6.16.2 U9 Player Pathway Policy

Effective Date: December 10, 2019
Rev June 2022
Rev January 2023
Rev December 2023
Rev June 2024
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1.0 General

1.1 U9 hockey is a two-year program.
1.2 No players registered at the U7 level to may affiliate to any higher age classification during the current season.
1.3 U9-aged players are NOT permitted to register with any higher age classification during the current season.
1.4 U9 players are only permitted to play a half-ice, four-on-four format for any game.
1.5 After December 26, U9 teams will be permitted to play up to nine (9) full ice ice games (league and exhibition) as part of the transition phase (see 3.4 for more information)
1.6 Affiliation is permitted between tiers of the U9 level as per Hockey Canada Regulations.
1.7 U9 players are NOT permitted to affiliate to higher age teams except for second- year players (i.e., 8-year-old player) who may affiliate to higher age teams after December 26 of the current season.
1.8 Second year U9 Players (i.e., 8-year-old) goaltenders are permitted to affiliate up to U11 (U10 for competitive) at all points of the season, providing that they are playing goalie only with the affiliated team.

2.0 Team Structure

2.1 Teams on a full sheet
2.1.1 2 teams: 1 game with 2 teams and a practice; or two games (split-squads).
2.1.2 3 teams: 1 game with 2 teams and a practice with 1 team.
2.1.3 4 teams: 1 game with 2 teams and a practice with 2 teams; OR two games.

	Rules (Must Do)	Options (Can Do)
Two Teams: 1 Game, 1 Practice	Tier 1: 18 on roster; 16 skaters, 2 goaltenders. Tiers 2-4: 9-13 on roster, rotate goalies. 1 official per game.	Tier 1: Assign or rotate goalies.

Two Teams: 2 Games (Split Squads)	Tier 1: 18 on roster; 16 skaters, 2 goaltenders Tiers 2-4: 17 on roster. 1 official per game.	Tier 1: Assign or rotate goalies. Tiers 2-4: Vary roster size.
Three Teams: 1 Game, 1 Practice	Tier 1: 18 on roster; 16 skaters, 2 goaltenders. Tiers 2-4: 9-13 on roster, rotate goalies. 1 official per game.	Tier 1: Assign or rotate goalies. Tiers 2-4: Vary roster size.
Four Teams: 1 Game, 1 Practice	Tier 1: 18 on roster; 16 skaters, 2 goaltenders. Tiers 2-4: 9-13 on roster, rotate goalies. 1 official per game.	Tier 1: Assign or rotate goalies. Tiers 2-4: Vary roster size.
Four Teams: 2 Games	Tier 1: 18 on roster; 16 skaters, 2 goaltenders. Tiers 2-4: 9-13 on roster, rotate goalies. 1 official per game.	Tier 1: Assign or rotate goalies. Tiers 2-4: Vary roster size.

2.2 Tiering

2.2.1 Tier 1 plays inter-District. Games are managed by the AA League. Roster size is 16 skaters plus two goalies (assigned or rotational).

Districts may declare more than 1 Tier 1 team.

Minor Hockey Associations may not declare Tier 1 teams.

2.2.2 Tiers 2-4 play within the District or within Inter-District House Leagues. Games are managed by the Leagues within Districts. Roster size is recommended at 13 players (three sets of four skaters) plus a goaltender (rotational, not assigned). Minimum recommended roster size is nine; maximum is 13. Exceptions must be approved by the District Chair.

Proposed Tier	Age Group	Ice Utilization	Play
Tier 1	7/8	Half	Inter-District
Tier 2	7/8	Half	Intra-District or Inter-District House Leagues
Tier 3	7/8	Half	Intra-District or Inter-District House Leagues
Tier 4	7/8	Half	Intra-District or Inter-District House Leagues

2.3 Roster Sizes

2.3.1 Tier 1: 16 skaters plus two goalies for a total of 18.

2.3.2 Tiers 2-4: 13 players to allow for 3 sets of 4 skaters plus a goaltender. Minimum roster size is 9, maximum roster size is 13; exceptions allowed based on local conditions and approved by the District Chair.

2.4 Goaltenders

2.4.1 Tier 1: Assigned or rotational goaltenders

2.4.2 Tiers 2-4: Recommended no full-time goaltenders. All players rotate in development/regular season phase 1 (September-December). There can be limited full time goaltenders – limited rotation in regular season phase 2 (Januar-April).

2.5 Team Formation (Tiers 2-4)

2.5.1 Each Association operating Intra-District House Leagues or participating in an Inter-District House League within HEO Minor shall be assessed the following team ratings:

2.5.1.1 Leagues operating at only one skill level shall be given an overall rating of 'Tier 3'. Each team in that Association shall be considered a 'Tier 3' team for the purpose of competition in tournaments or exhibition games outside of their District.

2.5.1.2 Leagues operating at more than one skill level may follow a 20-60- 20 split when dividing their teams into Tiers 2, 3 and 4. Leagues with participation of more than one Association may direct each Association to use this chart to submit teams for league play. These Tier levels will be considered for the purpose of competition in tournaments or exhibition games outside of their District.

2.5.1.3 Where some Leagues can only support Tier 2 and 3 teams, the upper levels can be increased up to a 40-60 split. The Tier 3 level is maintained at a minimum of 60 % level

3.0 Season Structure (Revised as per HC U9 Player Pathway)

3.1 Player Evaluation Phase

3.1.1 No evaluation / selection / tryouts or dry land training prior to the Tuesday following Labour Day, including any point during the previous season, or the off season prior to Labour Day.

3.1.2 Players must have a minimum of 4 conditioning sessions, i.e. practice/skills/game sessions prior to evaluation/selection/tryouts.

3.1.3 Players must have a minimum of 3 evaluation/selection/tryout sessions with a recommended breakdown of 1 skills session, 1 small area games session and one-half ice game.

3.2 Development Phase:

3.2.1 Must be a period of development time following team selection and prior to the start of the regular season.

3.3 Development and Regular Season Phase:

3.3.1 In the regular season, teams shall play a maximum of 46 games (including exhibition, league, and tournament/jamboree.

3.3.2 League play shall consist of no more than 22 regular season games (not including a recommended year-end league jamboree)

3.3.3 Of the 22 allowable regular season games, a minimum of thirteen (13) must be completed before December 26. (Note section 3.4 Transition Phase).

3.3.4 Teams may participate in a maximum of four (4) tournament/jamboree events (not including a recommended year-end league jamboree)

3.3.5 Recreational teams shall have a minimum 1:1 ratio of practices to games during the regular season.

3.3.6 Competitive teams shall have a minimum 2:1 ratio of practices to games during the regular season.

3.4 Transition Phase

3.4.1 The transition phase will provide a transition to full ice hockey.

3.4.2 This phase may commence no earlier than December 26 and may go until the end of the season.

3.4.3 Teams will be permitted to play up to nine (9) full-ice games in this phase (league and exhibition).

3.4.4 Teams will be permitted to attend two (2) full-ice tournament during this period. This will count towards the four (4) total tournaments/jamborees allowed throughout the season.

3.4.5 Teams will not be permitted full-ice exhibition games before December 26.

3.4.6 Transition phase is for both 1st and 2nd year U9 players (i.e. 7 and 8 year old players)

3.4.7 The transition phase is optional. Districts/MHA's can choose to play the entire season half ice four on four.

U9	Recreational	Competitive
Practices (Practice to Reg Games)	1:1 Ratio	2:1 Ratio
Regular Season Games	22	22
Exhibition Games	4	4
Tournaments Games	12	12
Playoffs Games	8	8
Total Games	46	46

Note: All full ice games will be played using the Hockey Canada Playing rules and must be officiated per HEO regulations. Travel permits are required for all exhibition games and tournaments signed by the District Chair.

3.5 Off-Season Phase:

3.5.1 Recommend limited skills-based on-ice training, making more time for multisport activity

3.6 MHAs may wish to rebalance Tier 2-4 teams at the beginning of the Development and Regular Season Phase.

3.7 MHAs may wish to re-open registration between phases one and two to capture players coming from Young Sens or First Shift programs, or late interest players.

3.8 Year-end tournament or jamboree recommended.

3.9 There are no playoffs for U9.

4.0 General Playing Rules (Half Ice Four-on-Four)

The rules for half-ice U9 game play focus on player development by maximizing opportunities to touch the puck, interact with other players, and make plays.

4.1 4 vs 4 player format and one goaltender for each team.

4.2 Each team must have two goaltenders, one for each half of the ice.

4.3 Three-minute warm-up.

4.4 Rink set-up: one set of barriers or two sets of barriers with a space in between for spare players.

4.5 Game length – 50 minutes in total (46 minutes post warm-up). This may vary if Associations schedule multiple blocks of ice time.

4.6 Two 23-minute halves.

4.7 Shift length – 90 seconds in duration with an automatic buzzer or whistle sounding to indicate player change. The clock continues to run through the 23-minute half.

4.8 Both games synchronized, and officials work together to ensure that happens.

4.9 Players change on the fly at the buzzer or whistle.

4.10 If there are fewer than four players on the bench, the active player designated to stay out for the following shift must tag up at the bench prior to continuing play.

4.11 Two face-offs during the game.

4.11.1 The first face-off will start the game.

4.11.2 The second face-off will start the second half.

4.11.3 There is no requirement that teams change ends.

5.0 Shifts (Half Ice Four-on-Four)

5.1 Player shifts are 90 seconds in length. A buzzer or whistle sounds to signal line changes.

5.2 On the buzzer/whistle sounds, players must relinquish control of the puck immediately and vacate the ice. The new players enter the ice immediately.

5.3 Failure to immediately relinquish control of the puck or new players entering the ice surface prematurely may result in a penalty for the offending team.

6.0 Change of Possession (Half Ice Four-on-Four)

6.1 Goaltender freezes the puck – the official blows the whistle to indicate the attacking team backs off and defending team gets possession.

6.2 Puck shot out of play – the offending team backs off and the official gives the non-offending team a new puck.

7.0 Officiating (Half Ice Four-on-Four)

7.1 One official per game. Coaches/Trainers must remain on the bench.

8.0 Penalties (Half Ice Four-on-Four)

8.1 Minor penalties are noted with the official briefly raising their arm to indicate a penalty will be assessed. The referee will blow their whistle and immediately escort the player to the player's bench. The official notifies the coach of the infraction and the number of the offending player.

8.2 If the offending team controls the puck after the infraction, the official blows the whistle and calls for a change of possession; the non-offending team is given room to play the puck (three-metre cushion).

8.3 The offending player will sit out the balance of the current shift and the next shift, but the team will play even strength.

8.4 Should an infraction occur, that would normally require a player to be ejected from the game (game misconduct, gross misconduct, or match penalty), the player will be removed from the remainder of that game. Even under these circumstances, teams will not play shorthanded.

8.5 For major penalties assessed to players and bench staff, the HEO Minor Code of Discipline will apply.

9.0 Scoring

9.1 Game scores will not be recorded. Game sheets shall be used to capture major penalties to players or bench staff in-game.

9.2 During the Transition Phase (note section 3.4), game scores for exhibition and league play will not be recorded. Game sheets shall be used to capture penalties to players and bench staff in-game.

10.0 Out-of-Branch Sanctioned Events (Jamborees, Tournaments etc.)

10.1 Teams will only be permitted to participate in sanctioned out-of-Branch events (requiring travel permits) only if the playing rules for all games for the event are half-ice, four-on-four format.

10.2 Teams may participate in one (1) full ice out-of-Branch tournament after December 26 (note section 3.4 Transition Phase)