

RECREATIONAL HOCKEY MODEL



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WELCOME TO THE RECREATIONAL HOCKEY MODEL

The goal of Hockey Alberta's Recreational Hockey Model, and its different streams, is to ensure families have access to affordable, fun, and safe opportunities to participate in youth hockey with a moderate to low time and financial commitment. Regardless of the program stream, Hockey Alberta encourages good sportsmanship, fair play, friendship, and respect. This guide outlines the activity options that program operators and Minor Hockey Associations can implement within their communities.

Key Outcomes for all Streams

- Provide organizations with the opportunity to offer families different options to play the game.
- Provide a positive opportunity and experience for all players.
- Provide a welcoming environment for youth to be active in a safe and positive manner.
- Instill a sense of community and camaraderie among teammates.
- Provide youth the opportunity to learn teamwork skills through sport.
- Promote fair play and sportsmanship among players, coaches, parents, officials, and spectators.
- Promote and provide leadership opportunities through sport.
- Provide athletes an opportunity to develop their hockey skills (skating, passing shooting) and passion for the game - HOCKEY FOR LIFE.

Streams of the Recreational Hockey Model

- ***Learn to Play***
 - ***Age Group:*** 5, 6, 7 and 8 year-old players
 - ***Time Commitment:*** One ice session per week on a half sheet of ice.
 - ***Structure of the Program:*** The program introduces the basic skills of the game and provides an opportunity for players to learn those skills and the game. Upon completion of a Learn to Play program, participants have the option to transfer to an Intro to Hockey (U7/U9) team at a nominal cost and finish the year in the Minor Hockey system.
- ***Pond Hockey***
 - ***Age Group:*** Any age group, no defined age categories required.
 - ***Structure of the Program:*** An unstructured hockey option with limited to no use of the Hockey Canada playing rules with a focus on fun and development. Players can join a team and enjoy the game regardless of their skill set or commitment levels. Players registered in a Pond Hockey program can be registered simultaneously in Rec Hockey or a Minor Hockey program and participate within league play.
 - ***Game/Tournament Play:*** Game play is allowed within the program (scrimmage), or with other Pond Hockey Programs (single game or Festival). Use of officials is not required.



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- **Rec Hockey**

- Age Group: Any age group with defined age categories as set by the program operator (ex: U7, U9, U11, U13 etc. OR U8, U11, U14 etc.)
- Structure of the Program: A moderately structured level of hockey with somewhat modified playing rules and regulations as outlined below. Rec Hockey provides a more competitive structure than a Pond Hockey program but still requires less commitment than a Minor Hockey program. Players registered within Rec Hockey can also be registered in a Pond Hockey program but cannot also be registered in a Minor Hockey program.
- Game/Tournament Play: Game play is allowed within the program or with other Rec Hockey Programs (single game, league play, & tournament). Use of registered officials is required.

Benefits of Program Sanctioning with Hockey Alberta

- **Insurance**

- Medical and Dental [Insurance coverages](#) program for registered participants (players, officials, team officials).
- Directors & Officers Liability Insurance coverage for Organization executives and volunteers.
- Support with Injury Reporting and Claim process.

- **Operational Support**

- Support with organizational governance policies and processes.
- Administration and operational support from Hockey Alberta volunteers and staff.
- Access to an online Registration system and support from subject matter experts.
- Assistance in the organization of competitions.
- Uniform interpretation and standardization of playing rules.
- Access to participate against other sanctioned programs/teams across Alberta.
- Access to a vast hockey network to share best practices, ask questions and obtain feedback.
- Regular communication through Hockey Alberta member updates, publications, and website.
- Availability of resource material from Hockey Alberta and Hockey Canada (Bylaws, Regulations, Rule Books, policy manuals, coaching/ officiating documents, and videos).

- **Funding & Fundraising Support**

- Access to AGLC Licensing opportunities.
- Access to the Hockey Alberta's [Every Kid Every Community Grant Program](#) and [Member Grant Program](#).



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- **Players, Coaches & Referees**
 - Player and Coach development support from Hockey Alberta Regional Centers.
 - Sanctioning of on and off-ice team and development activities.
 - Access to Hockey Alberta certified officials.
 - Access to player, coach, and officiating development programs.
 - Access to Hockey Canada development programs brought to the local organization through Hockey Alberta.
 - Access to coaching clinics, coaching development seminars, officiating clinics, officiating development programs, skills testing programs, parent programs, administration programs, etc.

- **Discipline**
 - Support and policy guidance regarding [Maltreatment](#), Risk and [Conduct Management](#) protocols and processes (screening, complaint handling, Abuse & Harassment, etc.).
 - Administration of Discipline processes and procedures (Major penalties, Match penalties, etc.).
 - Access to the [Independent Safe Sport Complaint Process](#).

Player Registration Process

Families who choose to access any options available within the Recreational Hockey Model may register with the organization of their choice and are not bound by the residency regulations that govern Minor Hockey. Players who are registered within the Rec Hockey stream may not affiliate to a registered Minor Hockey team, but organizations can decide to allow participation with additional Rec Hockey teams within the organization if needed.

Organizations registering Learn to Play, Pond Hockey or Rec Hockey programs will be required to utilize the online registration system provided by Hockey Alberta and Hockey Canada.

It is recommended that organizations set all Program Fees at the start of the season and that no additional costs are added to the families at any point of the season. Participant Fees for registration with Hockey Alberta are reviewed and set annually. Hockey Alberta's standard registration fee for Rec Hockey is \$44.73 per participant (players & Team Officials):

- Includes Hockey Canada Registration & Insurance Fee - \$29.73
- Includes Hockey Alberta Participant Registration Fee - \$15.00

Organizations not previously registered with Hockey Alberta that wish to register a Recreational Hockey Program have the ability (prior to January 1st) to apply using the online form to become part of the Hockey Alberta family and may be eligible for a reduced rate per participant (players & team officials) for their first season.

The Online Recreational Hockey Sanction Request Form can be found [here](#).



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REGULATIONS & GAME PLAY RULES

The Recreational Hockey Model provides several recommendations on how organizations / programs should operate and structure their program; however, organizations / programs are given the flexibility to create and maintain their own internal processes to adjust their program to the needs of their participants.

Recommended Age Divisions

- U8: 5, 6 & 7 year olds
- U11: 8, 9 & 10 year olds
- U14: 11, 12 & 13 year olds
- U18: 14, 15, 16 & 17 year olds
- U21: 18, 19 & 20 year olds

Coaching Education Requirements

- **Respect in Sport – Activity Leader:** All Coaches/Team Officials require Respect in Sport – Activity Leader Certification.
- **Hockey Canada Safety Program:** One (1) Coach/Team official per team requires Hockey Canada Safety Program Certification.

Coaching Recommendations

- **Coach 1:** It is recommended that coaches of U8 Half Ice Programs obtain Coach 1 certification.
- **Coach 2:** It is recommended that coaches of U11-U18 programs obtain Coach 2 certification.

All Recreational Hockey Model Programs are recommended to have coach/player ratio of one (1) coach to ten (10) players.

Overage / Underage Players

Rec & Pond Programs may approve/ deny underage and overage requests for their teams that are registered as recreation based on their own policies and procedures. While it does not require Hockey Alberta approval, we recommend that organizations create their own internal processes to handle such requests and situations.

Affiliation Processes

The filing of Affiliation is not required within any stream of the Recreational Hockey Model. When needed by a Rec Hockey team, or in the best interest of a player, organizations will be permitted to use age-appropriate players that are registered within their Rec program for any games. Players who are registered within Rec Hockey may not affiliate to registered Minor Hockey teams.

Exhibition & Tournament Games

Pond and Rec Programs, at their discretion, can schedule their teams to play games and participate in festivals/tournaments against other registered Rec Hockey programs. It is important to note that low costs and low commitment can be a driving factor for participation in this level. It is recommended to monitor the amount of travel and number of festivals/tournaments teams are participating in to make decisions in the best interest of the athletes, families registered and the program as a whole.



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Length of Games

Programs can adjust based on their association guidelines & ice availability, but should use the following guidelines:

- All Games are run-time.
- 5 Minute Warm Up
- No floods in between periods (consider 1 flood for older age divisions)
- Period lengths are determined prior to the start of the game (as a part of the scheduling process)
 - Example: U8 (half ice) & U11 - 1-hour games (Periods of 15, 15 and 15 minutes)
 - Example: U14, U18 & U21 - 1.25-hour games (20, 20, and 20 minutes)

If the game being played involves two different programs (Rec Hockey), they should come to an understanding on the length of periods prior to the commencement of the game.

Officiating & Discipline

- Two-Official system is recommended for U21, U18 and U14 games.
- One-Official system is recommended for U11 and U8 games.
- Officials should be at least one year older than the oldest permitted age of the division of hockey.
- If using a One-Official system for U21, U18 or U14, it is recommended that the official be a certified Level 2 and have at least three years of experience officiating.
- All officials must be Hockey Alberta certified.
- Players can score a maximum of three goals in one game.
- Players who receive 3 penalties in a game will be removed from the game.
- Officials Reports are required for all major penalties.
- Suspensions can be administered by the Organization but must follow the Hockey Canada / Hockey Alberta Minimum Suspensions.

Fair Ice Time

- A 'Fair Ice Time' policy should be established locally to ensure that all players get the same opportunity to participate in games, regardless of age, skill, or ability.
- A coach's responsibility is to develop all players and help them become capable.
- Shortening of the bench and sitting players is not permitted.
- All players should receive as close to equal ice time as possible, including opportunities on special teams (powerplay and penalty killing).
- The use of a buzzer (i.e. - every 2 or 3 minutes) is recommended for younger age groups to ensure shift lengths are similar. Upon hearing the buzzer, play will be stopped, and teams will change as quickly as possible. The clock shall continue to run.
- All skaters should rotate through all positions to ensure each player can try each position. (LW/C/RW/LD/RD)
- Full-time goaltenders are allowed. If a team has two goalies, they should rotate for equal playing time and the goalie not playing should be allowed to play out as a skater.



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SEASONAL STRUCTURE

Practice & Game Play Recommendations

It is recommended for all levels to keep practice and game times to a consistent day and time of the week. Having a structured/ set schedule allows for families to plan and athletes to potentially participate in other non-hockey related activities (school sports, music lessons, etc.).

For the U8 and U11 Divisions in Rec Hockey Programs, it is recommended that a practice to game ratio be 1:1 to promote skill development. Emphasis should be placed on foundational skills such as skating, passing, and shooting.

For the U14, U18 and U21 Divisions in Rec Hockey Programs, it is recommended that a practice to game ratio of 1:2 be implemented. Should a team or organization not have practices, it is recommended that additional drop-in skills sessions are offered to the players.

There are no playoffs. However, it is recommended that year-end tournaments and/ or jamborees take place to provide players, parents and coaches the opportunity to celebrate their season together.

Example of a Potential Seasonal Structure to Consider

OCTOBER - Skill Development Sessions (OPTIONAL)

- For programs that choose to start in October, skill development sessions should be operated to put the focus on skills and player development.

NOVEMBER – MARCH - Scheduled Hockey Season

- Programs can operate for any length of time during these months (ex. December – February season).
- Games/scrimmages can be scheduled starting November 1.
- Practices should still focus on enjoyment of the game, fundamental skill development, building individual player skills such as skating, passing, and shooting.
- Game play should focus on maintaining the enjoyment of hockey for the player and ensuring a competitively balanced experience (equal, fair, and fun).
- Organizations maintain the flexibility to change rosters at any time during the season to keep a good competitive balance.
- 100% of players, playing 100% of games.
- Season wrap up events are encouraged (ex. Year End Festival/Tournament).

APRIL to AUGUST - Off-Season

- Provides players the opportunity to pursue other sports / activities.
- Multisport activities are recommended during this phase.
- No games are permitted.
- Programs may choose to run development initiatives in April and May or September (prior to the season starting). Must be optional for players to attend.



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COMPARISON OF PROGRAM TYPES			
	Recreational Hockey		Minor Hockey
	Pond	Rec	
Registration Regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unstructured • No Residency Rules • No Registration Rules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-Structured • No Residency Rules • Limited Registration Rules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully Structured • Residency Rules • Registration Rules, etc.
Roster Size	No Permanent Rosters Required		Permanent rosters required.
	Pond	Rec	
Travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Participation • No travel for game play 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Participation • Limited Travel for game play 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • League Participation • Travel Required for game play
Intro to Hockey Operation	Half Ice Required for U8 programming		Half Ice Required for U7-U9 programming
	Pond	Rec	
Coach Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RIS Required for all Instructors, Coaches & Team Officials • Online Safety program required for one Team Official per Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RIS Required for all Instructors, Coaches & Team Officials • Online Safety program required for one Team Official per Team. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RIS – Activity Leader for all Instructors, Coaches, & Team Officials. • Online Safety program required. • Specific NCCP Levels Required for Coaches Depending on Level of Hockey
Coach 1 Recommended for Coaches of U8 (Half Ice Programs) Coach 2 Recommended for Coaches for U11 – U18			
Criminal Record Checks	Mandatory for the organization to screen all Volunteers.		
Off-Ice Conduct Management	Handled by the individual program with support from Hockey Alberta.		Handled by the MHA, League and/or Hockey Alberta.
Discipline from Game Play	Handled by the individual program with support from Hockey Alberta.		Handled by the MHA, League and/or Hockey Alberta.
	Pond	Rec	
Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No recommended Practice to Game Ratio. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1:1 Practice to Game Ratio (U8 & U11) recommended. • 1:2 Practice to Game Ratio (U14 & Up) recommended. 	Recommended 2:1 Practice to Game Ratio.
	Pond	Rec	
Playing Rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited Use of Hockey Canada Playing Rules. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modified use of Hockey Canada Playing Rules. 	Full Implementation of Hockey Canada Playing Rules.
Body Checking	None.		U18, U15 (Tier 3 and higher).
	Pond	Rec	
Tournaments	Host/attend Festivals with other Hockey Alberta Pond Programs.	Host/attend tournaments with other Hockey Alberta Registered Rec Hockey Programs.	Host/attend Tournaments with other Registered Minor Hockey Associations
Playoffs / Provincials	None.		League Championships and Provincials