

# Play Hockey Model



**ALBERTA** [HOCKEYALBERTA.CA](http://HOCKEYALBERTA.CA)



## PLAY HOCKEY MODEL

### Welcome players, parents, Organizations and Minor Hockey Associations (MHAs) to Hockey Alberta's new *Play Hockey Model*.

The Recreational Hockey Model has been renamed to the ***Play Hockey Model*** by Hockey Alberta.

The ***Play Hockey Model***, and the three streams within it, 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, fun, fair play, friendship, and respect. This guide outlines the streams, their season structure and game play, and operational information for Organizations and MHAs to guide the implementation of activity options in the ***Play Hockey Model*** within their communities.

#### Key Outcomes for all Streams

- Provide families with different options to play the game.
- Provide a positive experience for all players.
- Provide a welcoming, safe, and active environment for youth.
- Instill a sense of community and camaraderie among teammates.
- Allow youth to learn teamwork skills through sport.
- Instill fair play and sportsmanship among players, coaches, parents, officials, and spectators.
- Provide leadership opportunities through sport.
- Develop hockey skills (skating, passing, shooting) and passion for the game - HOCKEY FOR LIFE.

### **STREAMS OF THE PLAY 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:** Players are assigned to teams within these standardized age groups, U8, U11, U13, U15, U18, U21 (Junior), based on birth years (cut-off is December 31). Organizations have the flexibility to overage or underage players. Please see the section on Overage and Underage for further clarification.
- **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.

## **GAME PLAY & SEASON STRUCTURE**

### Regulations & Game Play Rules

- **Practice & Game Play Guidelines**
  - It is beneficial, for all levels, to keep practice and game times to a consistent day and time of the week. Having a structured/ set schedule allows families to plan and athletes to potentially participate in other non-hockey-related activities (school sports, music lessons, etc.).
  - Programming for the U8 age division is half ice.
  - ***Rec Hockey Programs:***
    - Age divisions U11 and under should follow a practice-to-game ratio of 1:1 to promote skill development. Emphasis should be placed on foundational skills such as skating, passing, and shooting.
    - Age divisions U13-U21 should follow a practice-to-game ratio of 1:2. Should a team or organization not have practices, it is recommended that additional drop-in skills sessions be offered to the players.
  - There are no playoffs. However, it is recommended that year-end tournaments (Rec) and/ or jamborees (Pond) take place to provide players, parents, and coaches with the opportunity to celebrate their season together.
- **Exhibition & Tournament Games**
  - ***Pond Hockey:***
    - Games and festivals are against other Hockey Alberta-sanctioned Pond programs.
  - ***Rec Hockey:***
    - Games and tournaments are against other Hockey Alberta-sanctioned Rec Programs.
  - Tournament and festival hosts are required to verify that the programs attending are sanctioned as Rec (tournament) or Pond (festival).
  - 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 the number of festivals/tournaments teams are participating in to make decisions in the best interest of the athletes, families registered, and the program.



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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 (3 Periods of 15 minutes each)
    - Example: U13, U15, U18 & U21 - 1.25-hour games (3 Periods of 20 minutes each)
  - Teams should come to an understanding on the length of periods before the commencement of the game.
  
- **Officiating & Discipline**
  - *Rec Hockey:*
    - Use of Hockey Alberta-certified officials is required.
    - Two-Official system is recommended for U13-U21 games.
      - If using a One-Official system for U13-U21, it is recommended that the official be a certified Level 2 and have at least three years of experience officiating.
    - One-Official system is recommended for U8 & U11 games.
    - Officials should be at least one year older than the oldest permitted age of the division of hockey.
  - 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/MHA 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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### Season Structure

*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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### OPERATIONS

The *Play Hockey Model* provides flexibility to Organizations and MHAs to adjust their program(s) to the needs of their participants and to create and maintain their own internal processes. Along with following the [bylaws and regulations](#) of Hockey Alberta and Hockey Canada, there are several recommendations on how organizations / MHAs should operate and structure their program(s).

Organizations not previously registered with Hockey Alberta that wish to register a program stream under the Play Hockey Model have the ability (prior to January 1<sup>st</sup>) 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 Play Hockey Model Program Sanction Request can be found [here](#).*

#### Team Formation

- Rec Hockey Age Divisions
  - U8 (5, 6 & 7 year olds)
  - U11 (8, 9 & 10 year olds)
  - U13 (11 & 12 year olds)
  - U15 (13 & 14 year olds)
  - U18 (15, 16 & 17 year olds)
  - U21 (18, 19 & 20 year olds)
- Pond Hockey Age Divisions – Recommended
  - The establishment of age divisions is not required; however, it is recommended to group registered participants based on age, skill level, and playing experience.
- Should there be enough players registered in an age division to create more than one team, the Organization/MHA should have a process outlined to split players into teams. Skill levels should be spread across teams to promote skill development for all. The objective is to create equal teams for meaningful competition and to properly allocate volunteer resources.

#### Coaching Education

- Rec Hockey
  - **Required**
    - [The Shift Forward – Coach](#): All Coaches/Team Officials
    - [Hockey Canada Safety Program – Level 1](#): One (1) Coach/Team Official per team
    - **For U8**: [Hockey Canada Coach 1, Online – Recorded/On-Demand](#)
    - **For U11 – U21**: [Hockey Canada Coach 2, Online – Recorded/On-Demand](#)
    - Organizations should ensure that Team Officials are properly screened with Vulnerable Sector Checks.
  - **Recommendations**
    - It is recommended that coaches attend in-person clinics if they can to get the most out of the coach education.
    - Rec Hockey is Non-Body Checking (NBC); however, the [Hockey Canada Coaching Program – Checking](#) is recommended for **U15 – U21 Coaches** to help players understand body contact vs body checking and coach them through participation in an NBC program.

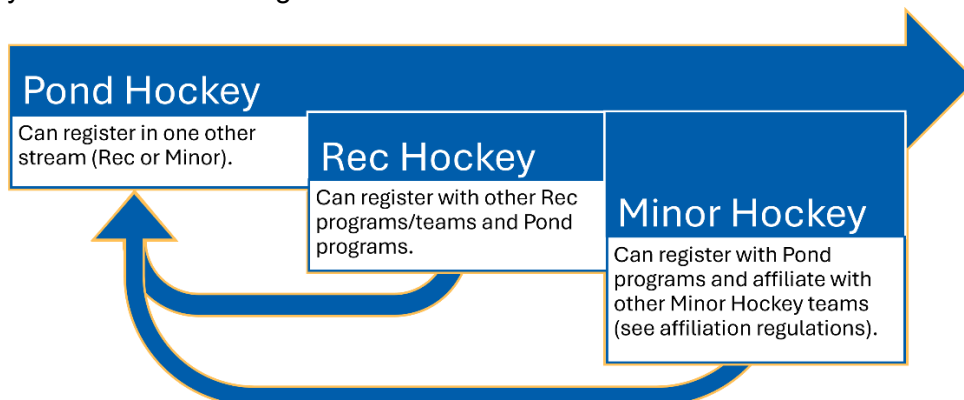


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- Pond Hockey
  - **Required**
    - [The Shift Forward – Coach](#): All Coaches/Team Officials
    - [Hockey Canada Safety Program – Level 1](#): One (1) Coach/Team Official per team
    - Organizations should ensure that Team Officials are properly screened with Vulnerable Sector Checks.
  - **Recommendations**
    - **For U8**: [Hockey Canada Coach 1, Online – Recorded/On-Demand](#)
    - **For U11 – U21**: [Hockey Canada Coach 2, Online – Recorded/On-Demand](#)
- All Play Hockey Model Programs are recommended to have a coach/player ratio of one (1) coach to ten (10) players.

### Player Registration Process

- Play Hockey Model program streams are not bound by the residency regulations. Players may register with the organization of their choice.
- Organizations registering Learn to Play, Pond Hockey or Rec Hockey programs will be required to utilize the online Hockey Canada Registry (HCR) system provided by Hockey Alberta and Hockey Canada.
- All program fees should be set at the start of the season so that no additional costs are added to the families at any point in the season.
- Participant Fees for registration with Hockey Alberta are reviewed and set annually. Hockey Alberta's standard registration fee for streams under the Play Hockey Model is \$60.41 per participant (players & Team Officials):
  - Includes Hockey Canada Registration & Insurance Fee - \$41.41
  - Includes Hockey Alberta Participant Registration Fee - \$19.00
- **Players who are registered within the Rec Hockey stream may not register with or affiliate to a Minor Hockey team**, but organizations/ associations can decide to allow participation with additional Rec Hockey teams within the organization/association if needed.



### Organizational Structure/Policies

- Overage / Underage Players
  - Organizations and MHAs may approve/ deny underage and overage requests for their teams that are registered as Rec or Pond based on their own policies and procedures. While it does



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not require Hockey Alberta approval, internal processes should be created to handle such requests and situations.

- Players who are requesting to overage at the U18 age division must be registered as a full-time high school student. Players older than 18 years of age can explore Junior Rec or Adult Rec Hockey options in their area.
- **Affiliation Processes**
  - The filing of Affiliation is not required within any stream of the Play Hockey Model.
  - When needed by a Rec Hockey team, or in the best interest of a player, organizations/MHAs 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 Minor Hockey teams.**
- **Structure & Policy Resources**
  - Organizations and MHAs should have the following as part of the structure of their organization. If assistance is needed in any of these areas, Hockey Alberta will provide support.
    - [Governance](#)
    - [Conduct Management](#)
    - [Volunteer Screening](#)
      - All volunteers require a Criminal Record Check (CRC).
  - Effective [risk management](#) of an organization operating hockey programs should also be considered. Organizations operating Rec Hockey will be required to become a [society](#) through the Government of Alberta. It is recommended that organizations operating Pond Hockey also consider the benefits of completing this process.
    - *There is a one-season grace period for new programs to obtain society status.*

## **BENEFITS OF SANCTIONING WITH HOCKEY ALBERTA**

### **Insurance**

- Medical and Dental [Insurance](#) coverage program for registered participants (players, officials, team officials). See the [Hockey Canada National Insurance Program Handout](#) for more information.
- 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.



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- 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 Hockey Alberta's [Every Kid Every Community Grant Program](#) and [Member Grant Program](#).

### **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](#).



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### COMPARISON OF PROGRAM TYPES

	Play Hockey Streams		Minor Hockey
<b>Registration Regulations</b>	<p>Pond</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unstructured</li> <li>No Residency Rules</li> <li>No Registration Rules</li> <li>No Registration/Roster Limit</li> </ul>	<p>Rec</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Semi-Structured</li> <li>No Residency Rules</li> <li>Limited Registration Rules</li> <li>No Registration/Roster Limit</li> <li>Game Rosters Follow Hockey Canada Playing Rules</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fully Structured</li> <li>Residency Rules</li> <li>Registration Rules, etc.</li> <li>Registration Allotments</li> <li>Game Rosters Follow Hockey Canada Playing Rules</li> </ul>
<b>Travel</b>	<p>Pond</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local Participation</li> <li>No travel for game play</li> </ul>	<p>Rec</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional Participation</li> <li>Limited Travel for game play</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>League Participation</li> <li>Travel Required for game play</li> </ul>
<b>Intro to Hockey Operation</b>	Half Ice Required for U7, U8, U9 programming		Half Ice Required for U7-U9 programming
<b>Coach Development</b>	<p>Pond</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Shift Forward Required for all Instructors, Coaches &amp; Team Officials</li> <li>Online Safety program required for one Team Official per Team</li> </ul>	<p>Rec</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Shift Forward Required for all Instructors, Coaches &amp; Team Officials</li> <li>Coach 1 Online for U8</li> <li>Coach 2 Online for U11-U21</li> <li>Online Safety program required for one Team Official per Team.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Shift Forward for all Instructors, Coaches, &amp; Team Officials.</li> <li>Online Safety program required.</li> <li>Specific NCCP Levels Required for Coaches Depending on Level of Hockey</li> </ul>
<b>Criminal Record Checks</b>	Mandatory for the organization to screen all Volunteers.		
<b>Off-Ice Conduct Management</b>	Handled by the individual program with support from Hockey Alberta.		Handled by the MHA, League and/or Hockey Alberta.
<b>Discipline from Game Play</b>	Handled by the individual program with support from Hockey Alberta.		Handled by the MHA, League and/or Hockey Alberta.
<b>Practices</b>	<p>Pond</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No recommended Practice to Game Ratio.</li> </ul>	<p>Rec</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1:1 Practice to Game Ratio (U8 &amp; U11) recommended.</li> <li>1:2 Practice to Game Ratio (U14 &amp; Up) recommended.</li> </ul>	Recommended 2:1 Practice to Game Ratio.
<b>Playing Rules</b>	<p>Pond</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited Use of Hockey Canada Playing Rules.</li> </ul>	<p>Rec</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Modified use of Hockey Canada Playing Rules.</li> </ul>	Full Implementation of Hockey Canada Playing Rules.
<b>Body Checking</b>	None.		U18, U15 (Tier 3 and higher).
<b>Tournaments</b>	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
<b>Playoffs / Provincials</b>	None.		League Championships and Provincials