



Parent HANDBOOK

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*A helpful guide for creating a
great youth hockey experience*



OVERHEARD AT THE RINK



“These past 10 years of hockey with my son have been the best years. Wouldn’t change a thing. The lessons they have learned, the ups and downs, friendships made, bonds for life, awesome family, a great way to prepare them for life!” —JANI WATROUS

“Air out their equipment. You have no idea how important this is but you soon will if you don’t.” —ADAM ROSS

“As a mom of a 18U player, it goes fast. Enjoy every second of it. Hockey families are friends for a lifetime.” —MICHELLE MEYER-GRANT

“Let them try every position... even goalie!”

—MICHELE MUSCAT MOSTEK

“Buy as much used gear as you can, and don’t be afraid to ask others for help. It’s okay to cheer loud and introduce yourself to other parents. They might be feeling out of their element too.”

—STEPHANIE RATHERT



“After each time on the ice, our first question is always, “Did you have fun?”

—ANNE GAVIN

“You will make mistakes. You will forget the game jersey. You will tie the skates too tight or not tight enough. Their socks will fall down no matter how much tape you use. You will work up more of a sweat getting them dressed than they will out on the ice. And before you know it they won’t need you at all. Love every crazy moment of it because there is nothing else like it in the world.”

—PAUL ALLIE DICKINSON



Welcome to USA Hockey

Whether it’s competing for a gold medal, skating with neighborhood friends or volunteering at the rink, hockey can provide a lifetime of great moments—and fun—for you and your child.

As the national governing body for ice hockey in the United States, [USA Hockey](#) is [here to help you make the most of it.](#)

PARENT HANDBOOK

— 2021-22 —



YOUTH HOCKEY

is our focus.



About USA Hockey

We aim to help every player reach their full potential through engaging, safe and fun programs that maximize skill development. We help young people become leaders, even Olympic or Paralympic heroes, and we connect the game at every level, promoting a life-long love of the sport. Our primary emphasis is on the support and development of grassroots hockey programs. Your registration with USA Hockey aligns you and your hockey-playing child with a powerful advocate that is completely dedicated to you and to making hockey a great experience for every player.

FOUNDED IN 1937, USA Hockey provides the foundation for ice hockey in American and today includes more than one million players, coaches, officials and volunteers. We are the official representative to the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee and the International Ice Hockey Federation. In this role, we organize and train teams for international competitions, including the IIHF World Championships, the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. We also work closely with the National Hockey League and the National Collegiate Athletic Association.

YOUR SAFETY IS OUR #1 GOAL.



Make AAA part of your family's game plan and feel fearless knowing you have the support of every AAA Associate on your side.

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Hockey is fun for **YOUR CHILD**

USA HOCKEY LAUNCHED the American Development Model in 2009, providing a framework for optimal athlete development. Since then, USA Hockey has continued to build upon the framework, implementing best practices nationwide through a network of volunteers, in order to ensure that every child has the opportunity to experience fun in hockey.

By giving your child the USA Hockey experience, you're setting them up for long-term success. It's proven programming, built on research and data from leading hockey nations, sport scientists, coaches and educators. As the parent of a USA Hockey athlete, you know that your coach has underwent Coaching Education Program training, and that they have learned and been trained with our extensive resources. You also know officials at your games have been trained and passed the USA Hockey rules test, and that your coach and any adults with your team have been SafeSport trained and have passed a background check. The foundation we've created for ice hockey gives parents the confidence that their child is having a fun and safe sports experience possible.

Hockey is fun. USA Hockey believes in letting kids be kids. We believe that kids and their families should get the most out of hockey without feeling undue



As the basis for youth hockey in the U.S., the ADM provides:

- Age-specific, age-appropriate skill development.
- An opportunity to efficiently learn and refine essential skills without an over-emphasis on winning games at the younger age classifications.
- A sensible practice-to-game ratio that encourages efficient skill development.
- High-performance practice and game programming that emphasizes skill development, competition, engagement and FUN.
- Structured training programs for coaches and qualified adult leadership.
- A philosophy that reduces burnout and disenchantment.

performance or financial pressure. We believe in community-based youth hockey. We believe in keeping kids engaged, moving and smiling. We believe in creating a safe and fun environment that is welcoming to everyone. We believe in making optimal use of ice time. We believe in creating great athletes, not just hockey players. USA Hockey believes your family will enjoy the mental, social and physical well-being that hockey offers.

Enjoying the EXPERIENCE

Above all, remember that hockey is a game, meant to be fun, including at the highest levels. Keep hockey in perspective and help your children do the same. Often the score isn't as important to them as simply gaining the experience of playing and making memories with teammates.

Savor every opportunity to watch your child on the ice. The hockey experience can be a source of great memories and lessons that last a lifetime. Traveling that road together can strengthen family ties.

Here are some ideas for making the experience great:

- Create a scrapbook for your child with photos, news clippings, website postings and tournament programs. Have each teammate sign it.
- Encourage your child to write a journal about his or her hockey experience.
- Turn road trips into true family vacations; see the sights and explore the local culture. Take lots of pictures.
- Take the lead in coordinating public service opportunities for the team, such as hosting a food or toy drive.
- Join or create a hockey parent social club for your child's team; use social media to keep the conversations and friendships flowing.

"PLAY IS OFTEN TALKED ABOUT AS IF IT WERE A RELIEF FROM SERIOUS LEARNING. BUT FOR CHILDREN, PLAY IS SERIOUS LEARNING. PLAY IS REALLY THE WORK OF CHILDHOOD."

— FRED (MISTER) ROGERS



**ENJOY
AND GET
INVOLVED
TODAY!**

Getting Involved

Joining your local hockey association as a volunteer committee member, a coach, an on- or off-ice official, team manager, or a helper of any sort can be a rewarding experience."

Everyone has different strengths and skills that they can bring to a local hockey association, and every contribution helps, since associations are almost entirely powered by the extraordinary efforts of volunteers.

Even parents who never played hockey can make huge contributions as volunteers, so don't be reluctant. There's strength in numbers. Ask your local association about volunteer opportunities today. And if you have ideas for new ways you could help your association, don't hesitate. Jump in and join the team!

What to expect as a HOCKEY PARENT

— ★ ★ ★ —
Your child's hockey experience will be influenced by many factors, but nothing will influence that experience more than you. As a parent, you are the most influential figure in your child's development, both as a hockey player and as a person. Embrace that opportunity.



**AS A
PARENT, YOU
ARE THE MOST
INFLUENTIAL FIGURE
IN YOUR CHILD'S
DEVELOPMENT**

Remember:

- **Let kids be kids.** Fun should be paramount.
- **Be supportive.**
- **Be disciplined.** Manage your emotions and set a good example that teaches your child to do the same.
- **Be positive,** and when adversity comes, be constructive not destructive. If you must be critical, don't get personal. Direct your comments at the action, not the person.
- **Be proactive.** Getting involved as a volunteer, coach or official in your association can give you an even greater influence on your child's hockey experience.
- **Your child's coach** is likely a volunteer, and often also a parent, donating their time to help your child. While criticism might be appropriate, it should be done constructively and through appropriate channels.
- **Be respectful,** to everyone, including officials, especially in situations of disagreement or conflict.
- **Don't bully or harass.** Speak out if you see bullying or harassing behavior from others.
- **Focus on the process,** not the outcome, and teach your child to do the same.
- **Kids learn** best by doing.
- **Praise your child's effort** more often than their performance. Studies show it helps them better develop the confidence to meet new challenges and overcome obstacles.
- **Keep hockey** in perspective. Maintain a healthy balance of hockey and non-hockey activities. Encourage your child to be well-rounded.
- **Enjoy the youth** hockey experience with your child. Life moves fast and time passes quickly. Soon your child will be grown and you'll wish you could return to these days, if just for a moment. So savor these seasons, don't rush them. Make the experience one that you'll remember fondly together years from now.



BUDGETING *Tips*

All youth sports require some financial investment, but costs to participate in hockey can be substantially reduced by planning ahead and make your experience more affordable.

ABOVE ALL, don't buy into the myth that only kids from wealthy families can excel in hockey. Many of the game's greatest players came from modest financial backgrounds.

YOUR LOCAL ASSOCIATION is the first place you should turn if you have questions or concerns. Local hockey associations have a wealth of knowledge, experience and connections that can help you minimize costs. Additionally, a high-quality youth hockey association will also make efficient use of ice time by putting multiple teams on the ice for practice sessions, reducing costs while also increasing skill development opportunities.

REMEMBER, used or hand-me-down equipment can be a great way to reduce costs, especially at the younger ages. Young children don't put as much wear-and-tear on equipment; its effectiveness usually far exceeds one or two players' use. Just be sure to inspect it carefully to ensure that all used items are still safe and fit properly. Resist the temptation to put your kids in oversized equipment. It will hurt their performance, making it difficult for them to play and have fun.

COMPARISON SHOP There are a myriad of online and local outlets offering new and used hockey equipment. Look for the best deals.

REMEMBER that hockey equipment can be a great birthday or holiday gift. Given the choice, most kids who are truly passionate about playing the



PRO TIP:

NEITHER THE SKATES NOR THE STICK MAKE THE PLAYER, ESPECIALLY AT YOUNGER AGES,

but proper fit matters. Put your children in equipment that is safe, comfortable and adequate, but resist the temptation to outfit them lavishly.

If you have questions regarding when a big-ticket splurge might be appropriate, ask your association or coaches. Regarding sticks, remember that proper stick length is crucial. While there is a range, a good rule of thumb is that an upright stick with the toe of the blade on the ground shouldn't rise above the player's eyes if standing in shoes. In skates, an upright stick with the toe on the ice shouldn't rise much above the chin or be much below the collar bone.

game would prefer hockey gifts that encourage their play.

BE PROACTIVE. Ask your local associations to explain what is included in exchange for your registration fees. Ask how the money is allocated toward ice time, administration, officials and travel. Also, make sure these topics are covered during preliminary parent meetings so you clearly understand your financial commitment for the season.

AVOID SPENDING money on impulse purchases at concession stands and during road trips. Pack lunches. Stay in hotels with complimentary breakfasts. Reduce travel. Frequently traveling to faraway tournaments isn't a necessary component of skill development. Development happens at your local rink. Road trips can be fun, but they aren't where you get the most bang for your hockey buck.



Try Hockey For Free

While you're already part of the sport, if you have friends whose children would like to try youth hockey, USA Hockey hosts Try Hockey For Free events each year that give children who haven't had that opportunity to play hockey a chance to try it for free.

TRYHOCKEYFORFREE.COM



Stay Involved

Your USA Hockey experience doesn't necessarily end at the rink. Along with annual coaching and officiating certification, USA Hockey also makes its resources available to parents and players. Below are some of the many offered in order to enhance your USA Hockey experience:



NEWS YOU CAN USE

We'll share age-specific information with both players and parents via email throughout the year.

Coaches and officials also receive monthly newsletters with the latest USA Hockey updates.
USAHOCKEY.COM



EVENTS

USA Hockey offers a full calendar of events ranging from national teams to youth hockey.

• **Hockey Week Across America:** Annual week-long celebration with salute days celebrating the game of hockey.

HOCKEYWEEKACROSSAMERICA.COM

• **Try Hockey for Free Days:** Everyone 10 and younger is invited to Try Hockey for Free. Do you have a friend or family member that has always wanted to try hockey? Bring them to your rink!

TRYHOCKEYFORFREE.COM

• **National Teams:** USA Hockey national teams compete internationally for gold medals every year. Get the latest Team USA news, including rosters and broadcast information, at:

TEAMUSA.USAHOCKEY.COM



GEAR UP

Support Team USA with USA Hockey jerseys, shirts and gear.

SHOPUSAHOCKEY.COM



THE USA HOCKEY NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS ARE AN AMAZING OPPORTUNITY TO SHOWCASE YOUR TEAM ON THE NATIONAL LEVEL.

USA HOCKEY NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

The USA Hockey National Championships are the culmination of the youth hockey season each year.

NATIONALS.USAHOCKEY.COM



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PLAYER DEVELOPMENT



HOCKEY FOR LIFE

TRAINING TO WIN

19+ (Pro Hockey, Olympics)

TRAINING TO COMPETE

Junior, NCAA

LEARNING TO COMPETE

18-and-under

TRAINING TO TRAIN

16-and-under, 14-and-under

LEARNING TO TRAIN

12-and-under, 10-and-under

FUNDAMENTALS

8-and-under, 6-and-under

ACTIVE START

6-and-under



1 AGES 0-6 ACTIVE START

This early development period is essential for acquiring fundamental movement skills (running, gliding, jumping, kicking, catching, striking, etc.) that form the foundation for more complex movements, thereby preparing children for a physically active lifestyle. USA Hockey encourages activity that incorporates fundamental movement skills in the four environments that lead to physical literacy: in the water (swimming), on the ground (athletics), in the air (gymnastics), on ice and snow (sliding and skating). Kids should start with a learn-to-skate program and then a learn-to-play program as their initial steps into hockey.



2 AGES 6-8 (FEMALE) AGES 6-9 (MALE) FUNDAMENTALS

The objective of this stage is to refine fundamental movement skills and begin acquiring basic sport skills through fun-focused methods. This is the time when a foundation is set for future acquisition of more advanced skills. In this stage, the focus is on the development of physical literacy. Fundamental movement skills are continually developed through a variety of activities and participation in other sports beyond hockey. For hockey development, the basics of skating and puck control are the main focus. Fun competitions are also introduced in a team environment.



AGES 8-11 (FEMALE)
AGES 9-12 (MALE)

3 LEARN TO TRAIN

This is the period during which accelerated learning of coordination and fine motor control occurs. Players in this development stage should begin transferring concepts from practice to games. Group interaction, team building and social activities should be emphasized. A wise ratio of practices and games (3 to 1) will promote efficient development and mastery of hockey skills.



AGES 11-15 (FEMALE)
AGES 12-16 (MALE)

4 TRAIN TO TRAIN

The focus of this stage is to further develop sports-specific skills, begin to introduce competition, and continue emphasizing support training to continue development of agility, speed, power and strength. Players should consolidate sports-specific technical skills with an increased emphasis on hockey and a reduction in the number of other sports played. A continued emphasis is also placed on the development of individual and group tactics. Social and emotional considerations are addressed by placing an emphasis on team-building, group interactions and social activities.



AGES 15-18 (FEMALE)
AGES 16-18 (MALE)

5 LEARN TO COMPETE

This is the time to prepare athletes for the competitive environment, continue to refine technical and ancillary skills, and develop the physical attributes. The focus is on optimizing fitness preparation and beginning to specialize in hockey. Training should be individualized to the athlete's particular needs in skill development, mental preparation, fitness and recovery. During this stage, training volume and intensity increases. Competitions become more important and the focus shifts to learning the requirements of performance. Training emphasizes the development of position-specific technical and tactical skills under competitive conditions. Mental skills that contribute to performance are also emphasized.



Body Checking: A Key Skill

USA Hockey provides resources for teaching body checking and competitive contact in a progressive, age-appropriate manner beginning with 7-year-olds and continuing through every age classification.

Competitive contact is legal across all early age groups. All Girls age levels, Youth 12U, 10U and 8U, as well as all non-checking leagues, allow for competitive contact so long as proper body control, angling and focus on puck possession occur.

Coaches are instructed through USA Hockey training how to properly teach acceptable competitive contact to their players, both on and off the ice. Players begin to feel confident on their skates the more they focus on balance, and begin to think about hockey in terms of angling and possession. These skills learned at younger ages will continue to grow and advance throughout your child's hockey career.

The foundation created by learning competitive contact as a skillset is expounded upon for Youth hockey players



beginning at 14U, as body checking is introduced. This decision was based on extensive medical, physiological and sport science research. At this age level, Youth players will use the skills learned from competitive contact, and can initiate legal body checks in order to win possession of the puck.

The purpose of a body check is to win puck possession, not to punish an opponent. Similar to competitive contact skills, players should focus on stick on puck action, proper angling and always take responsibility as the body checker. The onus is on the player delivering the check to avoid making illegal contact, including hits to the head, hits from behind or late hits.

It is illegal to body check an opponent without intending to play the puck or win possession of the puck, or to finish your check on an opponent who does not possess the puck.

Only the trunk (hips to shoulders) shall be used to deliver a body check, and the delivery of a check must come from the front or side of an opponent.

Body checking and competitive contact are skillsets learned, just like skating or shooting the puck. USA Hockey, and its vast network of resources across coaches and officials, will continually enforce and teach the proper standards at every age level to ensure a safe and fun environment for your child.

AGES 19-21 (FEMALE)
AGES 19-23 (MALE)

6 TRAIN TO COMPETE

The objective of this stage is to transfer from the training environment to a competitive environment. Athletes must consolidate technical skills and maintain ancillary skills and underlying physical capabilities. Training volume remains high while intensity increases with the importance of competitions. Training is usually 10+ months of the year, disciplined and hockey-specific. Athletes will usually be required to move away from home for training and competition environments that fit this stage of development.



7 TRAIN TO WIN

AGES 19+

The focus of this stage is the stabilization of performance-on-demand characteristics and achieving excellence at the highest levels of performance, e.g., professional hockey, the Olympics, the World Championship. Only a very small percentage will achieve this stage. It is important to build a winning strategy with these athletes and to individualize training and recovery to prevent over-training.



8

ALL AGES

HOCKEY FOR LIFE

Players can enter this stage at any age, as "Hockey for Life" can provide quality recreational opportunities for all ages. Whether as a "rink-rat" at a local outdoor rink, as an intramural/club hockey player at a college or university, or in adult recreational leagues, USA Hockey believes that the opportunity to play and have fun should be available to all players with various levels of commitment. Even later in life, USA Hockey hopes that everyone leads a physically active, healthy lifestyle that includes the great game of hockey. Studies have shown that physical exercise can increase the rate at which the brain creates new brain cells. It makes an old brain act more like a young one in its ability to generate neurons needed for learning and remembering new things. So, in effect, exercise helps the brain stay youthful.



YOUTH/GIRLS CLASSIFICATIONS

AGE CATEGORY	CLASSIFICATION
8 years & under	8U
9-10 years	10U
11-12 years	12U
13-14 years	14U
15-year-olds	15 Only
15-16 years	16U
17-18 years	18U
17-18-19 years	19U (girls only)



CODES OF CONDUCT

PLAYER'S Code of Conduct

PLAY for fun.

WORK HARD to improve your skills.

BE A TEAM PLAYER—get along with your teammates.

LEARN TEAMWORK, sportsmanship and discipline.

LEARN THE RULES and play by them. Always be a good sport.

RESPECT YOUR COACH, your teammates, your parents, opponents and officials.

RESPECT an official's decision.

PARENT'S Code of Conduct

DO NOT FORCE your children to participate in sports, but support their desires to play their chosen sports. Children are involved in organized sports for their enjoyment. Make it fun.

ENCOURAGE your child to play by the rules. Remember, children learn best by example, so applaud the good plays of both teams.

DO NOT EMBARRASS your child by yelling at players, coaches or officials. By showing a positive attitude toward the game and all of its participants, your child will benefit.

EMPHASIZE and celebrate major



moments and accomplishments, and how they benefit your young athlete. De-emphasize scores and stats."

KNOW AND STUDY the rules of the game and support the officials on and off the ice. This approach will help in the development and support of the game. Any criticism of the officials only hurts the game.

APPLAUD a good effort in both victory and defeat, and enforce the positive points of the game. Never yell or physically abuse your child after a game or practice—it is destructive. Work toward removing the physical and verbal abuse in youth sports.

RECOGNIZE the importance of volunteer coaches. They are important to the development of your child and the sport. Communicate with them and support them.

IF YOU ENJOY THE GAME, learn all you can about hockey—and volunteer.

USA Hockey developed codes of conduct for coaches, parents, players and spectators to help everyone understand the expectations associated with their role in the game.

SPECTATOR'S Code of Conduct

RESPECT officials and their calls on the ice."

DISPLAY good sportsmanship. Always respect players, coaches and officials.

ACT APPROPRIATELY; do not taunt or disturb other fans; enjoy the game together.

CHEER GOOD PLAYS of all participants; avoid booing opponents.

CHEER IN A POSITIVE MANNER and encourage fair play; profanity and objectionable cheers or gestures are offensive.

HELP PROVIDE a safe and fun environment.

COACH'S Code of Conduct

DEVELOPMENT is the priority. Scores and stats doesn't develop children, playing in a competitive and fun environment matters more than winning the game."

REMEMBER, players are involved in hockey for fun and enjoyment.

BE A POSITIVE ROLE MODEL to your players. Don't yell or criticize



officials. Your team and players are an extension of you and your coaching philosophy."

BE GENEROUS with your praise when it is deserved; be consistent and honest; be fair and just; do not criticize players publicly; learn to be a more effective communicator and coach; don't yell at players.

ADJUST to personal needs and problems of players; be a good listener; never verbally or physically abuse a player or official; give all players the opportunity to improve their skills, gain confidence and develop self-esteem; teach players the basics.

ORGANIZE practices that are fun and challenging for your players. Familiarize yourself with the rules, techniques and strategies of hockey; encourage all your players to be team players.

MAINTAIN an open line of communication with your players' parents. Explain the goals and objectives of your association.

BE CONCERNED with the overall development of your players. Stress good health habits and clean living.



GAIN AN EDGE:

NUTRITION, HYDRATION

...and Sleep

Nutrition is a key contributor to performance, but it's often overlooked. Introduce good nutrition habits to your young athlete early and you'll not only help them maximize their performance, you'll set them up for a healthier lifestyle, too. Here are some tips from USA Hockey.

Nutrition Tips:

EATING WELL-BALANCED MEALS, with foods from each of the essential food groups (vegetables, fruit, lean meat, dairy, healthy fats), is still the best advice.

HIGH-QUALITY FORMS of these foods are packaged with high-quality nutrients, instead of bad nutrients.

THINK OF FOOD AS THE FUEL and building blocks for everything your young athlete does. Carbohydrates (e.g., oatmeal, brown rice, whole-grain bread, fruit/vegetables, beans), proteins (e.g., chicken breast, eggs, fish, lean beef, beans, nuts/seeds, milk), and fats (e.g., olive oil, fish, nuts/seeds, avocado) provide the energy their body needs for both school and athletic performance.

WHEN EATING ON THE ROAD, research restaurant menus online in advance to determine if they have balanced

meal options. Also, consider visiting a grocery store instead of a restaurant. Healthy foods from a grocery store (e.g., whole-grain bread, lean meats, spinach, fruits, nuts, cheese sticks) often have more high-quality nutrients, fewer unhealthy nutrients and lower costs.

AVOID EXCESSIVE SAUCES or dressings, which can be packed with empty calories. Ask for them on the side to control portions and choose olive oil-based as a healthier option.

AVOID FRIED FOODS. Grilled and steamed foods are healthier choices.

DRINK MORE WATER. Studies show that people suffer a five percent decrease in cognitive function for every one percent of dehydration.

URINE COLOR is a good indicator of hydration level. Clear to pale yellow is good; darker yellow is bad.

AS A RECOVERY DRINK after exertion, fat-free chocolate milk can be an excellent choice. According to WebMD, it "beat out carbohydrate sports drinks at helping to rebuild and refuel muscles after exercise." It's often less expensive than carbohydrate sports drinks, too.

MINIMIZE OR ELIMINATE soda pop and sport drinks, especially outside of performance or training time.

Sleep Tips:

LIFESTYLES HAVE BECOME increasingly busy, but for children and athletes in particular, foregoing proper sleep is acutely damaging.



ACCORDING TO EXTENSIVE STUDY by doctors and scientists, children between the ages of 3 and 6 should sleep 10-12 hours nightly for optimal health and function. For children between 7 and 12 years of age, the recommendation is 10-11 hours. For 12-to-18-year-olds, the recommendation is 8-9 hours. When people are deprived of adequate sleep, or suffer from inconsistent sleep patterns, "the brain functions at a subpar level, with slower reaction times, impaired judgment and emotional instability." – Michael Sweeney, Brain: The Complete Mind, How It Develops, How It Works, and How to Keep It Sharp.

Creating a safe ENVIRONMENT

The safety of its players is USA Hockey's top priority. This includes not only on-ice safety, but also off-ice safety. USA Hockey works with leading organizations, including the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee and the U.S. Center for SafeSport, to develop policies and programs that protect our participants and create an environment safe from misconduct.

ON THE ICE

USA Hockey has a strict standard of rules enforcement, allowing for improved skill development and a positive environment for all participants. USA Hockey has long been a leader in the effort to enhance player safety, spearheading numerous initiatives, like neck and spinal injury prevention through the Heads Up, Don't Duck campaign, and extensive concussion education programs developed in partnership with leading medical experts.

In June of 2019, USA Hockey's Board of Directors ratified the Declaration of Safety, Fair Play and Respect, an initiative focused on changing the culture of body checking and enforcing competitive contact rules and standards, putting emphasis on the defender to win possession with stick on puck action. To learn more, visit usahockey.com/declaration.

OFF THE ICE

Our off-ice safety efforts are included



within the SafeSport program, which includes strict policies aimed at protecting participants from all types of misconduct. USA Hockey has zero tolerance for misconduct and abuse. The SafeSport program also includes a streamlined and neutral process for reporting alleged inappropriate behavior.

The SafeSport program includes policies prohibiting sexual, physical and emotional abuse, hazing, bullying and threats. These policies also specifically address areas such as one-on-one interactions, locker rooms, online and social media, team travel and host families.

- The One-on-One Interactions Policy specifically prohibits one-on-one interactions between adult members of USA Hockey or those authorized by a USA Hockey program to have regular contact with or authority over minors (including coaches), unless that contact is observable and interruptible by another adult. There are exceptions for emergency circumstances.

SafeSport also encompasses education and awareness training, a screening and background check program, reporting of concerns protocol, responses to abuse and other misconduct, and continued monitoring of the SafeSport program.

- **SafeSport Training**—All employees, coaches, officials, managers, volunteers and players 17 and older playing in an age category that allows minor age players and others who have regular access to or supervision over minor participants are required to complete SafeSport training before their participation or first contact with minor participants.
- **Background Checks**—All employees, coaches, officials (18 and older), managers, volunteers and others who have regular access to or supervision over minor participants are required to complete a background check before their participation or first contact with minor participants.
- **Youth Athlete Training**—USA Hockey also offers age-specific SafeSport training to youth athletes through the U.S. Center for SafeSport. These resources include courses for children of pre-school age; grades K-2; grades 3-5; middle school and high school. These free online trainings are designed as an introduction for minor athletes and their parents or other caregivers to understand the importance of positive, welcoming environments in sports, where misconduct like bullying or abuse is less likely to happen, and to know where to report abuse, should it occur.



- **Mandatory Reporting**—All adults registered with USA Hockey and/or who are authorized by a USA Hockey program to a position of authority over minor participants are considered mandatory reporters and are required by law to report actual or suspected sexual misconduct or child abuse to the U.S. Center for SafeSport.

A USA Hockey member or parent of any member who violates any of the SafeSport policies may be denied eligibility within any USA Hockey program and is subject to appropriate disciplinary action including but not limited to suspension, permanent suspension, and/or referral to law enforcement authorities. If you become aware of any issues that should be reported, or would like more information on the SafeSport program, please see usahockey.com/safesportprogram.

THE STRUCTURE OF USA HOCKEY

DISTRICTS/AFFILIATES

USA Hockey is divided into 12 geographical districts throughout the United States. Districts are organized with USA Hockey volunteer personnel to administer registration, risk management and coaching and officiating education programs. These programs include registration and training of coaches and officials. Districts volunteers also facilitate learn-to-play programs for youth players and their parents. Within those 12 districts, a total of 34 affiliates provide the governance.

YOUR LOCAL ASSOCIATION

Your local youth hockey association, which is the heartbeat of hockey in your community, builds on this foundation. USA Hockey supports these associations with tools and resources to help them excel.

Local associations pour heart, soul, time and resources into creating a great hockey experience for youth players and their parents. Volunteers are the backbone of these associations, administering schedules, registration, fund-raising and overall management. They are at your service, donating time, energy and talent for the love of the game and community. They are your first point-of-contact for any questions and concerns.

HOW THE GAME IS PLAYED

Your local associations schedule and manage ice time, including practices, games, jamborees, tournaments, etc. Structure and philosophy varies from association to association, but USA Hockey provides age- and developmentally appropriate guidelines, based on ADM principles, at every stage of development.

At the 8U level, those guidelines include 50-60 ice sessions per season. The emphasis is on fun, fundamental skill development and practice, not winning or losing. Playing multiple sports is encouraged.



The 8U experience recommended by USA Hockey includes no full-time goalies, 7-9 per team, station-based practices and cross-ice games to maximize fun, puck touches and skill development for every player.

Multiple teams should be on the ice for each session, making the most efficient use of ice time and maximizing skill-development opportunities.

At the 10U level, USA Hockey recommends one goalie per team along with 10-12 skaters on the ice for 95-100 sessions. These sessions should include 75-80 quality practices and 20-25 game days. The 12U experience is similar to 10U but with an optimal goal of 12 skaters per team, two goalies and an increase in ice sessions. Smaller rosters ensure more playing time and more skill development for all.

“WHAT’S REALLY GOOD FOR KIDS IS TO GIVE THEM A VARIETY OF SPORTS; TO HAVE THEM TRAIN TO BE ATHLETES, NOT NECESSARILY TRAIN TO BE GOOD IN ONE SPORT. LET KIDS BE KIDS. LET THEM HAVE FUN.”

– PETER LAVIOLETTE

Stanley Cup-winning head coach,
U.S. Olympian

USA Hockey’s recommended 14U and 16U experience includes an increase to 160 ice sessions, 16 skaters and two goalies per team, 120-130 quality practices and 40-50 games. At this stage, players should shift to a nine-month training calendar that also includes age-appropriate off-ice training.

For 18U males and 19U females, USA Hockey recommends 200 ice sessions mixed with developmentally appropriate off-ice training over a 10-month training calendar. As these players continue to advance, they will move toward a training calendar that equally supports training and competition.

COACHES

UNEQUALED INSTRUCTION FOR YOUR CHILD

USA Hockey makes an unequalled commitment to coaching education, which means that members of USA Hockey receive unrivaled support and resources for developing young players.

USA Hockey’s Coaching Education Program is designed to improve the caliber of coaching in amateur hockey. Five levels of achievement spanning nearly 600 coaching clinics each season combine with five online, age-specific modules to educate each USA Hockey coach, from the beginner to the expert.

The Coaching Education Program is committed to developing effective instructors and role models through a comprehensive education program at all levels of play. The program emphasizes fundamental skills, conceptual development, sportsmanship and respect for teammates, opponents, coaches, officials, parents and off-ice officials. Coaches trained by USA Hockey receive materials tailored to the age classification they’ll instruct, helping create an age-appropriate training environment for every athlete. Additionally, USA Hockey has developed an internationally renowned library of instructional resources for coaches to use throughout the ranks, both on the ice as well as in the classroom.



“THE THING I LIKE ABOUT COACHING IS LOOKING AT IT FROM WHERE THEY STARTED TO WHERE THEY FINISHED. IT ISN’T ABOUT WINS AND LOSSES; IT’S ABOUT HOW THEY DEVELOP. WE TAKE PRIDE IN THAT.”

– KEITH TKACHUK

Hockey dad, youth hockey coach, 19-year NHL veteran, four-time U.S. Olympian, first American-born player to lead the NHL in goal scoring

Officials

USA Hockey officials experience one of the most comprehensive officiating education programs in all of amateur sport. They attend clinics and pass tests annually that become progressively more difficult as they advance through the ranks. Additionally, each district has referee supervisors and mentor programs that help officials reach their fullest potential. If you’re looking for a way to get involved and give back to the game, consider becoming a USA Hockey official. It’s also a great way for teenage hockey players to make money while learning more about the game.



I made some good friends over the years playing.

One of my best friends still to this day is a goalie I played with growing up since I was 7 years old. Stay in the moment. Don't worry about what's going to happen in the future. You've got a lot of time for that, so just have fun, work hard and see

Patrick Kane

U.S. Olympian, 4-time USA Hockey medalist



The coaches that have fun and want to be out there and get engaged with the players on the ice, those are the ones that help develop passion."

Natalie Darwitz

U.S. Olympian, 11-time USA Hockey medalist



The most important part of youth hockey is having fun and instilling attributes in kids that they can take with them beyond the game."

KENDALL COYNE SCHOFIELD

U.S. Olympian, 14-time USA Hockey medalist



I had a basketball hoop in the driveway and right next to it was a hockey net. The hockey net got used a little bit more! I just fell in love with the game."

Seth Jones

4-time NHL All-Star, 4-time USA Hockey medalist



"It was a lot more fun for me growing up with small-ice hockey. The game's all about skill, creativity and competition. Play in smaller spaces helps develop all of that."

Auston Matthews

2021 most NHL goals, 3-time USA Hockey medalist



"I didn't watch hockey and didn't come from a hockey city, but once I found the sport it helped me focus on the things I enjoying doing and find camaraderie with teammates that I love."

RICO ROMAN

U.S. Paralympian, 7-time USA Hockey medalist



The rink should be the most fun place that we go every day. We play the game because we love it. We coach the game because we love it. We create a fun, passionate environment."

Seth Appert

Rochester Americans head coach



Our players in this country are developed in a great way to earn an opportunity. We're developing these players to seize the opportunity to have an amazing life, and hockey a great part of that."

DON GRANATO

Buffalo Sabres head coach



KATEY STONE

U.S. Olympic head coach, 4-time USA Hockey medalist





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