



OPERATIONAL POLICY: U7 / U9 Division Structure

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Preamble

The SMHA Intro to hockey (U7 and U9) programs have been structured around the guidelines and directives sent out from Hockey Canada and Hockey Alberta. It is important to note that these guidelines and directives were essentially modeled around how SMHA has been operating U7 and U9 programming for the past 40+ years.

The program has a number of key principles:

1. Provide a high quality age appropriate skill development environment that focuses on fun and participation.
2. Ensure an appropriate practice to game ratio.
3. Keep cost and time commitments minimal.
4. Utilize small area playing surfaces to increase puck touches, maximize ice usage and increase competition.

Program Guidelines

All programming is guided by the Hockey Alberta Intro to Hockey Model (U7 & U9) that was implemented in 2019-2020. These are guideline with **non-negotiables** listed by Hockey Alberta, for all registered minor hockey associations to follow.

<https://www.hockeyalberta.ca/players/intro-hockey/>



U7

This program is designed for beginners ranging in age from 5-6 years. The emphasis is on enjoyment and skill acquisition. The objectives are to have fun, stimulate interest in hockey and a desire to continue participation, develop basic hockey skills and promote physical fitness.

Format

Duration - 2 times per week starting the 1st week of October and concluding no later than the end of February (approx. 20 weeks).

Age - Introduction to hockey; generally, 5-6 years old as per Hockey Canada, but could be older depending on skill level.

League - No defined league, scoreboard not used and no league standings.

Teams - Team selection completed before December 1st

Ice Usage

Practices

- All players registered in Division to practice (No team practices).
- Individual age appropriate skill based teaching stations and small area game(s).
- Focus on skating, puck-handling, shooting and passing.
- Practice 2 times per week (1 hour ice allocation) until December 1st. After December 1 practice 1 time per week.
- Utilize 4 oz blue pucks where possible.
- On-Ice Coordinator to plan practices and allocate coaching responsibilities accordingly. (On-Ice Coordinator to be approved by the Board of Directors).
- Utilize integrated station approach as outlined in the Hockey Canada Skills Manuals.



Games

- Game play begins December 1st. Practice 1 time per week and 1 game per week.
- Game duration is 1 hour.
- 1/3 ice games using rink dividers. (Blue line to boards, neutral zone may be left open for skill activities.)
- Positions - Goalies and skaters on rotation.
- Buzzers - 3 minute shifts.
- Utilize 4 oz blue pucks and small nets. No goalie equipment only goalie sticks.
- Coaches to act as referees.

Tournaments - Maximum of two tournaments (1 home tournament and 1 away tournament).

Travel - No travel other than to 1 away tournament.

Practice to Game Ratio - Prior to December 1 (2:0) after December 1 (1:1) for an overall ratio of approx. 3:1.

Coaches

- Coach 1 (Intro to Coach) certified, minimum of 1 per 10 players.
- All coaches must have successfully completed "Respect in Sport Coach".
- 1 coach per 10 players to have completed "Safety" certification
- Minimum 2 coaches per team and maximum of 4.

U9

All players will be evaluated in October and placed on teams based on age and skill progression.

Duration - 2-3 times per week starting the 1st week of October and concluding no later than the 2nd week of March.

Age - Introduction to hockey; generally 7-8 years old as per Hockey Canada but could be older depending on skill level.

Teams - 12 players per team maximum. (Team selection completed before November 1st).



Team Selection - Teams to be selected by head coaches (approved by Board of Directors) after each player is ranked based on skill and game play as determined prior to November 1st.

Ice Usage

Practices

- Full ice with 2-3 teams using ice at the same time.
- Individual age appropriate skill based teaching stations and small area game(s).
- Focus on skating, puck-handling, shooting and passing.
- Practice minimum 3 times every two weeks (1 hour ice allocation).
- On-Ice Coordinator to plan practices and supply all head coaches with weekly practice plans to ensure a consistent skill acquisition experience. (On-Ice Coordinator to be approved by the Board of Directors).
- Utilize integrated station approach and full ice skill drills as outlined in the Hockey Canada Skills Manuals.

Games

- Half Ice game play using mobile boards begins December 1st.
- Games will be scheduled by the Director.
- Game and practice duration is minimum 1 hour and maximum 1.5 hours depending on how ice is allocated.
- Positions - All skaters will play on rotation. Goalies and Players are on a per game rotation prior to Jan 1. Teams can designate specific goalies after January 1 for those more interested in the position. Interested goalies are encouraged to and participate in goaltending clinics offered by the Association or as available.
- Full goalie equipment to be used by goaltenders which is supplied by SMHA.

Tournaments - Maximum of three tournaments (1 home tournament and 2 away tournament).

Practice to Game Ratio - 2:1



Coaches

- Coach 1 (Intro to Coach) certified, minimum of 1 per 10 players.
- All coaches must have successfully completed “Respect in Sport Coach”.
- 1 coach per 10 players to have completed “Safety” certification
- Minimum 2 coaches per team and maximum of 4.

Coaches

- Utilize the Hockey Canada Skills Manuals and online resources as a standard base of technical and tactical skill development and seasonal planning and focus on motor coordination skills in players. Develop these skills through age appropriate drills that incorporate agility, balance and change of direction.
- Continue to play players in multiple positions to develop all the skills of the game.

Job Description

Division Director(s) - U7 & U9

Appointed by the Executive Committee, the Division Director shall supervise the instructors, coaches, managers, and business of the U7 and U9 Division(s). Position will represent the Division(s) on the Stettler Minor Hockey Association Board of Directors.

Specific responsibilities and duties:

1. Have a strong understanding and commitment to Hockey Alberta “Intro to Hockey” model. <https://www.hockeyalberta.ca/players/intro-hockey/>
2. Attend all Board of Directors Meetings and represent interests of the Division at the Board of Directors Meetings and report accordingly.
3. Oversee coach selection with Vice-President Development and On Ice Coordinator
4. Coordinate preseason parent meeting to review division program, objective, expectations with on-ice coordinator and establish home tournament hosting responsibilities.
5. Ensure all on ice instructors/coaches have the necessary certification requirements as defined by Hockey Alberta.



6. Ensure that all instructors, coaches and managers adhere to the policies and procedures of SMHA.
7. Provide a list of on-ice instructors, assistant coaches managers to the Registration Director.
8. Provide a list of on ice instructors to the Division On-Ice Coordinator.
9. Make and distribute complete ice schedules, date time and place, for all divisions once ice times have been allocated by the Ice Coordinator. Schedules to include all practices, house league games and exhibition games as per Division policy outline.
10. Coordinate hosting of division tournament and assign duties accordingly.
11. Assist in the player evaluation process and any player movement with the On-Ice Coordinator.
12. Investigate any complaints and bring unresolved complaints to the Executive Committee for direction.
13. Represent interests of the Division at the Board of Directors Meetings.
14. Manage division finances, including bank account and allocate home tournament funds as per policy.
15. Prepare year-end financial report for Division.



Job Description

On-Ice Coordinator - U7 & U9

Approved by the Board of Directors, the Division On-Ice Coordinator will take an active role in developing the Division's seasonal technical plan and its delivery to the participants. Position shall supervise the instructors and coaches of the assigned U7 or U9 Division(s).

Specific responsibilities and duties:

1. Have a strong understanding and commitment to the Hockey Alberta "Intro to Hockey" model. <https://www.hockeyalberta.ca/players/intro-hockey/>
2. Develop and present on-ice programming within the SMHA for the assigned division.
3. Ensure that all on-ice instructors and coaches within the division adhere to the policies and procedures of SMHA.
4. Assist the Division Director in the selection of instructors, head coaches and assistants for the assigned division within the Association
5. Coordinate the evaluation process and any player movement with the Division Director.
6. Create a seasonal plan for Division based on Hockey Canada Skill acquisition outline and individual practice plans for all on-ice sessions based on ice allocated for the Division. Communicate same to all instructor and coaches in the Division.
7. Assist Division Director with preseason parent meeting to review division program, objective, and expectations.

Qualifications

- Have all necessary coach certification requirements met or exceeded.
- Strong interest in and personal commitment to coaching.
- Ability to work with and communicate with others to deliver program objectives.
- Ability to prepare season plans for division and individual practice session plans and communicate such to instructor and coaches of the division.
- Ability to design and implement other programs as may arise from time to time such as skill evaluations, mini-tournaments, etc.
- Ability to evaluate players for team selection.
- Strong commitment to SMHA and Hockey Alberta "Intro to Hockey" model.