

Westlock and District Minor Hockey

Return to Hockey Plan

September 19, 2020

**Introduction**

Westlock and District Minor Hockey Association (WDMHA) is committed to offering hockey this season while complying with Hockey Alberta’s Return to Hockey plan. WDMHA will also work closely with The Town of Westlock and the Spirit Center to ensure we are able to operate throughout the 2020-2021 season. It is our belief that our players and coaches need to get back on the ice.

 Hockey Alberta (HA) first released their Return to Hockey Plan on June 30. While this document was very comprehensive some details still had to be finalized. HA then scheduled to hold virtual Town hall meetings on August 12th. These meetings gave opportunity for associations to ask questions, voice concerns, and be updated on the latest information. WDMHA Board members were able to attend the Town hall meetings to get a sense of what changes were coming. We made the decision to wait until HA Updated Return to Play Document was released to finalize our own Return to Play document. That Document was released on Aug 21st.

 One of the other requirements for our association was to meet with the Spirit Center to understand the requirement they have for our players, coaches, officials and spectators. This meeting took place on Aug 18th.

 With all of the information given to date we have developed our own Return to Hockey Plan. We realize that hockey will not look the same as it was when we took a pause back in March. Our goal is to offer hockey in the safest way possible so we can get back to the way the game was. With this plan and the cooperation of our membership we can make this happen. We are all in this together.

The WDMHA thanks you for your understanding and patience as we work through this season the best way we can.

**Part 1: HOCKEY ALBERTA RETURN TO PLAY PROGRAM SUMMARY:**

Hockey Alberta has worked with Hockey Canada and other provincial branches, Government of Alberta, provincial sport organizations, 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 safe return to hockey in Alberta, to outline required safety protocols and requirements, and to assist our minor hockey associations with tasks they need to be undertaking for hockey to re-start.

Full details of the Updated Hockey Alberta Return to play can be found on Hockey Alberta's website or the link below:

<https://www.hockeyalberta.ca/members/return-hockey/>



When our season starts, we will be entering into the Development Season as outlined in HA Updated Return to Play Document:



Our choice as an association is to operate within the Cohort model. Utilizing each division as a cohort. Our current registration Numbers support this pathway. We believe this is the best way to develop overall skill within each division and allow for competitive inter squad games. For example with current registration numbers WDMHA would have a U18 cohort of 28 players, U15 Cohort of 33 players, U13 cohort of 29 players, U11 cohort of 23 players, U9 cohort of 23 players and U7 cohort of 19 players.

**Key Points During the Development Season:**

Hockey Alberta regulations for Return to Play have instructed associations to play within their MHA

boundaries.

***It is our view that members are to belong to only one (1) sports cohort. As per AHS guidelines “Individuals should limit the number of Cohorts to which they belong.” Cohorts can have a maximum of 50 participants. This includes coaches, managers, and other support. Anyone who cannot maintain social distance while in contact with the sports cohort.***

Hockey Canada has a new Coaching Module that will be required for all coaches. It will be launched next

week and is free for all to take. It is focused on Return to Play during COVID-19. Parents are encouraged to take this module as well.

***Masks are not required to be worn by coaches and players who belong to their primary Cohort while entering the Spirit Center. Masks are not required while in the dressing room or on the ice surface. Coaches who are helping with a secondary Cohort must always wear a mask.***

All members are to follow local arena regulations which can be found later in this document.

Coaches will be responsible for being cohort leaders. If the arena does not allow parents into the

dressing rooms, coaches may be required to tie skates for the younger players.

Associations must screen and track all participants and interactions, maintaining records in a secure location for a minimum of 14 days from completion of activity. This is to be done as part of a daily check-in procedure for participants before any activity. WDMHA will be looking at using an online tracing application through Team Snap.

Note: There will not be any on ice officials during the development season

The next step would then be to enter into the Modified Competitive Season. At this Point our third Party evaluators would conduct Tryouts to form our teams to then be eligible to join a pod within our region.



**Part 2: NORTHERN ALBERTA INTERLOCK RETURN TO PLAY PROGRAM DETAILS**

***As of Sept 12, 2020 NAI has updated their plans for the season. Nov 16 is the date tentatively picked to start modified season. They are also planning for Pod Play after Dec 1.***

***League Play within the NAI will not commence until HA Regular Season Component starts.***

***Please check the NAI Website for up to date details: http://nainterlock.msa4.rampinteractive.com/***

**Part 3: WESTLOCK MINOR HOCKEY RETURN TO HOCKEY PLAN**

WDMHA will be working with AHS, Hockey Alberta, NAI, and the Spirit Center to ensure a safe environment for our kids to return to playing hockey.

The health and safety of the players is our primary concern, and our focus is to ensure all players and their families have a positive experience in the 2020-2021 Season.

We are in a constantly changing environment and as new rules and regulations are updated by our governing authorities, we will continue to evolve our plan as we enter different stages as outlined by NAI, Alberta Health Services and Hockey Alberta. This plan is subject to change based on orders from the Chief Medical Officer, the Province of Alberta, the Town of Westlock, Hockey Alberta and NAI.

Our association’s goal is to reach a point where it is safe to resume league play within the NAI when the regular season resumes. Until then we are limited to staying within our MHA Boundary.

During the development phase we will be utilizing the Cohort option for each division. These cohorts will be managed as per the guidelines presented in this document, which follow the guidelines put forth by AHS and Hockey Alberta. Our current registration numbers allow us to maintain one Cohort per division. This number includes both players and coaches.

The Development phase is a great opportunity to develop skill and have competition within each division, with inter squad games. The use of our PEP Equipment will be beneficial during this time.

We are also working with Hockey Alberta personnel on a player development/practice plan.

We are currently looking at potentially longer ice times for practicing and inter squad games. We will be updating the practice format to be announced at a later date.

Once we enter the Modified Competition Season, we will then conduct third party tryouts and form our teams for the remainder of the season.

There will not be any officials utilized during the Development Phase. Coaches will fill this role during the inter squad games.

Parent and Player requirements- Labeled prefilled water bottles, come dressed as much as possible, for more info see: [Roles and Responsibilities – Appendix 5 HA](https://www.hockeyalberta.ca/uploads/source/Return_To_Hockey/Appendix_5-Roles_and_Responsibilities.pdf)

Coaches Clinics as they become available will still be held with social distancing.

Team Snap Health Screen function within app. Players are required to do questionnaire before every session.

**Travel**

There will be no travel during Phase 2. All practices and games will be held at the Spirit Center until we transition to playing games outside our MHA Boundary. No travel permits or tournament sanctions will be approved during this development phase.

**Tournaments**

WDMHA will follow all guidelines from Hockey Alberta. Currently, this means that tournaments will not be allowed until at least January 2021.

**Part 4: Town of Westlock Spirit Center Guidelines as of September 8, 2020**

No spectators are permitted to watch practices or Inter Squad Games

Players and coaches can only arrive 15 minutes before practice and head straight to the dressing room. Players should come partly dressed to ensure they can finish dressing within 15 minutes.

Players and Coaches are required to leave the Spirit Center within 15 minutes after practice.

South dressing room players will enter and exit the Spirit center using the South entrance. Players using the North Dressing rooms will use the Main entrance.

No Dryland activities will be permitted.

Coaches or managers within the Cohort will be able to assist players (i.e. tie skates)

**[Spirit Center website](http://www.westlock.ca/p/westlock-rotary-spirit-centre)**

**Part 5: HA Season Timeline**

<https://www.hockeyalberta.ca/uploads/source/Return_To_Hockey/Appendix%2014-RTH%20Timelines.pdf>

**Part 6: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

*Q. When will the season start?*

A. See Hockey Alberta timeline [HA TIMELINE](https://www.hockeyalberta.ca/uploads/source/Return_To_Hockey/Appendix%2014-RTH%20Timelines.pdf)

Please keep an eye on website and Facebook for updated WDMHA ice session start dates

*Q. When will players be evaluated?*

A. Players will be evaluated in the same manner as past years once the Modified Competition Season starts.

*Q. How will cohort teams be formed?*

A. Cohorts will be formed based on each age division. For example with current registration numbers WDMHA would have a U18 cohort of 28 players, U15 Cohort of 33 players, U13 cohort of 29 players, U11 cohort of 23 players, U9 cohort of 23 players and U7 cohort of 19 players.

 *Q. If a player no longer wants to participate, can I get a refund on my registration?*

A. If you are withdrawing your registration **due to the new Return to Play model** (COVID restrictions), you will need to **apply in writing to the** **registrar** Jessie Snow (westlockmharegistrar@gmail.com) by **September 13** – midnight in order to receive a full refund. If you withdraw, you cannot rejoin at a later date.

Q. Can I register mid-season after the cohort phase is over?

A. We will not be accepting registrations after the start of the cohort season, unless due to special circumstances.

*Q. What happens if someone in my cohort is sick or tests positive for COVID 19?*

A. Hockey Canada has established a protocol for addressing illness. Anyone present who is feeling unwell will be required to leave the facility immediately upon detection/reporting. Each player will also be required to submit a questionnaire before each ice session. For more information, visit the Hockey Canada return to hockey document.

*Q. Can I leave my sport cohort and join a new one?*

A. Movement among sport cohorts requires a 14-day period before joining a new sport cohort.

*Q. Can I belong to more than one sports cohort?*

A. Players, coaches, and officials must belong to only one sport cohort. A sport cohort is defined as a small group of the same people who can interact regularly without staying 2 meters apart. In choosing to coach/play within your hockey cohort, you are not able to join any other sport/performance cohorts while in phase two of Alberta’s relaunch plan.

 *Q. Can I participate in a pre-season camp and join a cohort before the 2-week period lapses?*

A. If you participated in a camp that maintained physical distancing, you do not need to wait 2 weeks before joining a cohort. If you participated in a cohort-camp whereby physical distancing was not maintained, you must wait two weeks before joining a cohort

*Q. Will my cohort operate as a team?*

A. Cohorts are intended to act as a temporary grouping until AHS restrictions are loosened; at which time, we plan to form traditional teams.

*Q. Do I have to wear a mask?*

A. As per Alberta Health regulations, masks should not be worn during intense physical activity. ***Players and coaches are not required to wear masks while they are with their Primary Cohort. Coaches who wish to help with a secondary Cohort must always wear a mask .***

Q. *Can I go into the dressing room with my child?*

A. Unless you are ***part of the Sports Cohort***, you will not be permitted to enter the dressing room. During this phase, players are encouraged to dress at home as much as required to meet the 15 minutes timeline to get onto the ice. Specific guidelines outlined by the spirit Center need to be adhered to.

**Important links:**

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| Hockey Alberta Return to Hockey Plan: <https://www.hockeyalberta.ca/uploads/source/Return_To_Hockey/Return_to_Hockey_Plan_-_UPDATE_-_Aug21.pdf> |
| Return to Hockey Frequently Asked questions:<https://www.hockeyalberta.ca/uploads/source/Return_To_Hockey/Appendix%206-Member%20FAQ.pdf>Return to Hockey Timelines: |  |
| <https://www.hockeyalberta.ca/uploads/source/Return_To_Hockey/Appendix%2014-RTH%20Timelines.pdf> |  |
| Roles and Responsibilities:<https://www.hockeyalberta.ca/uploads/source/Return_To_Hockey/Appendix_5-Roles_and_Responsibilities.pdf> |  |

**Questions – contact a member of the board**