



ELITE FEMALE HOCKEY MODEL





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INTRODUCTION

After a thorough review of Female Hockey within Alberta, Hockey Alberta implemented an entirely new Female Hockey Model beginning in the 2016-2017 season. The model focuses on player development and provides players a system of hockey to develop their skills within. Over the course of the review the feedback that was gathered stated very clearly that the players and stakeholders within the female game were not satisfied with the female hockey system in Alberta and it needed to change. Two items that were highlighted from that process were that the number of teams at the highest level of U18 hockey had to decrease and that a developmental system had to be built to help players develop skills and progress to the next level of hockey.

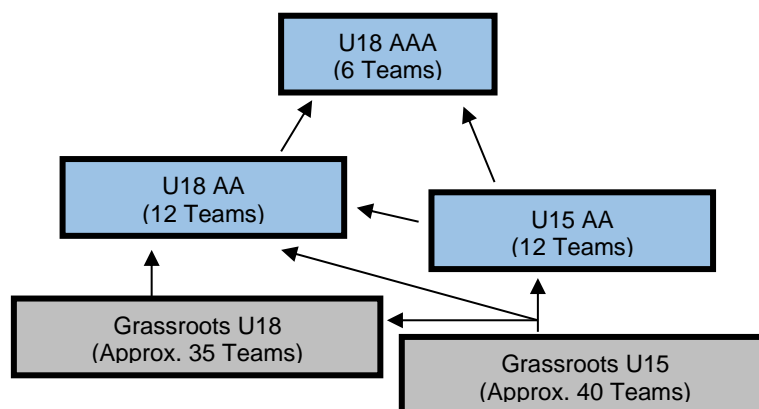
In the past Alberta has seen more than 20% of all U18 and U15 female players playing under the AAA title. This, along with a lack of a developmental level of hockey to provide support, was identified as a large part of the problem. There were players being moved up to a level that their skills were not capable of placing them at and, on the contrary, players were being forced to play on teams with beginners when their own skill set exceeded that level. This new model provides structure for the top two levels of U18 (AAA and AA) as well as the top level of U15 (AA) hockey. The AA level provides the players with an opportunity to play at a level that enables skill development and focuses on helping them get to the next level, bridging the gap between grassroots programs and AAA.

PRINCIPLES

1. A standardized Province wide system of hockey that provides the opportunity for female players to develop and progress from Grassroots hockey through to Elite hockey and up into Team Alberta's High Performance programs.
2. Defined criteria determining the appropriate number of Teams within each Category as well as the terms and conditions under which the teams operate. Establishes an environment that provides players with the opportunity to access the level of hockey they are capable of playing at; from grassroots programs progressing up to elite level opportunities.
3. Foster development by providing an opportunity for players to access Grassroots teams within close proximity to their home town, to access the "AA" programs regionally within a reasonable distance of travel and to access the "AAA" program within the Province with no defined boundaries.

STRUCTURE

This document provides specific rules and regulations that apply to the MHA's and Teams operating within the Elite Female Hockey Model. All Minor Hockey Regulations apply, unless regulations within this model alter the meaning of said Regulations for the purpose of AAA and/or AA Hockey.



CRITICAL DATES



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June 15	Commitments can start being made via the “Player Agreement”
July 1st	Deadline for Elite Player Movement Applications; Deadline for Exceptional Player Status Applications;
August 15th	AAA Try-Outs can start;
September 1st	AA U18 and U15 Try-Outs can start;
October 1st	All Second Try-Outs for AAA must be completed; AAA Regular Season schedule can begin; Deadline for Applications of Expansion or Reduction;
October 15th	All Second Try-Outs for AA must be completed; AA Regular Season schedules can begin;
December 15th	Deadline for MHA’s to file Affiliation;
January 10th	Final date to Register a Player to or Release a Player from a Team;
March	Provincial Championships;
April	Pacific Regional Championship (U18 AAA) Esso Cup (U18 AAA)

DRAW ZONES / RECRUITMENT AREAS

There are no established Draw Zones or Recruitment Areas for teams categorized as U18 AAA. All players new to this level are eligible to try out for any of the teams within this category.

In order to make it fair and equitable for all AA U18 and U15 Teams, Recruitment Areas have been established. These Recruitment Areas ensure there is an opportunity for all players that want to, and have the skill to, play within the AA category the ability to do so. The Recruitment Areas establish a consistent development system for players of all levels throughout the Province.

- Recruitment Areas for each Team do not overlap;
- Entire Minor Hockey Associations are within specific Recruitment Areas and not split;
- Each Recruitment Area has had a Host Minor Hockey Association identified within it and this Host MHA is responsible for operating the AA Team(s) as identified for the area, in accordance with this Elite Female Hockey Model.
- Recruitment Areas are based on registration numbers, geographic location and travel time to the Host Minor Hockey Association.

U18 AA AND U15 AA RECRUITMENT AREAS



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North West		West Capital		Edmonton		East Capital	
Beaverlodge Clairmont East Smoky Fairview Fox Creek Grande Cache Grande Prairie Grimshaw Grovedale High Level High Prairie Hines Creek Horse Lake Hythe	La Crete La Glace Manning Loon River Nampa Peace River Rainbow Lake Rycroft Savanna Sexsmith Slave Lake Smoky River Spirit River Valleyview Wembley	Athabasca Barrhead Boyle CNN CR Fort McMurray Lac La Biche Mayerthorpe Onoway Plamondon St. Albert Sturgeon Swan Hills Thorhild	Wabasca Westlock Whitecourt	Hockey Edmonton		Andrew Bruderheim Fort Saskatchewan Holden Josephburg Lamont Redwater Sherwood Park Smoky Lake Strathcona Tofield	
North East		North Central		Central		South Central	
Battle River Bonnyville Chauvin Cold Lake Dewberry Edgerton Elk Point Frog Lake Glendon Goodfish Lake Hardisty Hughenden Irma Kikino Kitscoty	Lloydminster Mallaig Mannville Marwayne Onion Lake Paradise Valley Provost Saddle Lake St. Paul Two Hills Vegreville Vermilion Viking Wainwright	Beaumont Calmar Camrose Devon Drayton Valley Edson Enoch Hinton Jasper Leduc Maskwacis Millet New Sarepta	Pembina Spruce Grove Stony Plain Thorsby Warburg Wetaskiwin Winfield	3C's Alix Bashaw Bentley Big Valley Blackfalds Caroline Clive Delburne Eckville Endmoor Innisfail Lacombe	Ponoka Red Deer Rimbey Rocky Spruce View Stettler Sylvan Lake Thunderstars	Airdrie Banff Beiseker Bowden Canmore Carstairs Cochrane Cremona Crossfield Didsbury Drumheller	Hanna Kneehill Morrin Olds Oyen Sundre
Calgary		Foothills		South			
Hockey Calgary * 2 Teams *		Blackie Chestermere Foothills High Country Hussar Indus Nanton Okotoks Rockyford Siksika Strathmore Standard		Bassano Bow Island Brooks Cardston Claresholm Coaldale Crownsnest Pass Duchess Foremost Fort MacLeod Irvine Kainai Lethbridge	Lomond Magrath Medicine Hat Picture Butte Piikani Nation Pincher Creek Raymond Redcliff Taber Vauxhall Vulcan Warner		

- MHA's Hosting U18 and U15 "AA" programs are listed in **bold** (Note: Airdrie and Olds share hosting duties).



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EXPANSION / REDUCTION OF TEAMS

The Elite Female Hockey Model has defined the maximum number of Teams that are permitted at each Division and Category within Alberta. Teams have been allotted based on registration statistics and historical data. The annual review process provides an opportunity to identify any need to expand or contract the number of teams within this model.

By **October 1**, an MHA has the ability to apply for expansion or reduction of the number of teams within their area for the upcoming season. The application must be based on the following criteria:

1. Registration numbers available within the region for the specific Division.
2. Recruitment Areas must have a minimum of one team for each Division (U15, U18).
3. Historical statistics showing competitiveness of teams.
4. Player development is a primary focus and consideration of the application.

ELITE FEMALE HOCKEY COMMITTEE / LEAGUE STRUCTURE

Hockey Alberta has established the Elite Female Hockey Committee to operate League play, under the banner of the Alberta Female Hockey League, for the AAA and AA levels of Female hockey in Alberta. The committee will conduct the day-to-day operations of League play in accordance with the established Bylaws, Regulations, Policies and Procedures. The Alberta Female Hockey League (AFHL), is the only sanctioned league to operate AAA and AA Female Hockey in Alberta.

The Elite Female Hockey Committee will be appointed in accordance with Hockey Alberta operating procedures and shall consist of the following positions:

- Chair
- U18 AA Director
- U18 AAA Director
- Vice-Chair
- U15 AA Director

The Committee will meet with the member MHA's a minimum of two (2) times per year to discuss the model and any topics that have been brought forth through the Recruitment Area meetings. The member MHA's that have been assigned as hosts within the model will have voting rights assigned to them during these regular meetings. The Elite Female Hockey Committee's duties include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Encourage communication between the Teams, MHA's and the committee to develop and grow female hockey in Alberta;
- (b) Make recommendations to encourage development opportunities to the Players, Teams and MHA's related to the Elite Female Hockey Model;
- (c) Review and recommend changes (if necessary) with respect to the reduction and addition of Teams, as well as on the assignment of MHA's within the Recruitment Areas;
- (d) Establish communication protocols and conflict resolution procedures for good governance;
- (e) Establish and operate a Regular Season schedule based on guidelines outlined herein;
- (f) Coordinate Playoffs to determine a Provincial Champion;
- (g) Administer Discipline in accordance for conduct and rule violations;
- (h) Host League meetings to discuss the game and recommendations for change to the model;
- (i) Implement rules with regard to how the league operates day to day (i.e. - game times, tie-breaking procedures).



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PLAYER MOVEMENT

U18 AAA - As there are no defined boundaries for U18 AAA teams, players are eligible to move to access their first try out with any team that is defined and approved to operate within this Elite Female Hockey Model.

- Players will obtain the necessary permission from their Resident MHA (if required), in accordance with the Notification of Try Out Procedures.
- Once a player has declared a U18 AAA team they wish to play for, upon being selected and registered to that team, the player is not permitted to move onto another U18 AAA team without first obtaining an Elite Waiver form and permission from their last registered team (this includes movement from one season to another).

U18 and U15 AA - Players are expected to try out for the Recruitment Area Team that draws from the Minor Hockey Association the player is resident in.

- Players will obtain the necessary permission from their Resident MHA (if required), in accordance with the Notification of Try Out Procedures.
- Players will not be considered “Import” Players to the Recruitment Area Team in which their Resident Minor Hockey Association is located.
- The Players’ Resident Minor Hockey Association may not refuse to give permission to a player that wishes to try out for his Resident Recruitment Area Team.

Players are only permitted to try out within a Recruitment Area that is not their Resident MHA’s Recruitment Area with special permission from the Elite Female Hockey Committee.

- Players should only request this movement for extenuating circumstances (i.e. Considerably closer for travel, move without parent transfers).
- Players file an application, using the Elite Player Movement Form and supporting documentation, through the Hockey Alberta office prior to **July 1** if they wish to request this “special permission” to move.
- The Committee reviews the application and renders a decision on or prior to August 15.

Note: ALL PLAYERS WILL RETURN TO THEIR RESIDENT MINOR HOCKEY ASSOCIATION AT THE END OF THE HOCKEY SEASON

PROGRAM PROMOTION AND PLAYER RECRUITMENT:

Players who are registered to a team that has not yet completed the current season are not eligible to be recruited and/or participate in U18 AAA practices (unless properly affiliated within HCR) until their Team’s season is complete.

U18 AAA Teams are permitted to host “Spring ID” camps for prospective players starting May 1. Players must obtain a signed “Letter of Permission” from their last registered team in order to participate.



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NOTIFICATION OF TRY-OUT PROCEDURE

Any Player may try out for the team(s) for which the Player is eligible, based on the Player Movement section outlined above, provided that:

- a) the player has filed a completed Notification of Try Out (NTO) form with the host MHA;
- b) the team has been approved to participate, by Hockey Alberta, in the Elite Female Hockey Model.

AAA Teams must allow all Non-Resident Players the opportunity to try out and register with the team. AA Teams must allow all Non-Resident Player from outside the host MHA's boundaries, but within the teams Recruitment Area, to have the opportunity to try out and register with the team. The top, eligible, players should be selected for each team, regardless of where they reside.

It is incumbent upon the Host MHA to ensure they have a plan for accommodating non-resident players. This would include preparing information related to the following:

- Living arrangements for players that need/want to be billeted if they make the team
- Schooling so the player can maintain their academics
- Tryouts scheduled appropriately to ensure out of town players can properly participate

Players wishing to try out with a U18 AAA or U18 / U15 AA Team must first complete a Notification to Try Out Form and submit it to their Resident MHA (the MHA within whose boundaries the player resides), and the applicable host MHA of the Team that the player wishes to try-out for. *Note – If the team the player is wishing to try out for is hosted within the Player's Resident MHA they are not required to submit this form.*

AAA – A player may choose a maximum of two (2) U18 AAA teams to try out for by naming both teams on their Notification to Try Out form. If the player does not make the first team they are trying out for, they have the following options:

- obtain an Elite Waiver and contact the second U18 AAA team they requested to tryout for;
- return to their Resident MHA to obtain permission to try out for an AA program;
- return to their Resident MHA to access other minor hockey programs.

AA - A player must try out for the team in the Recruitment Area where the player resides (unless previous approval has been obtained through the Elite Player Movement process). If the player does not make their Resident Recruitment Area team they have the following options:

- request that the Elite Female Hockey Committee direct them to move onto a second AA tryout by attaching an Elite Waiver form to their original NTO;
- return to their Resident MHA to access other minor hockey programs.

Players will not be afforded the opportunity to access more than two (2) try outs within a specific category of hockey. A player making any designated AAA or AA Team will receive permission to play for the season and will be returned to her Resident MHA at the end of the season.



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PLAYER ACCELERATION

One objective of the Elite Female Hockey Model is to develop players within their specific age group, and not to displace the players from their age Division by facilitating the movement of underage players. Underage players will only be considered as an exception if they are deemed to be an “*Exceptional Player*”.

Members hosting U18 AA: Teams are provided one (1) underage Player allotment, provided the Player meets the following criteria:

- a) Player must be a second-year U15 Player (14 year old), no exceptions;
- b) Player resides with the MHA’s Elite Recruitment area;
- c) Player has been endorsed by the MHA to tryout at the higher Division of play;
- d) Player completes the tryout process and is selected for the Team;
- e) No underage Players will be granted a second tryout at the accelerated Division.

Members hosting U18 AAA Teams can apply for an underage player to receive “*Exceptional Player*” status. Applications must be submitted to the Elite Female Hockey Committee on or before July 1, provided the player meets the following criteria:

- a) Player must be a second-year U15 Player (14 year old), no exceptions;
- b) Applicants must fill out, in its entirety, the Player Acceleration Application package and provide all the necessary documentation requested;
- c) Hockey Alberta will evaluate the application based on the applicant’s on-ice ability as well as their physical and emotional maturity;
- d) **Underage players, should they be granted a tryout, must tryout with the association that is closest to their permanent residence.** No underage players will be granted a second try-out at the accelerated division;
- e) Decisions will be communicated to the player and applicable Host MHA(s) in writing on or before August 1.

TEAM REGISTRATION

All AAA and AA Teams will be registered in the Registry by the MHA that has been identified as the Host MHA. The Host MHA will register the team(s) in accordance with the Hockey Alberta Regulations.

All Hockey Teams must be properly and duly registered in the Registry, prior to their first League Game or November 15, whichever occurs first. All Players and Team Officials participating with a Hockey Team must be duly registered in the Registry before participating in their first League game. Any Hockey Team whose registration is received after November 15, will not be eligible to compete in Provincial Play.

In order to support the Elite Female Hockey Model, and to align the system of player development within Alberta, AAA Teams are not permitted to begin the player evaluation and selection process for the current season until *August 15* and AA Teams until *September 1*.



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- Exception: U18 AAA teams are permitted to commit to a maximum of five (5) skaters and one (1) goaltender prior to August 15. This will be completed through the “Player Agreement” process.

Each AAA and AA Team will be required to obtain a commitment, in writing, from all players prior to registering them in the Registry (refer to the “Player Agreement” process).

Each Team is provided the opportunity to utilize Exhibition and Pre-Season games for the purpose of Team roster declaration. Provided that Exhibition and Pre-Season games take place prior to the first scheduled League Game and prior to November 15, Teams will not be required to have all players identified on the roster in the Registry when playing these games.

Each U18 AAA Team will be permitted to register a maximum of 18 skaters and 2 goaltenders at any one time during the season. **Of their 20 player allotments, the team can only register a maximum of five (5) first year U18 players (15 year olds).**

Each U15 AA and U18 AA Team will be permitted to register a maximum of 17 skaters and 2 goaltenders at any one time during the season. Additionally, each U15 AA and U18 AA Team is required to register a minimum of 15 skaters and 1 goaltender at any one time during the season.

PLAYER AGREEMENTS

In order to be eligible to play during the regular season and playoffs / provincials, all players must sign a “Player Agreement” form with the team that wishes to register them. Between June 15 and August 15, each U18 AAA team has the ability to formally commit to a maximum of five (5) skaters and one (1) goaltender. All commitments must be made formally by using the “Player Agreement” form.

Please note that underage players are not eligible to sign a “Player Agreement” prior to try outs as their participation must be approved in accordance with the Player Acceleration process.

COACH AND PLAYER SELECTION

Coach and Player selection is the responsibility of the Host MHA. One principle of the Elite Female Hockey Model is for each Team to consider all eligible coaches and players when selecting their team(s). Regardless of where a coach or player resides, provided they are eligible to try out and/or be selected, they should all be treated equally during the evaluation and selection process.

There are no “quotas” permitted to be exercised within the Elite Female Hockey Model and there shall be no restrictions, based on place of residence, placed on the coaches or players. It is the expectation that Teams are built with the best possible players and coaches available to them.

It is required that all Female Teams have at least one (1) female Team Official registered to the Team.



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AFFILIATION POLICY

The Affiliation Policy within the Elite Female Hockey Model is used to accommodate athlete development and provide an opportunity for players to experience the higher level of hockey.

- U18 AAA Teams are permitted to affiliate *U18 aged Players from registered U18 Teams from any part of the Province.*
- U18 AA Teams are permitted to affiliate U18 aged players that are registered on a lower category team (A or B) within the Team's regional recruitment area.

U18 AA teams are permitted to affiliate a maximum of four (4) U15 aged players provided they are registered to the Recruitment Area's U15 AA Team.

- U15 AA Teams are permitted to affiliate U15 aged players that are registered on a lower category team (A or B) within the Team's regional recruitment area.

U15 AA teams are permitted to affiliate a maximum of four (4) U13 aged players provided they are registered to a Team within the Elite Team's regional Recruitment Area.

To be eligible to register as an affiliate with an Elite Female Team, all Players must meet and qualify in accordance with the Hockey Alberta and Hockey Canada Regulations.

All Players must agree to register as an affiliate by completing a "Named Player Affiliation Agreement" with the AAA or AA Team. The Agreement must be uploaded to the request for affiliation in the Registry prior to approval coming from the Minor Zone Administration Coordinator.

- A team may affiliate a maximum of nineteen (19) players.
- Prior to participation as an affiliated player, the player's name must appear on the team's affiliation list filed within the Branch.
- Once a player's affiliation is approved, the player's name may not be dropped from the affiliation list during the current season and replaced, unless the team with which the player registered releases them on or before January 10.
- No player is permitted to be part of more than one (1) specially affiliated players list at any time during the current season.
- An affiliated player must have the approval of their registered team in order to play.
- All affiliations shall terminate at the end of the current playing season.

TEAM MANAGEMENT

The following is a guide for the management of teams within the Elite Female Hockey Model and establishes the communication protocol that will be used in order to ensure the success of the model.

Each Host MHA is responsible for identifying a representative that will attend regular League Meetings throughout the season in order to ensure proper communication between the Elite Female Hockey Committee and their Host MHA / Team(s).



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Seasonal reviews have been established in order to highlight how the model is operating within the Province as well as within each area. Utilizing the feedback from these reviews will provide the opportunity to make amendments as necessary and ensure parity within the model.

Communication with Teams

- Each Host MHA will host meetings a minimum of two (2) times per year to discuss hockey within their area. These meetings will be chaired by a representative from the Host MHA. The Host MHA will be responsible for communicating the date and time of the meeting to all Teams as well as reporting feedback from the meeting back to the Elite Female Hockey Committee.
- These meetings will occur at the start of the season and end of the season, with the second meeting taking place so that the feedback could be gathered and reviewed by the Elite Female Hockey Committee prior to the end of the season so that adjustments could be dealt with prior to the following season.
- In the case of Edmonton and Calgary, these meetings would be hosted by the member Minor Hockey Association.
- Some agenda items for these meetings will be submitted by the Elite Female Hockey Committee so that there is consistency throughout the Province in the information that is being provided to / gathered from the stakeholders.

Communication with Minor Hockey Associations

- The Elite Female Hockey Model encourages MHA's to work together to provide the best possible developmental experience for the players. The model supports moving practices and games around in order to include other MHA's in the model and to promote the program within each community.
- Each AA Team Host MHA will host a meeting a minimum of one (1) time per year with all of the MHA's within their Recruitment Area. This meeting would occur at the end of the season so that the feedback could be gathered and reviewed by the Elite Female Hockey Committee and adjustments could be dealt with prior to the following season.
- This Recruitment Area Meeting will be chaired by the Recruitment Area Host MHA and they would be responsible for communicating the date and time of the meeting as well as reporting any feedback that is received to the Elite Female Hockey Committee.
- Feedback will also be gathered from the MHA's every so often through the use of an on-line survey. The feedback will be gathered and reviewed by the Elite Female Hockey Committee so that adjustments could be dealt with prior to the next season.

In each of the cases, information will be gathered through the means listed above, reviewed by the Elite Female Hockey Committee, with recommendations then being sent to the CEO (or designate) of Hockey Alberta.



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PROVINCIALS

Provincial Championships for each Category within the Elite Female Hockey Model will be operated by Hockey Alberta and teams participating in the Championship will be determined through League play.

Only Hockey Alberta Teams approved to participate within the Elite Female Hockey Model will be eligible to play in the Provincial Championship.

ARBITRATION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

The Elite Female Hockey Model requires issues by arbitration and/or conflict resolution to be reviewed and remedied within a timely manner. The Host MHA can refer to the Hockey Alberta Conduct Management Guidelines if they do not have their own clearly defined steps for an arbitration and/or conflict resolution process.

Any requests for arbitration or conflict resolution that are submitted to the MHA, in writing, need to be dealt with accordingly. Due process is required to complete a review of the situation, and upon completion of the review a written response shall be sent to the complainant.

If, after all process is exhausted at the level of the MHA, further review is required, a second level of arbitration and/or conflict resolution can be accessed through the Elite Female Hockey Committee. The first level of review, within the MHA, may not be bypassed in favor of a review by the Elite Female Hockey Committee.