3 ice (ice divided at two blue lines)
- Play 2/3 ice (blue line to far end of the rink)
- Play 1/3 ice (ice divided at the red line and down the middle - this format actually keeps the length/width proportionate)

Modify the Equipment

- Use pylons for goals
- Use smaller nets
- Devise boards and benches to be used while dividing the ice
- Use target, artificial goalies or no goalies
- Use blue 4oz pucks

Modify Players Playing the Game

- Match skill strength of opposing players
- Change numerical advantages (i.e. 5 players vs 4 players)
- Change numbers playing (i.e. 3 on 3, 4 on 4 etc)

Modify the Basic Rules

- No statistics
- Players must make a certain number of passes
- Players may only score a limited number of goals
- Numerical strength may not be even
- No penalties
- Use buzzer system for line changes
- Player changes "on the fly" (no faceoffs)

Emphasize Skill

- Players can only skate backwards
- Players must only pass on the backhand
- All players rotate all positions including goal
- Goals only scored on shots outside a certain radius

Instruction during the Game

- Have instructors on the ice
- Stop the game to instruct if needed

LONG TERM PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

What is Long Term Play Development?

Hockey Canada's Long Term Player Development is an eight stage model based on the physical, mental, emotional, and cognitive development of children and adolescents. The model emphasizes in doing what is right for the player at their appropriate human developmental stage.

FUNDamentals 1 – is geared for both male and female players aged 5 and 6 years old.

The focus at this stage is on the development of physical literacy. Fundamental movement skills should be mastered and motor development emphasized, and participation in many sports/activities is encouraged. For optimal skill acquisition, the basic hockey skills of skating and puck control are to be introduced. FUN competitions through modified games, relay races and small area games should be introduced.

The skill of skating speed can be developed quickly with players this age. Coaching should focus on developing skating speed in repetitions of less than 5 seconds. The ABC's of **A**gility, **B**alance and **C**oordination should be emphasized through the teaching of skills and small area games. Ensure that the skills the player acquires during the FUNDamental stage will benefit them when they engage in physical activities thus enhancing their quality of life and health.

Hockey Canada recommends in the stage of FUNDamentals that players spend 85% of their time on the introduction and development of technical skills. Technical skills include such things as skating, puck control, passing, shooting etc. These skills should be explored and taught through a variety of FUN and engaging ice sessions that utilize station work, relay races, small area games and other modified games. The other 15% of time is recommended to be used to explore individual tactics of the sport. Individual tactics consist of combining 2 or more technical skills in order to gain advantage or take away an advantage of an opponent. At the FUNDamental stage there is no benefit based on human growth limitations to spend any time on team tactics, team play or team strategy.



FUNdamentals to Do List:

For Associations

- Players develop skills in practices and test those skills in modified games
- Maximize your ice time by putting upwards of 40 players on the ice at a time
- Utilize modified equipment appropriate for young players. Examples of this include junior model sticks, light weight pucks and fun teaching implements
- Provide coaches with the latest and most up to date resources to assist with seasonal planning and skill teaching.
- Provide coaches with continuing education opportunities

For Coaches

- Teach appropriate and correct balance, agility, edge control, skating, turning and puck control skills using the ABC's of athletics.
- Introduce children to the simple rules and ethics of sports.
- Develop the skill of speed in players through short (5 seconds or less) repetitions
- Utilize the Hockey Canada Initiation manual to deliver appropriately structured practices.
- Limit technical and tactical information communicated to the players -Ensure players enjoy the game and want to continue to play in the future
- NCCP training in the Intro Coach Program -Continuing education through Mentorship Instructional Stream clinics offered at MHA level with a focus on teaching the technical skills.

HOW THEY LEARN

To educate and support associations in how children learn let's take a look at a report prepared by Ms. Madelaine Halle for the Montreal University on children ages 5-7 years old.

Motor and Perception Motor Skills

Children aged 5 years old tend to have difficulties in terms of the mechanical effectiveness of their movements and also in terms of combining movements like running and jumping, or running and throwing. Skating is not considered a basic skill but rather a specialized one. It requires control of such skills as running and balance, both barely mastered at this age.

Dexterity and eye-limb coordination improves but is still not very good. It will take them many repetitions to adjust. The 5 year olds can tell their right from left, only if they have practiced. They are conditioned to know the difference but have yet to understand it.

Children aged 7 years old begin to understand what right and left means in the environment: the right side of the ice, the left boards, etc. 5 year olds are already identified as right or left-handed, although in some cases their skill level is virtually equivalent.

Children aged 5 to 7 have just begun to see the link between an action and its result: shooting in a certain way will produce a certain result. They cannot structure their space such as moving half the length of ice or leaving one third of the ice free. They will try to do it, approximate it, because they don't really understand the exact value of numbers and fractions very well.

Motor development depends on experience but also on the child's physical and neuro development: the most developed are thus not necessarily the most skillful. Amongst children, there is a very large variation in motor skills, between motor activities like throwing and running, and between body segments such as upper and lower body skills. Accordingly, a 6 year old child might be able to skate very well but shoot poorly, or control their right skate very well but their left one poorly. They need time to carry out instructions and need many repetitions to stabilize a movement and outside information to improve.

Cognitive Development

Children 5 to 7 years old decide to act solely on the basis of how things look. They can evaluate only one criterion at a time; they are either fast or accurate, but rarely **intentionally** both at the same time.

Children aged 5 years old have a very hard time reversing things, doing an action or movement and repeating it in the opposite direction. They are still highly influenced by things that occur simultaneously, which are then considered cause and effect: I don't play well because my coach is watching me. Generally, they feel their point of view is right and much better than others' point of view, including the coach's.

Emotional Development

They hardly have two opposing feelings at the same time, like being disappointed with their own performance but pleased with that of their team. They have global self-esteem: they are either good or not good at all.

Social Development

They recognize authority mainly on the basis of social status: father, coach. They have their own understanding of justice: everyone should be getting the same treatment. Their friendships begin to be based on trust and reciprocity.

Never: Assume they have bad intentions

Avoid: Presenting too much information at one time and hurrying them.

Do: Give instructions with concrete benchmarks, visual auditory or kinesthetic reference points; ask them to repeat your instructions in their own words.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTION

Why use a modified playing surface for Initiation Hockey?

A limited space allows for a greater variety in the execution of various technical skills. For example a child who is skating the whole length of the rink and is faster than the others may easily come to depend only on his speed. In a limited space, on the other hand, he has to control the puck more carefully and make frequent changes of skating direction. This is closer to the real game situation where there is not much puck carrying from end to end and the situations (and responses to them) are many and varied.

Think of other sports. Most have adapted either their playing surface or the game parameters for children. Basketball has a “mini basket”, downhill skiing offers shorter routes and gates that are farther apart and in volleyball the net is lower. In short, if you think of hockey in the context of how children learn, it makes sense to give them challenges that are within their grasp.

Review the section on How Children Learn as this will help you understand and explain these principles to parents who are intent on having their child play on the whole rink.