



# GIRLS HOCKEY RESOURCE

GROWING GIRLS HOCKEY  
IN YOUR COMMUNITY

COACH, PLAYER, GOALIE  
RECRUITMENT & DEVELOPMENT

ASSOCIATIONS WORKING TOGETHER



**Hockey Alberta has created this resource to provide information on building a sustainable girls hockey program. Topics include development, engagement strategies and recruitment strategies, along with key considerations for minor hockey associations to work together to create an all girls program. This information is a guide and can be adjusted to fit your association's needs.**



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>PARTICIPATION IN SPORT</b>	2-5
1. Value and Benefits – General	2
2. Values and Benefits – Girls Hockey	3
3. Barriers and Challenges	4
4. Keeping Girls in Sport	5
<b>GROWING HOCKEY IN YOUR COMMUNITY</b>	6-9
1. All Girls Programs	6
2. Player Recruitment	7
a. Try Hockey One-Day Event	7
b. Try Hockey/ Skills Program	7
c. Try Hockey Season Program	8
d. Hockey Canada ESSO Fun Days	9
3. Fostering Girls Hockey within your Association	10-11
a. Hockey Day/Weekend	10
b. “Elite” Role Models	11
<b>DEVELOPMENT</b>	12-17
1. Goaltender Development	12
2. Coach Development	13
a. Coach Recruitment	14
b. Coach Development	15
c. Junior Coach Program	16
d. Future Coaches Program	17
e. Future Leaders Program	17
f. Alberta Challenge Apprentice Coach Program	17
<b>APPENDICES</b>	18-24
Appendix A: Grants & Equipment Banks	19
Appendix B: Try Hockey One-Day Event Template	20
Appendix C: AFHL Engagement	21
Appendix D: League Contacts	22



## 1 Value and Benefits – **GENERAL**

Hockey provides the opportunity for girls to engage in a healthy, active lifestyle while developing new and long-lasting friendships. Participation in sport allows girls to develop as athletes and as people, learning key life lessons through their involvement. It also provides young girls the opportunity to engage with other females that share similar interests through sport.

Providing hockey opportunities within your association gives girls the chance to:

- Learn new skills while being active
- Learn the importance of goal setting and working both individually and as a team to reach those goals
- Learn how to handle adversity in a positive way

- Develop communication skills that will assist in building confidence
- Develop leadership skills that will benefit your athletes in sport, in school and in the work force
- Associate with positive female role models and leaders because you need to see it to be it!
- Enjoy Hockey for Life!



## 2 Values and Benefits – GIRLS HOCKEY

Sometimes, parents aren't sure whether they should register their daughter(s) in hockey.

***“Why should my daughter play girls hockey?”***

### Peers

**The opportunity to engage with other female players who share similar interests through sport and can help your daughter feel more accepted.** The social component in girls hockey is as important as skill development, as many girls leave the sport at an early age because they do not feel accepted among hockey teams.

### Coaches

**Associations with girls teams are more likely to have girls and women coaches working with these teams.** These coaches are often former players who return to help with their association teams. They understand the needs of their athletes, the pathway for girls in hockey and can provide mentorship for your daughter.

### Girl-centred Coaching

**There are subtle differences between minor hockey and girls hockey.** These coaches understand the social differences as well as how to work with and inspire young girls. They are also more familiar with the opportunities that girls hockey provides and can give guidance to families and players about the next level.

### Mentorship Programs

**Associations with girls programs often host mentorship programs.** Whether your daughter is U9 or U18 or somewhere in between, mentorship provides role models for young athletes in their own community or allows older athletes to give back to the younger generation of players.

### Leadership

**Girls hockey gives your daughter more of an opportunity** to become a leader on her team that she may not receive on a minor hockey team.

### Development

**An important part of individual skill development is playing in a variety of situations** (even strength, powerplay, penalty kill, etc.) during games. This opportunity is more likely to exist for your daughter in minor girls hockey, helping to build confidence and motivate towards skill improvement.



## 3 Barriers and CHALLENGES

It is important to recognize the barriers for participation in sport to aid associations in generating creative solutions and opportunities for girls participation in hockey. Key factors that contribute to dropping out or not getting started in sport include lack of:

- access to facilities
- female specific opportunities
- access to equipment
- transportation
- funds to participate
- positive role models

Factors Influencing Participation  
[CLICK HERE](#)

**Yes, hockey can be expensive, and there are other challenges to participation, but with creativity and collaboration, there are cost-effective ways to provide a positive hockey experience for everyone.**

**SEE APPENDIX A – GRANTS**



# 4 Keeping Girls IN SPORT

Studies have repeatedly shown that during adolescence, girls drop out of sport at a significantly higher rate than boys.

According to the Rally Report, 1 in 3 girls drop out of sport during adolescence compared to just 1 in 10 boys.

Canadian Women and Sport have developed an e-learning module for coaches and activity leaders to build their understanding of how to:

- address common motivators and barriers for girls in sport;
- navigate the ways girls and boys experience sport environments differently throughout their development stages;
- foster positive sport environments for girls; and,
- ultimately keep girls engaged in sport.

Respect in Sport has also developed a module – Keeping Girls in Sport. This online module was built for anyone coaching or mentoring girls in sport. It aims to help individuals view how the game is different for girls – physically, mentally, socially, and emotionally. The overall purpose of this module is to help teach individuals in a position of power how to work in girls and women's sports and hopefully create an environment where athletes can thrive and remain in sport for a longer duration.

## Respect in Sport

[CLICK HERE](#)

### Keeping Girls in Sport

[CLICK HERE](#)





## 1 All Girls PROGRAMMING

Your association can host programs for local girls to try new sports (or physical activities) while building their skills and confidence in a safe and supportive environment.

The social aspect of the game is just as important as development, as many girls tend to leave the sport at an early age because they do not feel a sense of belonging. Providing all girls opportunities allows for an increased social component, which helps foster a positive experience. Potential ideas include:

- Giving young athletes the ability to spend time in the same dressing room.
- Including women and girls instructors/facilitators to lead the sessions.
- Building relationships amongst the participants through icebreakers and games.
- Building in social time before or after practices or other team events.

- Off-ice sessions for girls to connect and share their sport experiences to assist in making physical activity more appealing to non-participants. Potential topics could include goal setting, health, and nutrition education.
- Promoting and introducing positive role models to highlight healthy living habits, athletic skills, athletic achievements, and contributions to the game and society.
- Providing equipment to first-time participants, which could include partnering with a local equipment bank or sponsor.
- Providing opportunities to participate at limited or no cost.



# 2 Player RECRUITMENT



Free or low-cost all girl “Try Hockey” opportunities are a great way to encourage participation in hockey. There are different types of Try Hockey programs.

## A. TRY HOCKEY ONE-DAY EVENT

Hosting a one-day “Try Hockey” event in your community is a great way to introduce the sport to girls. Associations have found success in running these prior to the season in September, or in April to generate excitement for next season. This may be an opportunity for the association to offer a reduced registration fee for first-time participants as an incentive for families to sign up for hockey following the Try Hockey Event.

Options include:

- Host at least one off-ice session and one on-ice session
- Incorporate with another event within your community (i.e., U18 Girls Game, University/ College Game)
- Encourage local sponsors to participate (provide pizza, jerseys, ice etc.)

**It is recommended to include a parent session with information on your association, programming and the benefits of participating in sport.**

**SEE APPENDIX B: TRY HOCKEY ONE-DAY EVENT TEMPLATE**

## B. TRY HOCKEY/SKILLS PROGRAM

This entry-level program is a season-long program option to engage current athletes and families in helping grow the number of girls participating in your association. Current players “bring a buddy” who is new to hockey or has limited playing experience to participate in the program. Things to consider when building your program include:

- Provide consistent ice time throughout the season (once a week, twice a month, for 3 months etc.);
- Charge a one-time cost (eg. \$250) for new participants and allow them to attend as many sessions as they like;
- For players already registered with the association, provide the opportunity to skate for free;
- Encourage current players and alumni within your association to participate.



### C. TRY HOCKEY SEASON PROGRAM

This program would focus on players with little or no playing experience. It can be targeted to a specific age group or be open to all ages.

The program differs from the one-day option as it encompasses multiple ice sessions throughout the season so that first-time participants and families can be introduced to the game gradually rather than beginning with a regular Minor Hockey schedule.

This program is designed to give first-time participants the experience and confidence to register for hockey in the future. The focus of this program should be on foundational skill development and enjoyment of the game. A key success indicator would be participants signing up for Minor Hockey in subsequent seasons.

Things to consider when building your program:

- This program is a starting point for young girls and their families, so try to keep the time commitment low for the family.
- Host a parent meeting before the first session. Topics can include: proper equipment and how to put it on, proper stick length etc., as well as the benefits of sport and specifically female hockey, etc.
- Provide consistent ice time throughout the season (once a week, twice a month, for 3 months, etc.);
- Set up stations or sessions based on ability;
- Recruit enthusiastic program leads and on ice helpers to help enhance the positive feelings about hockey. These leads and helpers can be coaches within your association and/or current players.





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## D. HOCKEY CANADA ESSO FUN DAYS

Esso Fun Days introduce hockey to first-time participants at no cost. Subsidies are available through Hockey Canada to offset association costs. An Esso Fun Day enables participants to become part of a team effort, experience team spirit and develop self-confidence. Associations can host this program for girls of all ages.

Choose from a one-day program or a six-week program. The one-day program features one on-ice session with a focus on basic skills and hockey concepts and one off-ice session. The six-week program has an introductory first day with one off-ice session, followed by additional weekly sessions.

Host communities are responsible for:

- Registering their program prior to the event.
- Sending in the program wrap-up form and receipts, within 30 days of the first session.

For a one-day program, reimbursement is for a maximum of \$400 and covers ice rental, off-ice facility rental, cleaning supplies (up to \$350), and advertising (up to \$50). For a six-week program, reimbursement is to a maximum of \$800 and covers the ice rental, off-ice facility rental, cleaning supplies up to (\$750), and advertising (up to \$50).

It is recommended to:

- Utilize local or regional U15 and U18 athletes at the elite and grassroots levels as on and off-ice support for the event(s).
- Recruit experienced lead instructors to run the on and off-ice sessions.

For application information and steps, go to:

**Esso Fun Days**

[CLICK HERE](#)



## 3 Fostering Girls Hockey within YOUR ASSOCIATION

Providing all girls development and events can be a great start to fostering a positive female hockey culture, enhancing community engagement, creating excitement around the game, and ultimately keeping girls involved.

**It is advantageous to bring awareness to the girls' teams, programs, and/ or collegiate/ university athletic programs that exist in your community or region. Partnering with programs and teams that already have a presence in your community will allow families and players to see different pathways and opportunities that exist in hockey.**

**SEE APPENDIX C: AFHL ENGAGEMENT**

### A. HOCKEY DAY/WEEKEND

Hosting a day or weekend to celebrate girls hockey within your association is a great way to generate excitement in your community. This can be run at the start of the season to create excitement for the upcoming season or be aligned with Hockey Alberta's Female Hockey Day that is hosted in January/ February.

Ideas to consider include:

- On-ice development/skill sessions. Depending on participant numbers you can group players based on age and skill level.
- Off-ice development sessions for players, parents, coaches and/or officials.
- Incorporate a tournament or jamboree into the event. Some associations mix players on teams for a 3-on-3 tournament.

- Work with your local Regional Officials Coordinator and include an introduction to officiating or a women and girls officiating development session.
- Include a "showcase" game to promote women and girls hockey, marketing to the public in your community and surrounding areas.
- Engage alumnae of your association or current U15/ U18 players to act as on- and off-ice leads, facilitators, and support for the event.
- Add a recruitment component - a "Try Hockey" or "Try Goalie" session.

Each year, the Hockey Alberta Foundation provides grants for associations to run their own celebration in conjunction with Alberta Female Hockey Day. Grant application deadlines are announced each year on the Hockey Alberta website.





## B. “ELITE” ROLE MODELS

MHAs with girls programs have found success in making a connection to role models through utilizing a U15/ U18 girls game in your community. Providing an opportunity for younger players to connect with veteran female players in your association or area is a great way to foster excitement around girls hockey. Younger girls can see what is possible for them in the future, and they can maximize their connection to these role models.

- Younger athletes can watch the game and meet the older players after the game.
  - Include a session for younger players to ask questions and learn from older role models.
- Extra ice time for an ice session/skate combining the younger girls with the U15/ U18 players.
  - Chance to host several throughout the season, or in neighbouring communities.
  - Can be held with players who already participate in hockey or to recruit younger players.

- Encourage U15/U18 players to attend games of the younger players to show their support.
- These types of actions help to create a positive hockey community within your association.
- Can be promoted within your association or to girls players in surrounding associations.

Your association can engage these role models with your girls programs by reaching out to:

- Older players within your MHA or within the area
- “Elite” players within your MHA or within the area
- Alumnae from your MHA or area
- College/ University players
- Athletes or coaches engaged in other high-level sports
- Professional/ Olympic athletes



# DEVELOPMENT

## 1 Goaltender DEVELOPMENT

Associations are encouraged to focus on recruiting and developing female goaltenders. This creates a safe and supportive environment for girls to try the position and develop their skills.

Depending on the number of girls registered, your association may want to partner with neighbouring associations to host some of these initiatives. As always, associations can adjust programs to fit specific needs.

- Implement a goaltender playing time policy at U11 and below so that all participants get several chances to try the position throughout the season.
- Establish part-time goalie opportunities for participants to try the position;
- Host a “Try Goalie” session or allow players to attend “Goaltender Development Nights.”
- Waive registration fees for goaltenders as an incentive to families.

- Provide equipment or equipment rental opportunities. Some associations have invested in equipment up to U18 as an incentive to retain goaltenders on their teams.
- Host annual “Try Goalie” clinics. These can be hosted on their own or in conjunction with an association’s “Try Hockey” event. Key elements for hosting are:
  - Providing goalie equipment;
  - Securing an on-ice lead;
  - Getting other goaltenders in your association to help coach;
  - Creating a practice plan that helps young players learn the basics of the position in a safe and fun environment.



- Host parent education session(s). Topics can include:
  - Equipment education, position education, how to be a supportive goalie parent, off-ice and multi-sport cross training, etc.
- Provide weekly or bi-weekly goaltender development sessions throughout the season. These can be on-ice or off-ice;
  - “Goaltender Development Nights” can be weekly or monthly open ice times where players can work with goaltender coaches to improve their skills;
  - Consider connecting with a neighbouring MHA to increase participation numbers for these sessions.
- Utilize your U15/U18 goaltenders to mentor younger goaltenders at practices or games.
- Secure goaltender coaches for your association or team(s).
- Provide development sessions for coaches about goaltenders or for your goaltender coaches.

You can also visit the Hockey Alberta Goaltender Guide for more information on Goaltender Development:

**Hockey Alberta  
Goaltender Guide**

[CLICK HERE](#)

## 2 Coach **DEVELOPMENT**

Women and girls coaches provide young athletes with strong role models in action. Research has shown that the presence of women and girls coaches challenges the negative messaging girls receive about their participation in sport and instills confidence.

**Having women coaches a part of a player's minor hockey experience helps create the opportunity for young girls to have strong, positive role models, showing them that women and girls can achieve and lead in sport. Young girls will not only benefit from the experience of direct leadership, but it also gives them the opportunity to connect with an individual who has played hockey and has firsthand experience regarding the pathway, joys, challenges, and social components that differ from minor hockey.**

Women's Sports Foundation (2019)



## A. COACH RECRUITMENT

Find a champion within your association to focus on attracting women and girls to coach coaches. Suggestions for recruiting and developing female coaches include:

- Be active. Engage with former players, local university/ collegiate players, parents within the association, or leaders within your community.
- Build relationships and regularly communicate with the alumnae of your association. If coaching a team during the season is too much of a commitment, provide opportunities for them to give back beyond coaching a team for a full season;
  - Helping at a “Try Hockey” event;
  - Coaching at a weekly, weekend or week-long skills camp(s);
  - Helping with goalie sessions
- Encourage mothers within your association to become involved in coaching. Provide them with educational basics of coaching to instill confidence;
  - Encourage them to start coaching when their children are at the younger age levels (U7/ U9);
  - Develop a plan to assist these coaches in growing and developing as their children progress;
  - Create a mentorship network among new coaches and coaches who have progressed.
- Foster a culture of giving back within your programs. Encourage your current players to give back by coaching or connecting with the younger generation of players. This can be done through formal “Junior Coach Programs” (See Page 16) or helping at weekend camps and events.
- Offer an annual all-women coach clinic and development opportunities.



## B. COACH DEVELOPMENT

All-women development opportunities can instill confidence in coaches and provide the tools to become a great coach. This specific type of development opportunity creates a sense of community and provides a safe environment to grow as a coach and leader.

- Create a network of women coaches within your association and establish regular communication with them. This could include development opportunities or monthly get-togethers for them to share and build relationships.
- Provide the option for women coaches to be mentored. This can be a key component to the development of strong female coaches. Having the support of an experienced coach mentor can be a great comfort and enhance the experience for coaches;
  - Create a formal mentorship program.
  - Check out the Coaching Association of Canada's mentorship model:

- Provide all-women coach development sessions within your association or area.
- Distribute the list, remind, and encourage coaches to attend Hockey Alberta Coach Clinics and Development Sessions being hosted throughout the year;
- Reimburse coaches for completed clinics helps offset cost of participation.
- Create on-ice and off-ice learning opportunities for your coaches. If possible, host these opportunities with all women attendees, as participants may feel more comfortable with learning and sharing.

### Female Coach Mentorship

[CLICK HERE](#)





### C. JUNIOR COACH PROGRAM

Creating a Junior Coach program is a great way to encourage your U15/ U18 athletes to become involved in coaching and start giving back to the game at a young age. This program provides a safe environment to learn the basics of coaching and instill confidence and leadership.

Program framework:

- Identify teams for junior coaches to work with.
- Host a meeting with the coaches of those teams to set the expectations for the junior coaches and how they should mentor and develop them throughout the season.
- Host an orientation meeting for junior coaches that clearly outlines the expectations for them (time commitment, assisting the Head Coaches, dress code, behaviour, etc.);

• Cover basic concepts of coaching such as puck placements, safety, communication skills, bench etiquette, providing feedback to the young athletes and advice on how to be a positive role model.

- Coordinate 1-2 ice sessions per season where all junior coaches can learn on-ice concepts as a group.
- Schedule 2-3 off-ice sessions throughout the season for mentor coaches to lead junior coaches on coach development topics.
- When available, encourage junior coaches to attend coaching clinics and development opportunities within your area.

Future Leaders is offered in various locations across the province and provides U18 level athletes with coaching certification and additional experience.





## D. FUTURE COACHES PROGRAM

Hockey Alberta's Future Coaches program educates U18 level hockey players in the areas of coaching, skill instruction and leadership. Through this interactive program, athletes are introduced to advanced coaching techniques, learn skill

development to better their game, and gain leadership skills and confidence to join a team in a support coaching role.

**Future Coaches** [CLICK HERE](#)

## E. FUTURE LEADERS PROGRAM

**The Future Leader Development Program is designed to train and mentor post-secondary students in coaching. Selected future leaders will be trained, both on- and off-ice, through sessions that include skill development, leadership, team building and off-ice training. Along with classroom sessions and tasks, future leaders will plan and deliver on-ice sessions. The Future Leaders Development Program helps to provide a base of enthusiastic coaches that will play an active role in Hockey Alberta programs and within their communities for years to come.**

[CLICK HERE](#)

## F. ALBERTA CHALLENGE APPRENTICE COACH PROGRAM

Hockey Alberta provides the opportunity for young coaches to apply to the Alberta Challenge Apprentice Coach Program, which runs each spring. The Apprentice Coach program provides the opportunity for aspiring coaches to gain experience in the Team Alberta Program. This program presents the unique opportunity to learn from and engage with the Alberta

Challenge coaching staff and Hockey Alberta's Mentorship Program throughout the short-term competition process.

**To learn more about the Alberta Challenge Apprentice Coach program, please visit the Team Alberta section of the Hockey Alberta website.**

[CLICK HERE](#)

# APPENDICES



# APPENDIX A: GRANTS & EQUIPMENT BANKS

There are options to receive grants for your girls hockey programs and to partner with local sports equipment banks. Some options include:

**Hockey Alberta Foundation: Every Kid Every Community Grant**

**Hockey Canada Foundation**

**Oilers Foundation**

**Flames Foundation**

**Doc Seaman Amateur Sports Grants**

**Local Community Grants**

**Calgary Flames Sports Bank**

**Sports Central (Edmonton)**

**Grindstone Award**

**Canadian Women & Sport**

**World Girls Hockey Weekend**

APPENDIX A



# APPENDIX B: TRY HOCKEY ONE-DAY EVENT TEMPLATE

Start Time	End Time	Task
11:30 AM	12:00 PM	Registration/ check-in
12:00 PM	1:00 PM	Off-ice (icebreakers, team building/ games, introduction to hockey and rules)
1:00 PM	1:15 PM	Water break (and small snack)
1:15 PM	1:45 PM	Get ready to go on ice (help with equipment and getting gear on)
1:45 PM	2:45 PM	On-ice (basic hockey skills and fun games)
2:45 PM	3:15 PM	Wrap up (could include giveaway item and contact for local MHA)

The purpose of the One-Day Try Hockey event is to introduce basics to beginners at little to no cost. As an all girls event, it will encourage players who may be too timid to get involved. Try Hockey events can be hosted as:

- Bring a Friend Sessions
- Esso Fun Days (Hockey Canada)
- Free Skates for those who are just starting
- Skills Camps for those with little experience

## EQUIPMENT

Basic Requirements:

- CSA-certified helmet
- BNQ-certified neck guard
- Hockey gloves
- Elbow and knee protection
- Skates
- Hockey stick

### Esso Fun Days Manual

[CLICK HERE](#)

To help with securing equipment for those who need it:

- “Bring a Buddy” where a friend borrows equipment for on-ice portion
- Borrow from another friend or family
- Include local team in which they lend their gear for the day
- Contact local equipment bank
- Host a donation campaign prior to the event

Please see Hockey Canada’s Esso Fun Days to read further into hosting a 1-Day Event.

# APPENDIX C: AFHL ENGAGEMENT

APPENDIX C:  
AFHL ENGAGEMENT

Over the past few seasons, minor hockey associations in the Alberta Female Hockey League have engaged their elite programs with grassroots programs in their community and the surrounding geographic area. Through this initiative, the association has been successful in creating excitement around girls hockey in the community. Successful strategies include:

- Assigning AFHL players to teams within the association and surrounding associations. These players participate in and attend team practices, functions, and games.
- For all AFHL home games, choosing a grassroots team from the association or the surrounding area to attend a game. A couple of players could also be selected to participate in pre-game routines with the elite players. Activities could include:
  - Off-ice warm-up
  - Pre-game preparation
  - On-ice warm-up
  - Joining the elite players on the blue line for the National Anthem
- Elite teams playing home games in surrounding communities to create excitement in the region.
- Scheduling multiple girls teams on the same day to allow the athletes to cheer each other on throughout the day.
  - Elite teams could arrive early before their games to cheer on the grassroots teams.
- Hosting goaltender sessions for all goalies within the association. Veteran goaltenders could attend these sessions and assist younger goaltenders in learning basic skills.



# APPENDIX D: LEAGUE CONTACTS

APPENDIX D: LEAGUE CONTACTS

**League:** **Rocky Mountain Female Hockey League (RMFHL)**

**President:** president@rmfhl.com

**Administrator:** secretary@rmfhl.com

**Website:** <https://rmfhl.net/>

**League:** **All Peace Hockey League (APHL)**

**President:** president@aphl.club

**Female Contact:** femalevp@aphl.club

**Administrator:** AllPeaceHockeySecretary@gmail.com

**Website:** [www.allpeacehockey.com](http://www.allpeacehockey.com)

**League:** **Girls Hockey Calgary (GHC)**

**President:** president@girlshockeycalgary.com

**Administrator:** admin@girlshockeycalgary.com

**Website:** [www.girlshockeycalgary.com](http://www.girlshockeycalgary.com)

**League:** **East Central Female Hockey League**

**President:** ECAFHLPresident@outlook.com

**Administrator:** ECAFHL@outlook.com

**Website:** [ecafhl.com](http://ecafhl.com)

**League:** **Edmonton Federation Hockey League (EFHL)**

**President:** N/A

**Administrator:** efhlcommissioner@gmail.com

**Website:** [www.efhlhockey.com](http://www.efhlhockey.com)



