



Under-age Athlete Policy

Revised July 2023

Applicability

This policy applies to all Metcalfe District Ringette Association athletes and teams.

Definitions

An “under-age athlete” is any athlete who wishes to play in an age group while still being eligible to play in a younger age group. For example, an athlete still eligible to play at the U10 level but playing at the U12 level is an under-age athlete.

Preamble

MDRA believes that athletes develop best from both a skill and social perspective in their age-appropriate division as determined by their year of birth. In general, MDRA athletes should play in their age-appropriate division. MDRA recognizes that occasionally an athlete may have the skill, physical and psychological attributes to compete at an older age division:

In developing this under age policy, MDRA’s out of association (OOA) player policy and that of other associations were also reviewed. While the under-age and OOA policies do not serve the same purposes, they are complementary and achieve the goal of providing appropriate opportunities to under-age players and out of association players while providing reasonable protection for MDRA of age players. These policies have been adopted for the sake of consistency and to avoid triggering disruptive movement of players between associations.

In addition, Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) principles as set by Ringette Canada have been respected and incorporated into the policy decision process. Details of those LTAD principles can be found here:

<https://www.ringette.ca/our-sport/long-term-ringette-development/>

Policy

Under-age players will only be considered in exceptional circumstances, such as unusual player development needs or to ensure the viability of a team. Each case of a proposed under-age player will be reviewed by the MDRA Board of Directors and approved or denied based on the merits of each specific situation, including but not limited to, and in no particular order: the development circumstances of the individual player, the likely effects on the two teams concerned and in both divisions as a whole, effects on the MDRA both in the near term and in the future.

Procedure

An athlete who is registered to try out for a team above their eligible age division shall provide in writing, notification to the MDRA President with rationale supporting their desire to play up. This must be received by the President prior to tryouts or sort-out’s.

Evaluation of Athletes

1. If there are under-age athletes registered for tryouts, a subcommittee will be formed in advance of the tryout commencing. The relevant committees (listed below) will be responsible for making a decision, if a committee member is in conflict, they will be replaced by another board member or convenor, not in conflict. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis and in addition to tryout results will consider factors such as:
 - LTAD principles including maturity, physical strength, emotional health and social development of the under-age player.
 - The number of players of similar skill level in the higher age group
 - The impact on the higher age group team
 - The impact on the same age group team
 - Level of play available in outside Associations for both age groups
 - Impact on the Metcalfe District Ringette Association
 - Any other factors relevant to the situation
2. The athlete must attend tryouts for their age-appropriate team in addition to the upper level. This requirement may be waived at the discretion of the responsible VP. Any applicable fees will be paid for each tryout session.

i. Competitive Skaters & Goalie

(Committee will consist of Director of Competitive, VP Player Development and Convenors):

Must assess in the top 4 of the age brackets they wish to play in. Goalies must assess as the #1 goalie and the assessors must agree that they are significantly better than the #2 goalie. If a second goalie is to be added to a team and there isn't a second goalie trying out, an under-age goalie may be added to the team if they are assessed as of calibre. If this criterion is not achieved, the athlete will return to their age-appropriate division.

ii. Regional Skaters

(Committee will consist of Director of Regional, VP Player Development and Convenors):

Will be assessed on an individual basis for the provision of team viability and/or in exceptional circumstances but will not displace a player of age in the same age bracket.

3. Under-age athletes are required to attend every assessment session. Failure to do so may jeopardize their ability to make the team. The association must be notified in advance if an athlete is unable to attend any of the sessions. MDRA's "Tryout policy for injured, ill or absent players" as found in MDRA's Player Assessment Guideline document does not apply to under-age athletes. Under-age athletes must be available for tryout sessions and will not be assessed at an alternate time.

In addition to this policy, player movements must be compliant with all Ontario Ringette Association and Eastern Region Ringette Association policies. The MDRA Board of Directors may make exceptions to this policy for the overall good of the program.