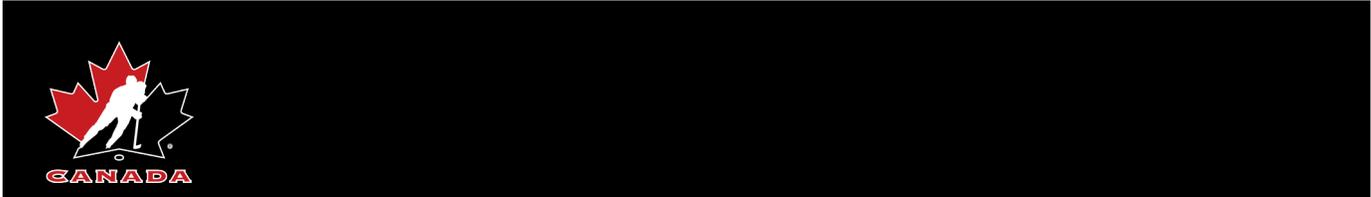




# RETURN TO HOCKEY

ON ICE OFFICIALS PLAN





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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Hockey Alberta has worked with Hockey Canada and other provincial branches, Government of Alberta, Provincial Sport Organizations, Minor Hockey Associations, Leagues, and volunteer committees to develop Hockey Alberta’s Return to Hockey Plan. The Return to Hockey Plan provides guidance and expectations for a restart to hockey in Alberta, outlines required safety protocols and requirements, and assists Minor Hockey Associations (MHAs) and Leagues with tasks they need undertake for hockey to re-start.

The Hockey Alberta Officials Committee (HAOC) has developed this plan for On-Ice Officials to assist in the safe return of hockey for participating officials. While the HAOC has worked to reduce risks as much as possible utilizing available guidance from governmental, regulatory and health authorities, it is recognized that participating in hockey this season is the personal decision of each official.

**This plan reflects the [Hockey Alberta Return to Hockey Plan \(updated October 1\)](#).**

The Plan is subject to change based on future Government of Alberta, Alberta Health Services and Hockey Alberta direction.

Information contained in this document is not a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. The knowledge and circumstances surrounding COVID-19 are continuing to evolve and Hockey Alberta recommends that all participants and legal guardians refer to the Government of Alberta website for the most up to date information (<https://www.alberta.ca/coronavirus-info-for-albertans.aspx>)

## WHO TO CONTACT?

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Specific questions regarding Return to Hockey for Officials can be directed to:

Brett Kelly,  
 Manager, Officials, Hockey Alberta  
 Email: [bkelly@hockeyalberta.ca](mailto:bkelly@hockeyalberta.ca)



## 2. COVID-19 GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR ON ICE OFFICIALS

Officials participating in a game are to adhere to following general requirements:

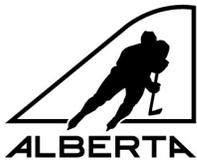
- No handshakes with any participants or fellow officials.
- No sharing of water bottles or any other items with fellow officials or participants.
- Stand a minimum 2 metres from the Timekeeper's box and all off-ice officials when reporting penalties.
- Where desired, wear a mask and ensure you carry additional masks to replace any mask that becomes unsanitary. Follow the [Government of Alberta's Masking Guidance](#).
- Direct coaches of both teams that spitting or spraying of water on the ice is not allowed and that any violations will be penalized at the discretion of the officials.
- Instruct coaches that the on-ice officials will significantly limit or eliminate their physical presence around the players between whistles (at stoppages of play) and use their voice and rulebook to ensure the game is played in a safe and fair manner.
- Follow all facility protocols and be polite and patient with facility personnel. Each facility may have different protocols and all officials need to be prepared to comply in every case.
- Consider washing your equipment after every game or as often as is practical
- If an official develops any symptoms or is required to isolate, immediately report your status to your Assignor and/or RIC.

Below are some guidelines for you to follow during the game:

1. Face Offs
  - Handle pucks as little as possible. If you pick up the puck, you drop it.
  - Discourage players and goalies from picking up the puck.
  - For fast face offs, blow your whistle when you are physically distanced from the players.
2. Line Changes
  - Use vocals to diffuse situations. Penalize if necessary.
  - Use current line change procedures but avoid high traffic areas. Be aware of potential scrums.
3. Penalized players
  - Maintain physical distancing, if possible.
  - Make contact only as necessary and then observe physical distancing.
4. Scrums and Altercations
  - Awareness and hustle are key. Practice physical distancing where possible.
  - If required, disinfect following a scrum using sanitizer.
  - Communicate with players/coaches prior to and during game and penalize scrums accordingly.
5. Players Benches
  - Maintain physical distancing as much as possible.
  - Communication with benches takes place with minimum 2 metre physical distancing.
6. Broken sticks / Equipment
  - Officials should direct the player or a teammate to retrieve any equipment.

IN GENERAL:

1. Complete the [AHS Daily Checklist](#) prior to officiating each game. If you develop COVID-19 symptoms or are feeling ill (or answer Yes to any questions on the checklist), STAY HOME.
2. Come to the rink dressed. Arrive 15 minutes prior to game
3. Wear a mask when entering the facility and until stepping on the ice. Depending on the municipality and facility, this may be mandatory. Check with the arena on specific rules as there are a wide range of facility-specific procedures that will continue to evolve.
4. Maintain physical distancing in the official's room.
  - a. In small rooms, rotate with other officials
  - b. Officials going onto the ice have priority to change



## References:

Hockey Canada Return to Hockey COVID-19 Response Safety Guidelines  
[https://cdn.hockeycanada.ca/hockey-canada/Exclusive/return-to-hockey/downloads/HC\\_RTH\\_Officiating\\_Guide\\_EN.pdf](https://cdn.hockeycanada.ca/hockey-canada/Exclusive/return-to-hockey/downloads/HC_RTH_Officiating_Guide_EN.pdf)

Government of Alberta COVID-19 Health Protocols  
<https://www.alberta.ca/coronavirus-info-for-albertans.aspx>

For additional information regarding the safe return of high intensity physical activity  
<https://www.alberta.ca/assets/documents/covid-19-relaunch-sports-physical-activity-and-recreation.pdf>

## 3. TRAINING & CERTIFICATION

Hockey Alberta requires officials to complete the following prior to returning to on-ice activities:

- Hockey Canada – Hockey University *Planning a Safe Return to Hockey* online module.
- an officials' clinic, unless granted a special exemption by their Regional Coordinator.

The *Planning a Safe Return to Hockey* online module is free and accessed under the [eHockey](#) account that you use to register for an officiating clinic.

Attending a clinic is required so that officials are aware of Hockey Canada procedures and protocols, and the risks associated with hockey, prior to returning to the ice.

- **Levels III-VI Officials:** Virtual clinics in September and October for registration and training. Level II officials working Elite levels of hockey may be invited by their Regional Coordinator or Clinic Coordinator to attend a virtual clinic to supplement and support those levels of hockey.
- **Levels I and II Officials:** Clinics will continue to be scheduled through November, as required, to meet the projected needs of Hockey Alberta and the MHAs. Specific details regarding the scheduling of clinics for Level I and II officials will continue to be explored and communicated as the situation evolves. Clinics may be virtual or in-person depending on current guidelines.

## 4. ASSIGNING OF OFFICIALS - GENERAL

Regional Coordinators and their assignors will employ the following protocols whenever possible:

- Assign officials in small groups to the same set of teams/ leagues to limit exposure to other officials.
- Assign officials to a limited number of leagues to minimize exposure to team cohorts.
- Ensure any official who refuses any game for any reason is not subject to future assigning restrictions.
- Limit travel for officials where practical.

Officials are not required for Team Training and Cohort Group stages. Leagues and MHAs are encouraged to use individuals participating in their cohort to 'officiate' these stages if required. If Leagues and MHAs run scrimmages during Team Training or Cohort Group stages, those should take place without certified Hockey Alberta officials. Regional Coordinators and their assigning teams will use their discretion in supporting officiating requests during this time. The practical implication of this is that many games will be officiated using the 2-Official system during Return to Hockey.



## 4.1 ASSIGNING OF OFFICIALS – COHORTS

Officials may be assigned by their Regional Coordinator/ assigning team to a 50-participant Cohort and will be required to follow the cohorting guidelines found in the Hockey Alberta Return to Hockey Plan.

Assigning to Cohorts will be based, where possible, on an official's previous season's experience to ensure, to the extent possible, that officials who have previous experience at the Cohort's level of hockey will be assigned to work those games. The HAOC has requested MHAs to schedule their Cohort games on similar nights to allow for ease of planning for officials to help ensure greater coverage of games.

The ability of each Region to meet the demand for officials will depend on the following factors:

- Referee interest in participating in a cohort
- Availability of a referee cohort to skate during assigned game times

This approach is preferred to reduce the risk to community spread by officials intermingling hockey cohorts. In order to support a quicker return to hockey, all officials must be assigned their cohorts/games through the local RIC, Regional assignor, or Regional Coordinator.

## 4.2 ASSIGNING OF OFFICIALS – PHYSICAL DISTANCING

The Hockey Alberta Return to Hockey authorizes officials to participate in games without being part of a Cohort but requires masks be worn during the game when physical distancing can't be maintained.

Hockey Alberta does acknowledge that Cohorts may be impractical in certain situations. Accordingly, Hockey Alberta will permit, during Exhibition Series, Modified Competition Season and Regular Season, physically distanced officials when there are insufficient officials in a local municipality or region to support hockey cohorts.

Officials participating using physical distancing only must do the following:

- Wear a mask when a minimum of 2 metres of physical distance cannot be maintained
  - Such scenarios include but are not limited to: working on the players bench side, face-offs and gatherings after whistles.
  - Consider use of an electronic whistle to facilitate mask wearing
- Limit touching your face/mask (in accordance with the Government of Alberta Masking Guidance)
- Sanitize your hands regularly prior to, during and after the game. Officials may wish to bring a small bottle of hand sanitizer or disinfectant hand wipes to use while on the ice.
- Direct coaches that on-ice officials will significantly limit or eliminate their physical presence around the players between whistles (at stoppages of play) and use their rulebook to ensure the game is played in a safe and fair manner; and
- Follow all guidelines provided in Section 4 of this document.



## 5.0 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### 1. What levels do you expect to require officials in Development Season?

Elite levels of hockey, including “A” program Male and/or Female leagues such as Junior, U18, U16, and U15. Some regions may support Hockey Canada sanctioned adult leagues with officials for their Cohorts.

### 2. Why won't other levels (i.e. Tiered, House, Recreational, Intro to Hockey) be assigned officials during the Development Season?

To reduce the likelihood of community spread, the Hockey Alberta Return to Hockey Plan recommends using personnel from inside their Cohorts to manage players on the ice.

### 3. How will you determine who will be assigned hockey this season?

If you choose to participate, you may be assigned to a Cohort approximately at the same level you were skating last season. Example: If you were skating Midget “B” or “Tiered” hockey last season, you will be eligible to be in a Cohort for U18 B-level / Tier-level hockey.

### 4. If assigned to a Cohort, can I also be a player or coach in a different Cohort?

Once you are part of a Cohort you must remain in that Cohort. If you want to switch cohorts (i.e. move from being a coach to an official), you are not to initiate activity with a new cohort for 14 days.

### 5. How will younger officials develop if they cannot officiate games?

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced us all to make hard decisions. As the situation evolves future demand may lend itself to increased participation of younger officials in the Modified Competition Season. We are looking for the officiating community to pull together as best as possible to minimize the spread of COVID-19 and allow us to return to normal hockey operations as soon as possible.

### 6. I normally pick up exhibition/ tryout/ tournament games directly from an association. Can I still do that?

All assignments into a Cohort MUST be done through your Regional Coordinator/ Assigning Team. This is to ensure we work with the MHAs to keep their Cohorts under 50 participants and that we don't have officials in multiple cohorts.

Do not accept any assignments unless they come from your Assignor/ RIC. We are all trying to return to hockey together. For those who don't follow the rules, we risk an outbreak of COVID-19 as well as the potential cancellation of the season. Those officials who do not follow the rules will be subject to discipline.

### 7. How will the game be different in a Cohort?

On the ice, the game will change depending on a number of factors, including the number of players who may attend an ice time. Games may be 5v5, 4v4 3v3 or some other variation. We ask that officials be flexible and remember that the point of the games is to provide a playing opportunity to the players. The role of the official will be to enforce the rules and keep players safe. We do not anticipate many problems as we expect cohorts will be comprised entirely of players from the same MHA or League.

### 8. How are the off-ice rules determined?

Each facility (city owned or private owned) will have its own rules that you need to follow. You will need to follow up with each facility at which you are skating to understand the specific rules they may have.



**9. I am still interested in coaching officials, is this possible?**

It may be possible depending on facility rules. However, Hockey Canada recommends all supervisions take place outside of the facility where practical, with virtual being the preferred method of delivery. If interested in being an Official's Coach, please contact your local RIC and/or Regional Coordinator for more details. Supervision, development, coaching and mentoring opportunities will fully resume once we return to Regular Season. Until then, work with your local RIC and/or Regional Coordinator on coaching needs.

**10. Can I officiate in a cohort with one group and physical distancing in my other officiating?**

Yes.

**11. Do I need to wear a mask on the ice?**

If you are participating as a physical distancing official, yes. As a Cohort official, the choice is yours as the official. Wearing a mask alone will not prevent the spread of COVID-19. Hand washing and physical distancing are also important in limiting the spread.

**12. Can I wear gloves on the ice?**

We do not recommend wearing gloves. Please refer to the Hockey Canada Return to Play Guide for Officials for more information.

**13. If a player or official in the Cohort contracts COVID-19, will I be required to isolate?**

The decision regarding isolation of the official or anyone else in the Cohort will be at the discretion of Alberta Health Services. Ensure you immediately notify your Assignor and/or RIC if you are required to self-isolate.

**14. If I am required to isolate and am unable to work, is there any compensation available from Hockey Canada's insurance?**

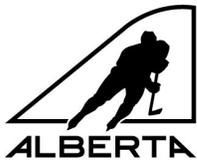
There is no insurance policy under Hockey Canada to cover lost wages in the event you are required to isolate as a result of being part of a Cohort. The decision on whether to participate in the Return to Hockey in the Development Season and/or Modified Competition Season is up to each individual.

**15. Can I catch COVID-19 while in a Cohort?**

The short answer is yes. Social distancing, handwashing and face masks are some of the recommended methods to avoid spreading and catching COVID-19. However, no guarantees can be made that even if you follow the recommendations made by Hockey Canada and Alberta Health Services that you won't catch COVID-19. Each official should consider their own personal circumstances before agreeing to participate in the HA Return to Hockey Plan.

**16. I am not interested in participating in Development Season or Modified Competition Season but would skate again if we moved to the Regular Season, should I still sign up for a clinic?**

Participating in the Development Season or Modified Competition Season may not be for everyone. We do not know when the Regular Season will come, if at all, this season. Hockey Canada is allowing your certification to remain current until January 31, 2021. HAOC is planning on running an initial series of clinics in October to test its online clinic program. There will be additional clinics created to allow for officials to officiate in the Modified Competition Season within the most current COVID-19 updates and the most recent Hockey Canada Rule Changes.



**17. If clinics are moving virtual, how will I get my rule book?**

Hockey Canada has approved a full online rule book for download. A printed rule book will NOT be available this season. You are strongly encouraged to download the new rule book and/or App:

[https://cdn.hockeycanada.ca/hockey-canada/Hockey-Programs/Officiating/Downloads/rulebook\\_casebook\\_e.pdf](https://cdn.hockeycanada.ca/hockey-canada/Hockey-Programs/Officiating/Downloads/rulebook_casebook_e.pdf)

**18. Will all clinics be virtual this season?**

The HAOC has not yet determined this. At this point, the plan is for Levels III-VI officials to take an online clinic. Hockey Alberta is planning for additional clinics for Levels I-II officials starting in mid-October. Depending on needs, there may be additional virtual clinics offered at those levels. Where possible and practical in-person clinics may be offered if they can be done safely.

**19. How do I know that I will get assigned hockey if I sign up for a clinic?**

There are no guarantees. It is important to note that the preference in assigning during the Development Season and Modified Competition Season of the Hockey Alberta Return to Hockey Plan is through Cohorts. That must be considered by the official when signing up for a clinic.

**20. What if I sign up for a clinic but don't get assigned any hockey to officiate. Do I get a refund?**

At this time, a refund policy is not in place but will be considered as circumstances evolve. If you do not have any intention of officiating in Development Season or Modified Competition Season, we recommend not signing up for a clinic at this time.

**21. What will happen to my development if I don't sign up for a clinic and/or am unable to skate this season during the Development Season or Modified Competition Season?**

As mentioned before, these are extraordinary times. The HAOC expects Officiating Regions not to make any major changes to their roster except as necessary to fill the various cohorts. Any changes to the roster for this season will be based on the 2019-20 season.

Development, coaching and mentoring opportunities will resume, in full, once we return to the Regular Season. If we are unable to return to the Regular Season until next season, we expect that roster spots will generally not change from their current setup unless officials do not return to active skating.

Your roster spot will not be affected if you do not officiate in Development or Modified Competition Seasons.

It is important to note that when you are assigned to a cohort you must remain in that cohort. Similar to players and coaches, if officials are found to be in multiple cohorts you risk jeopardizing a return to hockey for everyone. Any officials who do not follow the Guidance here within may be subject to Discipline.

**22. I have a question that is not covered in this FAQ. Who should I speak to?**

Please review this FAQ to ensure your question has not been covered. The HAOC is referring all questions to Brett Kelly, Manager, Officials for Hockey Alberta. Contact him by email at: [bkelly@hockeyalberta.ca](mailto:bkelly@hockeyalberta.ca)