



Non-Sanctioned Hockey Policy

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In partnership with Hockey Canada and our associates in other Provincial Amateur Hockey organizations, Hockey NL is committed to offering the best development programs for our membership. In a collective effort and building upon the review of our Hockey Development Program in the 2022-23 season, we have invested significant resources in the development of officials, coaches, administrators and players countrywide. We have a committed strategy toward a cohesive long-term athlete development model, and we feel our programs are second to none in sport.

Despite, or perhaps because of, our success in delivering quality programming throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, other organizations operating outside our structure form from time to time and offer various levels of amateur hockey programming through leagues, tournaments or individual games. These “non-sanctioned” organizations do not support the development of Hockey NL or the programs of our Member Organizations. Non-Sanctioned Organizations operate with limited, and sometimes no, consideration to the impact of their programs on Hockey NL’s female, minor, junior, senior, or the officiating, coaching, and administrator development in Newfoundland and Labrador. These Non-Sanctioned Organizations choose instead, in many instances, to utilize resources already developed by Hockey Canada and its Members.

Because these Non-Sanctioned Organizations operate outside of our structure, Hockey NL has no way of ensuring they implement many of the fundamental safeguards inherent in Hockey Canada sanctioned programs. For example, Non-Sanctioned Organizations may not be using the same Playing Rules that Hockey Canada has implemented to protect player safety and may not provide adequate insurance for their participants. Hockey NL also cannot ensure that the quality of play offered by those Non-Sanctioned Organizations matches the level advertised.

Hockey NL respects the right of every individual to choose at the beginning of each hockey season between participating in programming sanctioned by Hockey NL or by a Non-Sanctioned Organization. Every individual who makes the choice to Participate in hockey programming offered by a Non-Sanctioned Organization, however, must understand the ramifications of that choice, as described in greater detail in Section 3.0 of this policy.

2.0 DEFINITIONS

- 2.1 “Cut-Off Date” means September 30th.
- 2.2 “Member Organization” means any Minor Hockey Association (MHA), Female Hockey Program, Recreational Hockey Program, Accredited School, Para Hockey Program, Junior/Senior Hockey League, any Divisional League or team, that is approved and registered with Hockey NL.
- 2.3 “Non-Sanctioned Game” includes any exhibition, tournament or league hockey game that is offered, organized or operated by a Non-Sanctioned Organization.
- 2.4 “Non-Sanctioned Organization” means any individual or entity that offers amateur hockey programming and operates outside the auspices/sanctioning of Hockey Canada and Hockey NL. This currently does not include summer hockey leagues/teams, adult recreational hockey leagues/teams, or private hockey programs that do not conflict and/or compete with Hockey NL activities, as determined by Hockey NL, in its sole and absolute discretion.
- 2.5 “Participate” means to engage, knowingly or otherwise, after the Cut-Off Date in a Non-Sanctioned Game or in any activity offered by a Non-Sanctioned Organization that could only be engaged in under Hockey Canada if the participant was properly registered on the Hockey Canada Registry or participation in a Non-Sanctioned Game or any activity with a Non-Sanctioned Organization shall only be deemed to have occurred if the Non-Sanctioned Game or activity conflicts with a game or activity organized by Hockey NL or one of its Member Organizations. Such participation includes, without limitation, playing, managing, coaching, officiating, acting as a trainer, or an administrator.

3.0 IMPLICATIONS OF SUPPORTING OR PARTICIPATING IN A NON-SANCTIONED LEAGUE

- 3.1 Hockey NL will implement the Hockey Canada Non-Sanctioned Leagues Policy and in addition has modified the application of that policy as set out below.
- 3.2 Any individual who Participates in any aspect of hockey programming offered by a Non-Sanctioned Organization is subject to the following consequences:

- 3.2.1 Any individual who Participates in a Non-Sanctioned Game or activity after the Cut-Off Date will lose all privileges with Hockey NL for the remainder of that season, and, subject to paragraph 3.2.2 below, may only apply for the reinstatement of those privileges after the end of that season.
- 3.2.2 Notwithstanding the consequences listed in 3.2.1, any player who Participates in a Non-Sanctioned Game or activity after the Cut-Off Date is entitled to seek early reinstatement of their privileges within Hockey NL by appealing to Hockey Canada's Non-Sanctioned Hockey Reinstatement Committee, which may grant early reinstatement if it is satisfied that special circumstances exist.
- 3.3 The consequences described in this section of this policy will remain in effect even if the Non-Sanctioned Organization ceases operations, or the individual is released, suspended or fired from said Organization.

4.0 HIGH PERFORMANCE PROGRAMS

- 4.1 Players who engage in Non-Sanctioned Games or activities outside of the jurisdiction of Hockey NL will only be accepted into our High-Performance Programs and Development Camps (ie: Atlantic Challenge Cup, Newfoundland and Labrador Winter Games, Canada Games, or other recognized hockey events that have Hockey NL participation) should they not be in violation of this Non-Sanctioned Hockey Policy.
- 4.2 Access to these programs is a privilege that is offered to and reserved for the member participants of Hockey NL.
- 4.3 Hockey NL reserves the right to make choices regarding the coaches that we deem to be the best fit within our high-performance and grassroots development programs. Those who Participate in Non-Sanctioned Organizations **could** be perceived to pose a conflict and therefore may not be considered for Hockey NL programs or committees, including High Performance.

5.0 OFFICIATING

- 5.1 An Official who works in a Non-Sanctioned Game or other activity offered by a Non-Sanctioned Organization, regardless of whether such Non-Sanctioned Game or activity conflicts with a Game or activity organized by Hockey NL or one of its Member Organizations **WILL NOT**:

- have access to the Hockey Canada insurance program for any injuries that may occur, as a result of that participation;
- have access to the Hockey NL (Maltreatment Penalty, Rule 11) Match Penalty on Official process for any infractions that may occur during the non-sanctioned activity;
- be eligible to be selected by Hockey NL for any Regional or Provincial, assignments; and/or
- be eligible to participate as an official in Hockey NL's Officiating Development Programs, or High-Performance Programs; or
- be eligible to act in the capacity of Officials Committee member, Supervisor, Evaluator, and/or a Clinic Instructor.

5.2 Hockey NL reserves the right to make choices regarding the officials and/or officials administrators that we deem to be the best fit for our programs. Those who officiate for Non-Sanctioned Organizations could be perceived to pose a conflict and therefore may not be considered for assignments within sanctioned programs, events or committees.



Hockey NL is aware of programming being offered and advertised for this hockey season outside of those offered under our umbrella. These programs **ARE NOT** being offered or supported by Hockey NL and as a result have implications that not all parents and members may be aware of. For example, participants in non-sanctioned programming **WILL NOT**:

- have access to the Hockey Canada insurance program for any injuries that may occur, as a result of that participation;
- have access to the Hockey NL Match Penalty (such as Maltreatment Penalty, Rule 11) for any infractions that may occur during the non-sanctioned activity;
- have improved opportunity to be eligible for selection by Hockey NL or Hockey Canada for any Regional, Provincial, National or International activity;
- If working as an Official, have the same protections as present under Hockey NL activities.

Hockey NL does not support any outside program that operates in competition with the programming of our Members and Hockey NL as a whole. Conflicting programming is of the utmost concern for the Board and all Members. Following the work of Hockey Canada, Hockey NL has completed work on a provincial Non-Sanctioned Hockey Policy. This policy is available and has been communicated to all Members.

Attached, please find an FAQ for some of the questions that have been received by Hockey NL on Non-Sanctioned Hockey.

Non-Sanctioned Hockey Policy FAQs

What exactly is non-sanctioned hockey?

Hockey is a game played by hundreds of thousands of Canadians, coast to coast to coast. Canadians participate in hockey via membership organizations, such as Hockey NL, with "sanctioned" oversight and stewardship.

Non-sanctioned hockey is simply any hockey programming (ice times, practices, games, tournaments, exhibitions, etc.) that occurs outside of the membership oversight of Hockey NL and Hockey Canada. There is non-sanctioned hockey happening every day, and participants are free to enjoy the game as they wish, but most organized amateur hockey in Canada (both competitive and recreational) does occur within the oversight of a Hockey Canada member or partner.

Non-sanctioned hockey programs are those formed and delivered outside of Hockey Canada's membership, and therefore outside of the rules, regulations, process, safeguards, and oversight of the national governing body.

Here is the formal definition:

Non-Sanctioned Leagues include any amateur hockey league or program that operates in Canada outside of Hockey Canada registration and sanctioning. Hockey Canada and Hockey NL have no regulatory authority over unsanctioned leagues and organizations.

So, my hockey with Hockey NL is “sanctioned” hockey? How do I know?

Hockey NL is the regional member branch of Hockey Canada, within Newfoundland and Labrador, and is the steward and governing body for sanctioned hockey. Hockey NL is a non-profit Provincial Sports Organization (PSO).

Within sanctioned hockey, members have created standards and consistency (with rules, regulations, and processes) for ensuring the game is safe, fun, and inclusive for all participants. It also seeks to make hockey sustainable in all communities, regardless of size or location. Within sanctioned hockey, we all work together to create and maintain a healthy landscape for players, officials, coaches, and volunteers to grow and thrive.

All the Minor Hockey Associations (MHAs), Leagues, and/or teams that you may be familiar with in your area (Paradise, Clarenville, Gander, Stephenville, or Lake Melville etc.) are members of Hockey NL. So too are our Junior and Senior Hockey teams, and the fast-growing Female Hockey Division. They all enjoy the benefits of being under the umbrella of Hockey NL and Hockey Canada.

Programs, teams and leagues overseen by Hockey NL, or any of our members, are all within our stewardship, and all enjoy the benefits of that membership. All participants that register to play hockey in Newfoundland and Labrador under Hockey NL are registered with Hockey Canada. It makes us all a part of the same family, playing by the same rules, and enjoying the same insurance coverage, support and benefits.

What about summer hockey, or pick-up hockey after work or school, or when my friends just rent some ice to play together? Is that a problem?

Definitely not. Lots of people enjoy hockey outside of our stewardship. In most cases this takes place in programs outside of the usual hockey season or in a recreational setting. For instance, the following programs are specifically exempted from Hockey Canada's Policy regarding non-sanctioned hockey:

- Summer hockey leagues/teams;
- Adult recreational hockey leagues/teams;
- Hockey schools or camps;

What are the major differences between sanctioned and non-sanctioned hockey?

Sanctioned and non-sanctioned hockey kind of look the same from the outside. However, when you look more closely, it becomes clear that there are important differences. This includes ensuring that all players are learning from trained and certified coaches and staff, in the safest possible environment. Other responsibilities include constant attention to the evolution and change in the sport environment, creating programs to improve the ability of our coaches and officials, ensuring best practices for the administrators and associations, and always considering well-considered regulations so that all our teams safely play under the same basic rules across the country.

Our participants are also protected by Hockey Canada's insurance, for both medical and dental emergencies. Further, both Hockey NL and Hockey Canada are not-for-profit membership organizations. All revenue and costs are fully accounted for and put back into the programs, with transparency and accountability.

Non-sanctioned programming, on the other hand, is forging their own pathway in all these areas. This means that any player or parent considering a non-sanctioned program ought to have questions, like, what does the program have in place for safety, background checks, maltreatment oversight and prevention, and training and certifications for coaches and team staff?

Of course (and probably not surprisingly), in many cases these non-sanctioned programs try to employ coaches and administrators who have been trained by Hockey Canada and its members. This raises the issue of coaching certifications. Does a coach have any certifications? Are they expired? Are they appropriate for the players they are coaching now? Are these coaches still in good standing with their certifications? Are they suspended by Hockey Canada or Hockey NL for any reason? These are just some of the questions worth asking.

Insurance coverage for those involved is also an important consideration. Does the program have adequate levels of insurance in place to protect players and coaches in case of injury? In reality, however, unless participants ask these questions there is no way to know what you are signing up for.

Here is a little more insight from Hockey Canada's website:

Non-member programs or unsanctioned leagues are leagues that are not affiliated with Hockey Canada and operate outside of Hockey Canada's existing minor hockey system. Unsanctioned leagues are wholly responsible for their own oversight. It is up to each individual unsanctioned league to determine how issues like injuries, harassment and rule infractions are handled.

In some cases, unsanctioned leagues operate without a constitution, without bylaws, without insurance and with their own customized rulebook for game play.

Hockey Canada has no regulatory authority over unsanctioned leagues, and cannot hear appeals, provide players insurance or ensure a consistently high standard of game play in unsanctioned leagues. It is for this reason that Hockey Canada does not condone, endorse or create affiliations with unsanctioned leagues.

Finally, in many cases, these non-sanctioned teams and leagues are for-profit enterprises, where someone is trying to make money. There is nothing wrong with that, but it differentiates these leagues from the ones operated by your local MHA.

Why does Hockey NL have a Policy about non-sanctioned participation?

This comes down to fairness, transparency, and making sure member programs run smoothly. All of us under the Hockey NL/Hockey Canada umbrella work very hard to make hockey safe, affordable, and fun for all participants.

Hockey NL has the position that everyone who participates in our game can enjoy all of the benefits of what membership brings – including all of those mentioned above, as well as the ability to access special programs such as our High-Performance Program, our development streams, or as an affiliated player in higher levels or leagues from time to time.

There is concern when players or parents forego these benefits, perhaps without realizing or understanding them, there is concern related to the disruption of our member programs by participants moving in and out of sanctioned programs without realizing how this affects programs and all who participate in our game.

What exactly is Hockey NL's High-Performance Program (HPP)?

The HPP program is where the best players in an age group compete to represent Hockey NL in games versus other provinces. Our HPP program is highlighted by teams that participate in annual tournaments within Atlantic Canada and our Flagship Canada Games Program. Teams representing Hockey NL participate in the Atlantic Challenge Cup in both the Minor and Female Divisions. There are provincial camps that offer opportunities for many players to try out for these teams. These are amazing opportunities and only available to Hockey NL registered players.

Do sanctioned and non-sanctioned teams ever play one another in tournaments or exhibition games?

They do not. Hockey Canada's insurance requires all participants to be registered members to protect the health and safety of all.

What is a parent/player agreement, and do we need one?

Hockey NL has also developed a Player/Parent Agreement for our Associations, Leagues, and Teams. This agreement shall be made to clearly establish the expectations on the participant taking part in programming and what the responsibilities of the Association/League/Team are to the member. These have been in place for almost twenty years in some Associations where they have proven to be successful for both parties.

What if I change my mind and want to leave non-sanctioned hockey?

The consequences of a decision to play non-sanctioned hockey endures even if the non-sanctioned league folds, or the team dissolves, or the player changes their mind and wants to return to a Hockey NL program. Players may be reinstated into sanctioned programs the following season or by following the appeal process under the Non-Sanctioned Hockey Policy for Hockey Canada.

Can I attend non-sanctioned hockey camps or practices?

Of course! As noted earlier, members have a choice in how they participate in the game of hockey. Attending a non-sanctioned camp or practice is the choice of the individual. It is Hockey NL's position that this is not a concern so long as the scheduling does not directly compete with Hockey NL programming.

Will being sanctioned under this policy affect my participation with AAA or High-performance hockey?

It is the policy of both Female and Minor Council that ALL members of their programming must be in good standing either within the current or the previous season to be eligible for tryouts in a current season as noted in their Policy Manuals. This would mean that any individual sanctioned under this policy could be impacted for participation at these levels the following season.

Can I go to practices or camps that do not conflict with Hockey NL Programming?

As long as the practice or camp DOES NOT have the same scheduled time as the programming for Hockey NL then it is the individual's choice to attend.

Can I coach with a non-sanctioned organization during the hockey season and continue coaching my child's Minor Hockey Team?

Hockey NL will be monitoring all potential conflicts of interest with respect to this coaching concern. Individuals can choose to coach in both Hockey NL programming and non-sanctioned organization programming. However, it is the position of Hockey NL that programming for members MUST be the priority. At no time will there be tolerance for the rescheduling or altering of schedules to the detriment of members of Hockey NL. This act shall be considered a violation of the non-sanctioned policy, and any violation can be submitted for discipline under this policy.

What happens if my child plays in a non-sanction organization game when their MHA coach has a practice planned for the same date and time, which he won't be able to attend?

Any member who chooses to attend a non-sanctioned organization game when their MHA coach has a practice planned for the same date and time will be deemed to be in violation of the policy.

Can my child register this season with a non-sanction team in the USA, and still be able to participate in the High-Performance Program in the Spring?

Yes, as the non-sanction program does not conflict with Hockey NL programming, you will not be prohibited from registering for our High-Performance Program.

As an official, what consequences would I face if I decline an assignment request, and later, I decide to work a non-sanctioned organization game on the same date and time?

As per the policy, the individual would be deemed to be in violation of the policy.

I play Junior Hockey outside of Newfoundland and Labrador that is a non-sanction league in the province where I play, and I decide to return home in December, can I register with a team in the St. John's Junior Hockey League?

No, this is after the Cut Off date of September 30th, therefore, you would have to file an application with Hockey Canada's reinstatement appeals committee as outlined in the policy.

What else should I know?

Hockey NL would like everyone who participates in our game to be well informed about what Hockey NL membership means and be educated about what it may mean to play hockey outside of our stewardship.

For specific information about Hockey Canada's Policy, and Hockey NL's own Non-Sanctioned Policy, click the links below.

Hockey Canada Policy: <https://cdn.hockeycanada.ca/hockey-canada/Corporate/About/Downloads/2023-non-sanctioned-leagues-policy-e.pdf>

Hockey NL Policies: <https://hockeynl.ca/members/policies/>