

**UPDATED**  
**SEPTEMBER 3,**  
**2020**



# RETURN TO HOCKEY



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# 1 INTRODUCTION

Hockey Alberta has worked with Hockey Canada and other provincial branches, Government of Alberta, Provincial Sport Organizations, and our Members, staff and volunteers to develop Alberta's Return to Hockey Plan. The purpose of the Return to Hockey plan is to provide options for a restart to hockey in Alberta, to outline required safety protocols and requirements, and to assist our Members with tasks they need undertake for hockey to re-start.

***The Return to Hockey Plan is current as of September 3, 2020.***

The current edition of the Plan reflects the most recent information published by the Government of Alberta on August 28 in its [Guidance for Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation – Stage 2](#) document, and aligns with Hockey Canada's Return to Hockey Safety Guidelines in focusing on the safety and wellbeing of all participants.

All timelines within this plan are subject to change based on Hockey Alberta's evaluation of environmental factors and changes to the Government of Alberta's Relaunch Plan. Updated versions of the Plan will be published and posted to the [Hockey Alberta website](#).

The information in this document is not a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. The knowledge and circumstances around COVID-19 are changing constantly and Hockey Alberta recommends that the [Government of Alberta COVID-19 site](#) be accessed for the most up to date information.

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## WHAT HAS BEEN UPDATED?

The following updates are included in the **SEPTEMBER 3 VERSION** of the Return to Hockey Plan:

1. The document has been restructured with the Return to Hockey Programming section moved to Section 2.
2. In the Return to Hockey Programming section (Section 2):
  - a. The Off-Season Skill Development component has been removed. All hockey activity should now operate under the rules and guidelines in the Development Season.
  - b. Information on how to offer sessions via Physical Distancing can be found in the Development Season section.
  - c. Guidelines regarding Sport Cohorts have been updated based on direction from the Government of Alberta.
  - d. Registration protocol information has been updated.
  - e. Clarification of activities allowed in each Return to Hockey component.
  - f. Travel restrictions have been removed, based on direction from the Government of Alberta.
3. In Protocols and Safety (Section 3):
  - a. Requirements for Record Keeping and Contact Tracing have been updated.
  - b. The process and procedure for dealing with a sick participant and/ or a participant who tests positive for COVID-19 has been updated.
  - c. Game protocols for coaches, officials and players have been added.



4. In Communications (Section 4):
    - a. updated guidelines for identifying a Communications Lead within each organization.
    - b. An updated Hockey Alberta FAQ document.
  5. In Facilities and Spectators (Section 5), updated guidelines for spectators.
  6. In Coaches and Team Officials (Section 6):
    - a. updated information on coach clinics
    - b. updated Hockey Alberta requirements with regard to masks, Cohorts and Physical Distancing.
  7. A new section, On-Ice Officials (Section 7), with updated information related to Officials.
  8. Some appendices have been removed or renumbered.
  9. Additional links are included, where applicable, to allow direct access to the Government of Alberta website.
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## WHO TO CONTACT?

Hockey Alberta will be undertaking member engagement strategies to help support member organizations as they prepare for the implementation of each Return to Hockey component.

Specific questions can be directed to appropriate Hockey Alberta senior management based on topic:

- General – Drew Dixon ([ddixon@hockeyalberta.ca](mailto:ddixon@hockeyalberta.ca))
- On-Ice Session Planning – Justin Fesyk ([jfesyk@hockeyalberta.ca](mailto:jfesyk@hockeyalberta.ca))
- Safety Guidelines and Facilities – Mike Klass ([mklass@hockeyalberta.ca](mailto:mklass@hockeyalberta.ca))
- Sanctioning and Registration – Kevin Macrae ([kmacrae@hockeyalberta.ca](mailto:kmacrae@hockeyalberta.ca))
- Member Messaging – Brad Lyon ([blyon@hockeyalberta.ca](mailto:blyon@hockeyalberta.ca))



## 2 RETURN TO HOCKEY PROGRAMMING

Stage 2 of the Government of Alberta's Relaunch Plan has authorized recreational facilities, including arenas, to open and host activity using safety and risk management measures. This provides the opportunity for hockey participation to resume.

Hockey Alberta's Return to Hockey Plan is comprised of activity components to help organizations prepare for the return to regularly scheduled hockey within a league structure. The Plan's components are:

- Development Season
- Modified Competition Season
- Regular Season

The use and timing of each component are dependent on the health and safety requirements in Alberta as well as the needs of your local community.

The intent of this plan is for our Members to be able to offer hockey activity in a safe environment by using local/ regional training and development opportunities. Following this plan will allow Members to provide development and competition for players as we await a return to the regular hockey season model.

### **Safety is paramount.**

The components outlined in this section provide the framework for Hockey Alberta Members and sanctioned partners (inclusive of all abilities, levels and streams of hockey) to plan their return to hockey activities. Launch dates for any component may differ as these will vary depending on the levels of hockey (Senior, Junior, Elite, Minor, etc.).

Members are not required to submit their plans to Hockey Alberta for approval, but all activity must adhere to the standards herein, the Government of Alberta regulations, and with Hockey Canada's guidelines to continue to be eligible to operate. The building of programming in the Development Season is the responsibility of the Member organization. Hockey Alberta is available to answer questions or provide clarification.

### **SPORTS COHORTS**

Stage 2 of the Government of Alberta's Relaunch Plan identifies types of Cohorts and the guidelines for those. Even while using cohorting, it is recommended to try and utilize physical distancing whenever possible (dressing rooms, benches, and in public areas). For more information on Cohorts: **See Government of Alberta Website: [Guidance on Cohorts](#)**

- When playing a sport or engaging in a physical activity that involves or requires multiple participants/players and where it is not possible to maintain a physical distance of 2 metres from other participants/players, the individuals in the group should form a Cohort.
- The cohort should always include only the same people.
  - Cohorts limit the risk of disease transmission because they reduce the number of people with whom players/participants have close contact.





- The maximum number of individuals that can form a Cohort is 50.
  - The 50-person maximum includes any coaches/staff, instructors, participants, officials, and volunteers who consistently and routinely engage with participants at a distance of less than 2 metres.
  - Coaches, staff and officials who primarily interact with individuals or teams at a distance of 2 metres or greater do not need to be counted as part of the Cohort. These individuals are required to wear a mask and perform proper hand hygiene if it becomes necessary to temporarily interact with cohorting participants at a distance of less than 2 metres.
- Transportation to and from activities should be arranged so that only Cohort members, or members from the same household, share rides.
- Individuals should limit the number of Cohorts to which they belong.
- If an individual or team member wishes to change Cohorts, they should not participate in a new Cohort activity for 14 days (this reflects the incubation period of the virus).
- If a Cohort comes to completion during Stage 2, a new Cohort comprised of new Cohort teams may be formed if there is a 14-day period between completion of play in the old Cohort and the beginning of the new Cohort.
- It is recommended that each Cohort appoint a responsible person whose role is to ensure cohort rules and other public health guidance are followed.

## PHYSICAL DISTANCING

Physical Distancing remains an integral part of the Government of Alberta's Relaunch Plan. Practicing physical distancing in an activity helps to reduce the risk of transmission as well as allows participants more flexibility to participate in other activities.

**See Government of Alberta Website:** (<https://www.alberta.ca/prevent-the-spread.aspx>).

The Return to Hockey Plan provides ideas and examples for Hockey Alberta members as they set up on- and off-ice training activities. It is important to note that to obtain sanctioning from Hockey Alberta, all programs **MUST** abide by the guidelines provided herein (which are based on the Government of Alberta and Hockey Canada's Safety and Protocols). If the guidelines are not followed, Hockey Alberta reserves the right to remove or suspend sanctioning for any event.

## RETURN TO HOCKEY COMPONENTS

COMPONENT	DATES	ACTIVITY	PARTICIPANT ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA	TRAVEL
<b>DEVELOPMENT SEASON</b>	<b>Current-TBD</b>	<p>Organizations can take player registrations and start to sort players into similar skill level groupings. Types of programming permitted are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skills Sessions</li> <li>• On-Ice Practices</li> <li>• Off-Ice Training</li> <li>• Intra-Squad Game Play</li> <li>• Exhibition Series (Jr, AAA, AA)</li> </ul> <p>Programs may be delivered using Physical Distancing or Cohorting.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Programs can operate 'tryout' sessions for each specific level of hockey</li> <li>2. Use physical distancing to identify a group of players to bring into a Cohort.</li> <li>3. A Cohort is a maximum of 50 people.</li> </ol> <p><b>Tournaments are not permitted.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Participants from the established registration area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tiered Hockey - MHA Boundary</li> <li>• Minor Female - Closest Female Program</li> <li>• HCAS - No Restrictions</li> <li>• AA Hockey - Recruitment Area</li> <li>• AAA Hockey - Draw Zone</li> <li>• Junior/ Senior - No Restrictions</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Registration of at least 1 Team Official per team (2 recommended) is required to comply with Hockey Alberta Regulations.</li> <li>3. Where there are defined/ structured sub-groups that comprise a Cohort, Hockey Alberta requires that each sub-group must have a designated coach/ leader that is part of the 50-person Cohort.</li> </ol> <p>Near the end of the Development Season, formal Team Rosters will have to be registered in HCR.</p>	<p>Players should access programs in their immediate area where possible.</p> <p>For the 'Exhibition Series', Hockey Alberta will work with Leagues to 'pair' programs based on geography.</p>
<b>MODIFIED COMPETITION SEASON</b>	<b>TBD (based on GOA guidelines)</b>	<p>If Government of Alberta (GOA) Cohort guidelines permit, Teams will be grouped into regional 'Pods' of 3-5 teams for competition using a Mini-League concept.</p> <p>This component provides the opportunity to finalize tryouts/ evaluations, register rosters, engage in game play and prepare for an eventual return to the Regular Season, when permitted.</p> <p>Types of programming permitted would be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skills Sessions</li> <li>• On-Ice Practices</li> <li>• League Series Play</li> <li>• Off-Ice Training</li> <li>• Mini-League Game Play within Pods</li> </ul> <p>Tournaments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pods of Teams or Mini-Leagues can have games in the same location over a weekend.</li> <li>• Restrictions on gathering numbers and sizes of Cohorts must be adhered to.</li> <li>• Teams from other Pods/ Mini-Leagues cannot play against each other</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Participants from the established registration area. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tiered Hockey - MHA Boundary</li> <li>• Minor Female - Closest Female Program</li> <li>• HCAS - No Restrictions</li> <li>• AA Hockey - Recruitment Area</li> <li>• AAA Hockey - Draw Zone</li> <li>• Junior/ Senior - No Restrictions</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Using the Development Season criteria, the majority of participants should be registered and the evaluation/ sorting process almost complete.</li> </ol>	<p>Hockey Alberta will work with Leagues to identify Pods/ Mini-Leagues based on geography.</p>
<b>REGULAR SEASON</b>	<b>TBD</b>	<p>When Government of Alberta guidelines permit, regularly scheduled League Play and travel will commence. Types of programming permitted would be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skills Sessions</li> <li>• On-Ice Practices</li> <li>• Off-Ice Training</li> <li>• League Play</li> </ul> <p><b>Tournaments: TBD based on Government of Alberta gathering number restrictions.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Participants from the established registration area. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tiered Hockey - MHA boundary</li> <li>• Minor Female - Closest Female Program</li> <li>• HCAS - No Restrictions</li> <li>• AA Hockey - Recruitment Area</li> <li>• AAA Hockey - Draw Zone</li> <li>• Junior/ Senior - No Restrictions</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Using the criteria from the Development Season and the Modified Competition Season, participants should be registered on rosters in HCR and teams are prepared for competition.</li> </ol>	<p>Scheduling play within regions/ conferences will be considered.</p>

## DEVELOPMENT SEASON

### OVERVIEW

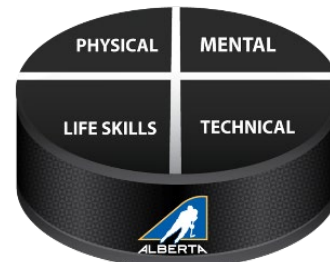
Hockey Alberta Members (including MHAs, Club Teams, Sledge Hockey, Accredited Schools, etc.) may operate development programming starting off the 2020-21 season. Organizations can take player registrations and start to sort players into similar skill level groupings in preparation for a smooth transition to a competitive model once Government of Alberta guidelines permit.

The building of programming is the responsibility of the Member organization. All programming must be based on either Physical Distancing or Cohorting guidelines. Hockey Alberta is available to answer questions or provide clarification as required.

### Player Development

Activities should be divided to focus on the four components that play an important part in helping a player have a successful season.

- **Physical:** Warm Up/Cool Down, Performance (Hydration, Nutrition, Sleep)
- **Mental:** Team Identity, Goal Setting
- **Life Skills:** Team Building, Citizenship
- **Technical/ Tactical/ Team Skills:** On-Ice, Off-Ice Development



While operating programs, work can be done in all four areas. Resources can be found by visiting the [Coach Resources](https://hockeyalberta.ca/coaches/coaching-resources/) webpage ([hockeyalberta.ca/coaches/coaching-resources/](https://hockeyalberta.ca/coaches/coaching-resources/)).

### Types of Programs Permitted

- I. Skills Sessions
- II. On-Ice Practices
- III. Off-Ice Training
- IV. Intra-Squad Game Play
- V. Team Training (Jr., AAA, AA)
- VI. Exhibition Series (Jr., AAA, AA)

### Development Season Definitions

- **Prep Skate:** Physical Distancing skill development sessions to prepare for evaluations/ regular season (the number of players in each ice session should be kept low to properly accommodate physical distancing requirements).
- **Physical Distancing Sorting/ Evaluations:** Skill development sessions and skills evaluations for the purpose of selecting your Cohort group. All participants (including coaches) must be 2 metres apart from each other at all times. The number of players in each ice session should be kept low to properly accommodate physical distancing requirements. **A maximum of 30 individuals are permitted on the ice at any one time. The recommendation is only 16-24 players on the ice at one time.**





- **Cohort Selection Group:** A maximum of 50 people (which includes coaches and support staff) that participate in drills and intra-squad play where Physical Distancing cannot be maintained. Used for evaluating players, introducing competition into the Development Season and selecting your team.
- **Intra-Squad Game Play:** Internal game play/ scrimmages that are operated within a Cohort.
- **Team Training (Jr, AAA, AA):** Timeframe when your selected Team can begin team development and training.
- **Exhibition Series (Jr, AAA, AA):** Hockey Alberta and the respective Leagues will determine pairs of Teams (by region) to pair up for competition purposes.

## PROGRAM OPERATION

### i. Programs with Physical Distancing

- Aligning with current physical distancing measures, all participants remain a minimum of two metres apart during participation.
- Physical distancing programming should be used:
  - Any time a skill development activity involves players and instructors/ team officials from more than one group or team; or
  - Any time a Cohort has not been put in place.
- On-ice programs should utilize either a lane setup formation or a station-based setup formation. Both formations allow for physical distancing of two metres to be maintained.

[See Appendix 1 – Lane Formation Diagram](#)

[See Appendix 2 – Station-Based Formation Diagram](#)

- Each ice session must be planned and communicated in advance to on-ice participants and parents.
- On-ice markings can help with physical distancing while performing skills or waiting in line.
- Try to limit the amount of wait time in lines and if wait time is required ensure these markings are clearly communicated and identified to participants.

#### Options for structuring play using Physical Distancing:

- Well-spaced circuits develop a variety of skills while keeping players moving.
- Relay races add competition to ice sessions. Routes and rules ensure proper physical distancing.
- Skill competitions add competition and provide benchmarking to show tangible development training improvements.
- Consider using goaltenders, but ensure players are not deking or playing out rebounds. One shot and done from at least two metres out from the goaltender.
- If goaltenders are not used, consider using shooter tutors or in-net targets for drills that finish with a shot on net.
- Goalie-specific sessions can be delivered as physical distancing can easily be achieved.
- On-ice equipment (nets, divider boards) and training aids (pylons, shooter tutors etc) are to be placed and moved by coaches. Training aids are to be sanitized at the completion of the session by a coach.

[See Appendix 3 – Physical Distancing Practice Tips](#)



## ii. Programs with Cohorting

- Forming Cohorts is at the discretion of each organization. Many factors including the number of registered players, age division, and skill range will come into play.
- To enhance the experience of all participants, it is recommended that MHAs and/or Teams use evaluation and/or sorting methods to identify like-skilled players for each Cohort within MHA boundaries.
- In some cases, only one age division will be needed to establish a viable Cohort. In other cases, organizations may need to combine age divisions to establish a large enough participant group for a Cohort.
- In cases where smaller MHAs are unable to form a Cohort, obtaining approval from Hockey Alberta to join with neighbouring MHAs is an acceptable alternative.
- Each Cohort can be comprised of a maximum of 50 people. Any game play will be limited to intra-squad play within the same Cohort. Groups in different Cohorts cannot play each other.
- Where there are defined/ structured sub-groups that comprise a Cohort, Hockey Alberta requires that each sub-group must have a designated coach/ leader that is part of the 50-person Cohort
- For examples of Cohorting, check **Appendix 4 – Cohort Examples**.

[See Appendix 4 – Cohort Examples](#)

## iii. Utilizing Other Facilities or Programs (Yoga, Fitness/Weight Rooms)

Please review the [Guidance for Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation – Stage 2](#) document. It includes guidelines for participants in the following areas:

- High Intensity Fitness Classes and Studios
- Low Intensity Fitness Classes (eg Yoga, Pilates)
- Weight Rooms and Fitness Equipment Spaces


## TRYOUTS, EVALUATIONS, SORTING PLAYERS

Within the Development Season, MHAs/ Teams may start and, for some levels of hockey, complete the player evaluation and/or tryout process. This will allow MHAs/ Teams to complete player selection and rostering in preparation for a competitive season.

To allow players the opportunity to access hockey at the highest level at which they are capable of playing, Hockey Alberta has established a timeline document (see **Appendix 5, Return to Hockey Timelines**, or review the chart below) for an altered tryout, evaluation and player sorting structure. Following this structure will allow MHAs/ Teams to work towards team selection in preparation for a start to the Modified Competition and/ or Regular seasons. Timelines within this chart may change due to Government of Alberta guidelines.

### NOTES PERTAINING TO THE CHART:

- Prep Skates can be initiated prior to the timeframe shown in the chart.
- Identifying and initiating a Cohort can be done prior to the timeframe shown in the chart.
- By the end of the 'Player Selection Week' shown in the chart, all teams must have rosters cut down to the identified number.
- Exhibition Series play and Pod play will be arranged by Hockey Alberta and the Leagues.
- If an individual or team member wishes to change Cohorts, they should not participate in a new Cohort activity for 14 days.



# Return to Hockey Timelines

WEEK	Aug. 17-23	Aug. 24-30	Aug. 31-Sept. 6	Sept. 7-13	Sept. 14-20	Sept. 21-27	Sept. 28-Oct. 4	Oct. 5-11	Oct. 12-18	Oct. 19-25	Oct. 26-Nov. 1	Nov. 2-8	Nov. 9-15	Nov. 16-22	Nov. 23-29	Nov. 30-Dec. 6
Senior							Physically Distanced Sorting / Cohort Group Camps					Exhibition Series		Pod Play		
Major Junior														Team Camps		Regular Season
Junior A, B, C	Physically Distanced Sorting / Cohort Group Camps				25 Players Selected	Team Training		Exhibition Series			Pod Play					
U18 AAA	Prep Skates / Physically Distanced Sorting				Cohort Group	22 Players Selected	Team Training		Exhibition Series			Pod Play				
U16 AAA	Prep Skates / Physically Distanced Sorting				Cohort Group	19 Players Selected	Team Training		Exhibition Series			Pod Play				
U18 AA			Prep Skates / Physically Distanced Sorting			Cohort Group	19 Players Selected	Team Training		Exhibition Series		Pod Play				
U16 AA			Prep Skates / Physically Distanced Sorting			Cohort Group	19 Players Selected	Team Training		Exhibition Series		Pod Play				
U15 AAA	Prep Skates / Physically Distanced Sorting				Cohort Group	19 Players Selected	Team Training		Exhibition Series			Pod Play				
U15 AA			Prep Skates / Physically Distanced Sorting			Cohort Group	19 Players Selected	Team Training		Exhibition Series		Pod Play				
U13 AA			Prep Skates / Physically Distanced Sorting			Cohort Group	19 Players Selected	Team Training		Exhibition Series		Pod Play				
U18 AAA F	Prep Skates / Physically Distanced Sorting				Cohort Group	20 Players Selected	Team Training		Exhibition Series			Pod Play				
U18 AA F			Prep Skates / Physically Distanced Sorting			Cohort Group	19 Players Selected	Team Training		Exhibition Series		Pod Play				
U15 AA F			Prep Skates / Physically Distanced Sorting			Cohort Group	19 Players Selected	Team Training		Exhibition Series		Pod Play				
Tiered Hockey (U18, U15, U13, U11)				Prep Skates / Physically Distanced Sorting			Cohort Group					Pod Play				
Intro to Hockey (U9 & U7)				Prep Skates / Physically Distanced Sorting			Cohort Group					Pod Play				

### [See Appendix 5 – Return to Hockey Timelines](#)

Whenever possible, tryout sessions should be conducted using physical distancing in order to mitigate the risk of transmission.

- If programs wish to include more than 40 players in their Tryout process, they will be permitted to operate 'Tryout' sessions with physical distancing measures in place. These sessions will assist in the identification of the players that will move on to participate in the Cohort.
- Programs that can/ wish to immediately identify a maximum of 40 players can do so and create their Cohort for the Development Season.
- Players may be allowed to access a second tryout outside of their established registration area (AA recruitment area, AAA draw zone, etc.), in accordance with current Hockey Alberta Regulations. Third tryouts will not be permitted.
- Teams should make decisions on releasing players as early as possible to help move those players to the next level and through the system.
- The only game play permitted within the Development Season is inter-squad play involving players from within the Cohort and/ or the Exhibition Series (for Junior, AAA and AA only).
- It is incumbent on the organization, parents, and players to be in full communication with each other through the tryout process. The goal is to ensure the athlete plays the appropriate level of hockey.

### [See Appendix 6 – Player Selection Resource Guide](#)



## REGISTRATION PROTOCOLS

- Sanctioning:
  - Camps (e.g. tryouts, conditioning, etc.)
    1. MHAs, Sledge Hockey, Accredited Schools and other Minor-aged programming can schedule and operate sanctioned camps without having to complete any additional application processes.
    2. Junior and Senior Club Teams wishing to operate camps during the Development Season must apply via Hockey Alberta's online Special Event Sanction System in the Centre Ice Portal.
  - Exhibition Game Sanctions and Travel Permits
    1. Junior, Senior, AAA, AA and Accredited School programs will have all Exhibition games arranged for them by Hockey Alberta and the respective League, therefore no further permits are required.
    2. Sledge Hockey programs and MHAs operating Tiered Minor Hockey and Intro to Hockey must obtain sanctioning through the Centre Ice Portal.
  - Members can operate training activity in accordance with Hockey Canada guidelines and, when doing so, they know they have coverage.
  - Tournament Sanctions will not be approved during the Development Season.
  - Hockey Alberta reserves the right to rescind a sanction for any program that does not adhere to these guidelines.
- Eligible Participants:
  - Participants from the established registration area.
    - i. Tiered Hockey - MHA boundary
    - ii. Minor Female - Closest Female Program
    - iii. HCAS - No Restrictions
    - iv. AA Hockey - Recruitment Area
    - v. AAA Hockey - Draw Zone
    - vi. Senior/ Junior Hockey - No Restrictions
- Participant Registration:
  - At the discretion of the Member, there are two options for registering players and team officials at this stage:
    1. Register all participants onto rosters in accordance with the normal procedures. (This is only recommended if your organization has completed the player evaluation/ tryout process and/ or knows the players who should be on each Team).
  - OR
  - 2. Register all participants onto group lists in HCR. Complete this based on the age division to track individuals who have signed-up to play within your organization.
- Requests for team rosters and age division group lists are submitted in accordance with normal procedures.
- Members will follow existing regulations and policies (ie: boundaries) regarding player eligibility and complete the registration process for players eligible for their own programs.
  1. As it would involve players changing cohorts, Affiliation will not be permitted to be filed nor used during the Development Season.

## ON-ICE OFFICIALS

Certified on-Ice Officials are not required in the Development Season. For more information on Officials, see Section 7.



## MODIFIED COMPETITION SEASON

### OVERVIEW

When Government of Alberta restrictions on people allowed in a gathering are increased or lifted, Hockey Alberta and our sanctioned Leagues will have a plan in place for a transition into a 'Modified Competition Season'. Communication is integral to ensure everyone knows the structure and guidelines being used.

**The Government of Alberta guidelines and recommendations will determine when this component is able to start. It is anticipated the Modified Competition Season will not commence before Friday, October 30, 2020 and could be delayed until later in the 2020-21 season.**

### PROGRAM OPERATION

#### Types of Programs Permitted

- On-Ice Practices
- Off-Ice Training
- League Series Play
- Pod Games – Teams may be grouped into regional 'Pods' of 3-5 Teams for competition purposes.
- Tournaments – Timelines for tournament dates/ sanctioning will be confirmed by Hockey Alberta based on Government of Alberta protocols.

#### Modified Competition Season Definitions

**League Series Play:** If the current Government of Alberta guidelines on the number of people permitted within a Cohort remain, Hockey Alberta will work with respective leagues to pair Teams up to create competition Cohorts. Using geography and the level of hockey, the pairs of Teams will be scheduled to participate in league play against each other for a defined timeframe. Using the Government guidelines, Cohorts can be changed after taking a break and new pairs of Teams can be put in place to continue League play.

**Pod/ Mini-League Games:** If Government guidelines increase the number of people permitted within a Cohort, Hockey Alberta will work with respective leagues to group Teams into pods of 3-5 Teams to create competition cohorts. Using geography and the level of hockey, the Teams will be scheduled to participate in league play against each other for a defined timeframe. Using the Government guidelines, cohorts can be changed after taking a break and new pairs of Teams can be put in place to continue League play.

### REGISTRATION PROTOCOLS

- Sanctioning:
  - Exhibition Game Sanctions and Travel Permits
    1. Teams will be engaged in Cohorts through League Series play or Pods/ Mini-Leagues and therefore Exhibition Games will not be permitted.
  - Members can operate training activity in accordance with Hockey Canada guidelines and, when doing so, they know they have coverage.
  - Out of Province travel may be restricted depending on Federal and Provincial government recommendations and restrictions.
  - Timelines for when consideration will be given to requests for tournament sanctions will be confirmed by Hockey Alberta based on Government of Alberta protocols.



- Participant Registration:
  - The Team Order process and initial Registration dates have been amended based on start-up dates.
    1. All players participating must be registered to a team in the HCR prior to their first game.
    2. Participants will need to be registered onto rosters in accordance with the normal procedures.
    3. As it would involve players changing Cohorts, Affiliation will not be permitted to be filed nor used during the Modified Competition Season.
  - Registration deadlines may be amended based on start-up dates.
  - All carryover suspensions from the previous season will be applied to players and team officials for this stage and must be served in full prior to participating or be approved for a suspension deferral.

## **ON-ICE OFFICIALS**

Certified on-ice officials will be used during the Modified Competition Season. For more information on Officials, see Section 7.





## REGULAR SEASON

### OVERVIEW

When Government of Alberta guidelines allow, regularly scheduled hockey operated by Leagues will be eligible to return. Hockey Alberta will work with Members and Leagues to return to play in a safe and productive manner. Communication is integral to ensure everyone knows if there are precautions and/ or alteration to the traditional structure in place.

### PROGRAM OPERATION

#### Types of Programs permitted:

- On-Ice Practices
- Off-Ice Training
- Exhibition Games
- League Games – Scheduling within League play could still consider some travel restrictions to reduce time commitments and cost.
- Tournaments – Timelines for tournament dates will be confirmed by Hockey Alberta based on Government of Alberta protocols.

#### Registration Protocols:

#### Sanctioning:

- Members (MHAs, Club Teams, Sledge Hockey, Accredited Schools, etc.) must obtain sanctions (Exhibition Game Sanctions and Travel Permits) for any game play operated outside of scheduled League play.
- Members can operate training activity in accordance with Hockey Canada guidelines and, when doing so, they know they have coverage.
- Out of Province travel may be restricted depending on Federal and Provincial government recommendations and restrictions.
- Timelines for when requests for tournament sanctions will be considered will be confirmed by Hockey Alberta based on Government of Alberta protocols.

#### Participant Registration:

- Team Order and Registration deadlines may be amended based on start-up dates.
- Register all participants onto rosters in accordance with the normal procedures. (This is only recommended if your organization has been able to complete the player evaluation/ tryout process and/ or know which players should be on each Team).
- With a later start to the season, Minor Hockey Affiliation deadlines will move to January 15, to align with all other levels of hockey.
- All carryover suspensions from the previous season will be applied to players and team officials for this stage and must be served in full prior to participating.

**Full details pertaining to the Regular Season component of the Return to Hockey Plan will be circulated once start dates are able to be identified based on updates to the Government of Alberta's Relaunch Plan.**



# 3 PROTOCOLS AND SAFETY

Hockey Canada, Hockey Alberta and its 13 Member Branches have built a comprehensive Safety Guidelines document, along with an FAQ document, to provide direction and support as organizations (administrators, coaches, managers, safety staff, trainers), parents and players prepare to return to hockey. The information included in these documents should be reviewed regularly, as it provides a solid framework to follow for any organization (and its members) as Return to Hockey planning is undertaken.

[See Appendix 7 – Hockey Canada Safety Guidelines.](#)

[See Appendix 8 – Hockey Canada Safety Guidelines FAQ.](#)

Hockey Alberta's Members and sanctioned partners are to ensure they do the following:

- follow the Government of Alberta's COVID-19 Public Health guidelines.
- comply with Hockey Alberta's Return to Hockey information.
- comply with all requirements in agreements with arenas/ recreational facilities.
- communicate with their members the safety protocols and Return to Hockey approach that have been approved in Alberta, and for the organization.

For parents and players, their responsibilities include:

- stay at home if experiencing any symptoms.
- become educated on the safety protocols and procedures and adhere to them while at the session.
- ensure each player has his/her own, clearly-labelled water bottle which is sanitized prior to each session, and his/her own hand sanitizer for use while on the ice.
- ensure equipment is dried, cleaned and/or sanitized following each session.
- arrange appropriate transportation to and from the session.
- do not spit, blow nose freely or release any bodily fluid anywhere in any facility due to an extremely high risk of virus transfer.

A detailed outline of responsibilities of Administrators, Coaches and Managers, Safety Person and Trainer, Players and Parents can be found in **Appendix 9 – Roles and Responsibilities.**

[See Appendix 9 – Roles and Responsibilities.](#)

## IN-GAME PROTOCOLS

COVID-19 enters the body through the eyes, nose or mouth (not through the skin) when an individual touches their face. Participants should:

- refrain (to the extent possible) from touching their eyes, nose, mouth and face during activities.
- limit celebration gestures or customs during activities (e.g., handshakes, high fives, fist bumps, chest bumps) that bring attendees within 2 metres or promote physical contact.

On-ice officials are not to shake hands with the coaches prior to the game. Instead, officials and coaches will use verbal greetings from a distance of at least 2 metres.

Opposing teams are not to shake hands prior to or at the conclusion of a game. They may acknowledge each other through a stick tap, or other means, from a distance of at least 2 metres.

Off-ice officials (for example timekeepers, penalty box staff etc) must either wear a mask or maintain a minimum 2-metre distance from everyone else.



## MASKS

All programs and activities are expected to follow the guidelines put in place by the Government of Alberta, the municipality and facility with respect to the wearing of masks in public areas. During Hockey Alberta sanctioned activity it is recommended that coaches, team officials, off-ice officials, on-ice officials, instructors, players, volunteers and parents that will be interacting with a Team (for example, assisting with equipment in the dressing room), wear masks when they are not separated by a physical barrier or are unable to keep a two-metre distance from all other participants. Other personal protective equipment may be appropriate depending on the task as well (e.g. First Aid).

For guidance on how to choose and wear a non-medical mask to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, please refer to the [Government of Alberta website page on Masks](#).

**For Players participating via Cohorting:** masks are not required in the dressing room, on the player's bench or in the penalty box area, or on the ice. These areas are considered within the "field of play" for the sport.

**For Players participating via Physical Distancing:** they must maintain two-metre physical distancing, and wear masks within the dressing room. Players may only remove their mask immediately prior to placing their helmet on and leaving the dressing room to go to the ice.

## RECORD KEEPING, PUBLIC HEALTH CONTACT TRACING AND PRIVACY

- Prior to the start of a program (for example, first ice session, camp, event), the organizer should distribute the [Alberta Health Daily Checklist](#) to all participants. If a participant can answer YES to any of the questions, they are not to attend. Collecting and storing the document is no longer required.
- During each day of a program, an individual should be designated to record the names of all participants in each Cohort to assist AHS should an individual test positive for COVID-19 and contact tracing is necessary.
  - Rosters are to be kept for each event/activity so there is a record of which individuals were present.
- To support accurate contact tracing, organizers should encourage all attendees to download and use the Alberta contact tracing app, **ABTraceTogether**.

## PLANNING FOR RAPID RESPONSE TO SICK ATTENDEES

If an attendee becomes sick while participating, the following requirements apply:

- While preparing to immediately leave the facility or event, symptomatic individuals should perform proper hand hygiene, put on a non-medical face mask, and maintain at least 2 metres distance from all others.
- The individual should arrange, with assistance from team officials or the facility as necessary, for immediate transportation to their home/residence to begin isolation. Public transportation like buses, taxis or ride sharing should be avoided.
- Once a sick individual has left the facility or event, facility staff should clean and disinfect all surfaces and areas with which the individual may have come into contact.

Provided this guidance is being followed, there is no need to cancel an activity, or postpone the undertaking of a cohort group, in the event that an individual becomes sick. Team officials should immediately consider and record the names of all participants in which the sick individual has been in contact. This information may be necessary to assist public health officials if the sick individual later tests positive for COVID-19.



## REPORTING A POSITIVE COVID CASE

If an attendee tests positive, AHS will only request information about the attendee's participation in sport if it is deemed that a potential exposure is likely to have occurred during such activity.

- When interviewing a person who has tested positive, AHS investigators will determine if there are close contacts that should be made aware/notified based on the period of infectivity and the organization's compliance with public health guidance. This might involve a call to the team representatives or players, but only if necessary.
- An individual participant is under no obligation to inform sport organizations or other participants, coaches, instructors, officials or volunteers of:
  - the reason for missing a practice or game,
  - if they are pursuing COVID-19 testing, or
  - the results of a COVID-19 test.
- Organizations and team officials should be respectful of the privacy and sensitivity of every participant's personal health information, and comply with relevant requirements set out in Alberta's *Health Information Act*.



## 4 COMMUNICATIONS

It is crucial for Hockey Alberta and our Members to communicate with our respective audiences on the details of the Return to Hockey Plan and the programming planned by each organization. Returning and potential new participants want to know what programming is available from their local MHA or team, and that it is aligned with planning by Hockey Alberta and Hockey Canada. It is also important to ensure that the entire hockey community understands that the safety of all participants is paramount to Hockey Alberta and our Members.

Hockey Alberta is committed to providing regular updates to our Members. Our Return to Hockey Plan and its appendices, Bulletins and Memoranda pertaining to COVID-19, and other related materials will be housed on the [Hockey Alberta website](#) on the Return to Hockey Plan page.

We encourage our Members to engage in regular and open communication with participants/ customers as a key part of returning safely to the rink. Members should have a designated page on their website for information related to your program plans. That page should include a link to the Hockey Alberta Return to Hockey page.

It is recommended that each organization identify a Return to Hockey Lead who is responsible to update and circulate all relevant information to everyone within the organization. The Lead would also be the organizational contact to whom coaches, family members and others within an organization would direct questions. If those questions required input from Hockey Alberta, the Lead would contact Hockey Alberta for the answers and then circulate in a timely and accurate manner to the appropriate audiences within the organization.

Other responsibilities can include:

- Monitoring all relevant updates from the Government of Alberta and Alberta Health.
- Monitoring all relevant updates from Hockey Alberta.
- Communicating with your local facilities on guidelines and updates.
- Ensuring teams are following the prevention guidelines set by the Member/hockey association/league.
- Meeting with their Members on a regular basis to assist in facilitating updates.

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

A Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section has been developed to address the questions that have been asked by Hockey Alberta Members. The questions and answers can be found in Appendix 10 – FAQ. As additional questions are included, the FAQ document will be updated at the Return to Hockey page on the Hockey Alberta website, <https://www.hockeyalberta.ca/members/return-hockey/>.

**[See Appendix 10](#) – Hockey Alberta Member FAQ – UPDATED**



## 5 FACILITIES AND SPECTATORS

Hockey Alberta Members and arena facilities must work together to ensure everyone complies with public health guidelines, and that facility users are prepared for the processes and procedures in place at the facilities they use. All Hockey Alberta Members are reminded to engage in positive and open communication with their facilities in planning a safe return to the rink.

Facilities will adopt the standards required by the Government of Alberta, and update and adapt to changes as required. Those standards may differ between facilities or municipalities, so the onus is on the Member to reach out as part of the facility rental agreement process for clarification of the following:

- Guidelines and requirements specific to physical distancing?
- Does the facility have specific Cohort restrictions? For example, does the facility require timekeepers/ penalty box staff to be included in the 50-person cohort.
- Restrictions on the number of people allowed in public areas?
- Entry and/or re-entry rules? Will masks be required?
- Areas not accessible in the facility – main lobby, dressing rooms, spectator area, etc?
- Dressing rooms available? If not, what options are available for players, parents, coaches and officials?
- Common areas available to put on skates with marked physical-distanced seating?
- Cleaning and disinfection processes implemented by facility owners?
  - How often are common touchpoints serviced?
  - Are there requirements of user groups to sanitize arena facilities or equipment as part of the rental agreement?

It is recommended that a ***force majeure clause*** be included in any future contracts that you negotiate.

### SPECTATORS

Spectators may be allowed in the facility, subject to physical distancing measures (based on current Government of Alberta and local municipal restrictions) and any specific directions provided by facility management. The allowance of spectators is at the discretion of each facility and should they be allowed the following guidelines are in place:

- Spectators should be kept out of participant spaces (ice surface, dressing rooms, benches).
- With 2 metres of distance maintained between members of different households (with the exception of core/ household cohorts), the following capacity restrictions apply:
  - A **maximum of 100 spectators is permitted for indoor** events/settings.
- Cheering and yelling is strongly discouraged as it presents a high risk of spreading droplets.
- It is strongly recommended that spectators wear masks.





# 6 COACHES AND OTHER TEAM OFFICIALS

## CERTIFICATION AND TRAINING

The structure of certification and training clinics and seminars for Coaches and Team Officials has been confirmed by Hockey Canada and Hockey Alberta for the 2020-21 season. Certification programs will include a combination of in-person clinics (using physical distancing) and online programming.

Hockey Alberta will maintain the same requirements for all Coaches and Team Officials for the 2020-21 season (November 15 deadline), with the addition of an online Hockey Canada Return to Hockey Safety Guidelines module for all head coaches. The module is now available.

### [RETURN TO HOCKEY SAFETY MODULE >](#)

The list of current coaching requirements is available under the Coaches tab on the Hockey Alberta website:

### [GO TO COACH EDUCATION >](#)

## STRUCTURE OF IN-PERSON CLINICS

- All clinics offered via Physical Distancing. A two-metre distance between attendees and instructors will be in place throughout all clinics.
- All participants will be required to complete a pre-screening document prior to attendance.
- Facility policy regarding masks will be followed.
- All registration must be done online, prior to the clinic. No walk ups will be accepted.

For the clinic, ensure you bring the following:

- Mask/ Face Covering
- For the on-ice portion (skates, stick, gloves, CSA-approved helmet)
- For the in-class portion: notepad, pen/pencil, and/or iPad/ laptop

## REGISTRATION PROCESSES

The Hockey Alberta regulations require all Teams to have Team Officials registered to them that meet the required certification and training criteria for the specific level of hockey.

- Registration of at least 1 Team Official per team (2 recommended) is required to comply with Hockey Alberta Regulations.
- Where there are defined/ structured sub-groups that comprise a Cohort, Hockey Alberta requires that each sub-group must have a designated coach/ leader that is part of the 50-person Cohort.

When using a Cohort, it is recommended that instructors, coaches and other team officials be a part of a Cohort with only one team and that physical distancing measures be practiced at all times when engaging in activity with any other team(s).

A strategy for accomplishing this is to include a coach in the Cohort of a team that s/he is a registered Head Coach with and ensure the coach (or other Team Official) engages in physical distancing measures and proper use of masks when engaged in activity for any other teams s/he is registered.



## COACHING DURING PRACTICES AND GAMES

When participating via Cohorting:

- Team officials are not required to wear masks in the dressing room, on the player's bench or in the penalty box area, or on the ice. These areas are considered within the "field of play" for the sport.
- When Cohorts are being used and some coaches are not part of the Cohort (they are instead physically distancing from all other participants), those coaches are required to wear masks while in the dressing room and while on the player's bench.

When participating via Physical Distancing:

- Team officials must maintain two-metre physical distancing from all other participants, and wear masks within the dressing room.
- Team officials are to wear masks while on the bench but can remove them while coaching/ instructing on the ice.



# 7 ON-ICE OFFICIALS

## CERTIFICATION, TRAINING AND REGISTRATION

The structure of certification and training clinics and seminars for On-Ice Officials has been confirmed by Hockey Canada and Hockey Alberta for the 2020-21 season.

- For new officials, and returning Level I and II officials, in-person certification clinics will start after Thanksgiving weekend. The current targeted start date is the weekend of October 17-18, but that is subject to change based on Government of Alberta guidelines.
- Levels III-VI officials are eligible to sign up for a virtual (video conference) session to obtain their certification for 2020-21. These clinics will be available starting in late September.
- For any official who was certified in the 2019-20, that certification remains valid until January 31, 2021. Normally, certification from the previous season remains valid until December 31, but for this season, Hockey Canada has extended that deadline by one month.

Clinic registration will begin in mid-September. Check the Hockey Alberta Officials website ([officials.hockeyalberta.ca](https://officials.hockeyalberta.ca)) for updates and current information pertaining to officiating and the 2020-21 season.

These revised timelines for clinics and certification align with on-ice officials not being required until the Modified Competition Season component of the Return to Hockey Plan. Once officials begin to work on the ice, Hockey Canada has developed a set of COVID-19 officiating guidelines and an FAQ. Information can be found on the Hockey Canada website (<https://hockeycanada.ca/en-ca/exclusive/return-to-hockey/plans/officiating>) or in Appendix 11.

**[See Appendix 11](#) – Hockey Canada Officiating Guide**

## OFFICIATING GAMES

When using Officials for any type of game play there are two options to consider and be determined by the participating teams and officials.

- Officials can be included within a Cohort and follow all cohorting guidelines provided by the Government of Alberta; or
- Officials who primarily interact with individuals or teams at a distance of 2 metres or greater do not need to be part of the Cohort. In this case, officials will be required to wear a mask:
  - and practice physical distancing and perform proper hand hygiene;
  - and keep a distance of 2 metres between all other officials while in the change room and during the transition from the change room to the ice;
  - whenever dropping the puck;
  - when talking with a player, team official or another official inside a distance of 2 metres.

# APPENDICES

(Appendices can be accessed on the Hockey Alberta website:

[RETURN TO HOCKEY PLAN >](#)

