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USA Hockey Guidelines Regarding Non-Sanctioned Play

USA Hockey and its Affiliates are charged with establishing rules and policies for the organization, coordination and betterment of hockey, including developing players, coaches and officials, and managing and minimizing risks associated with the sport. Examples of recent rules and policies include the American Development Model (ADM), Red, White and Blue Hockey (cross-ice) for players 8 and under, and processes and procedures for expansion of junior hockey programs. USA Hockey strongly believes in these programs as evidenced by the overwhelming support they have received across the country, the continuing growth in membership, and the advances that have resulted and are expected to result in the development of hockey players in our country.

USA Hockey has had inquiries recently regarding the rights and obligations of USA Hockey, its various Affiliates and local programs with respect to ice hockey that is not sanctioned by USA Hockey. To provide guidance to Affiliates and local programs, USA Hockey, as the National Governing Body for ice hockey in the United States, provides the guidelines below acting pursuant to USA Hockey's authority under the Amateur Sports Act (36 U.S.C. § 220501 et. seq.).

- For a game to be sanctioned by USA Hockey, all players, coaches and officials in the game ("Individual Participants") must be members of USA Hockey and the USA Hockey Affiliate with jurisdiction over their respective geographic area(s). Participating teams must also be members of the applicable USA Hockey Affiliate.
- There have been occasional exceptions to the above-stated membership requirement where in certain limited, special circumstances, USA Hockey or the applicable USA Hockey District Registrar may provide a special event sanction for an event where not all participants are members of USA Hockey ("Special Events"). These Special Events are occasional and have generally been limited to exhibition games between USA Hockey teams and High School Federation or NCAA teams, Try Hockey For Free programs, and alumni and charity games. The limited nature of these exemptions is due to USA Hockey insurance and risk management concerns.
- Any Individual Participant may become a member of USA Hockey. Membership in or registration with another sanctioning body may not be used as a basis to deny membership in USA Hockey, its Affiliates or local programs. Correspondingly, no Individual Participant may be penalized for participating in a program that is not sanctioned by USA Hockey. Any Individual Participant may be disqualified from membership for violation of USA Hockey Bylaws, Rules & Regulations or Policies in accordance with USA Hockey's Dispute Resolution Procedures.
- Affiliates may establish reasonable rules for compliance by such Affiliate's member organizations and/or teams seeking membership in or who are already members of the Affiliate, provided that such rules do not conflict with the Bylaws, Rules & Regulations, Policies or directives of USA Hockey.





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- If a team desires to play in a USA Hockey sanctioned game, tournament or event, then, unless it is sanctioned as a Special Event, the team and its Individual Participants must be registered with USA Hockey and the applicable Affiliate. Such registration implies and constitutes the registrant's agreement that the team and all of its Individual Participants will be subject to the Bylaws, Rules & Regulations, Policies and Playing Rules of USA Hockey and the reasonable requirements of membership for the applicable Affiliate.
- Once an organization, team, or Individual Participant becomes a member of USA Hockey and the applicable Affiliate, that Affiliate may require that the member organization, team, and all Individual Participants continue to comply with the reasonable requirements for membership in the Affiliate. This may include, for example, such rules as coaching certifications, screenings, equipment requirements, safety mandates, and other rules, including the ADM and Red, White and Blue Hockey, if the Affiliate has in fact mandated such rules.
- An Affiliate may enforce a rule that prohibits its member teams from participating in games or practices that are not sanctioned by USA Hockey. Unless sanctioned as a Special Event, USA Hockey's insurance policies are not available to cover local programs, teams and Individual Participants when participating in a game or practice among or between teams sanctioned by an Affiliate and a non-sanctioned team. A parent of a youth hockey player that has registered with USA Hockey with the expectation of receiving the benefits of such membership, should not be placed in a situation where they may be surprised to learn after their child is injured that the injury occurred during a non-sanctioned event.
- An Affiliate may also enforce a rule that its member organizations must register all of their teams and players with USA Hockey and the Affiliate. If an Affiliate has such a rule, a member organization within that Affiliate cannot register some of its teams with the Affiliate while other teams in that organization are not registered with the Affiliate. Important reasons for such a rule are so that neither USA Hockey nor its Affiliates become liable for activities conducted by a member organization that is also conducting non-sanctioned events, and to prevent the occurrence of situations where USA Hockey's insurance could potentially be asserted to apply in a non-sanctioned event.
- Despite the foregoing, if an Affiliate's member organization or team desires to play in events or games that are not sanctioned by USA Hockey, they may seek a Special Event sanction for such game or event, or they may also do so provided that certain other requirements are met. Teams playing in a non-USA Hockey sanctioned event or game must be part of a separate organization (for example, a separately incorporated corporation) that is sufficiently distinct from the USA Hockey sanctioned program. The non-sanctioned organization or team(s) should also have a separate board of directors, the team cannot wear the same uniforms or have the same team names, and all rink or vendor contracts relating to the non-sanctioned team(s) or activities must be in the name of the separate organization rather than the USA Hockey member organization or team. Distinguishing teams participating in non-sanctioned events or programs from teams that are members of USA Hockey will help avoid making USA Hockey, its Affiliates or member organizations liable for activities conducted in connection with non-sanctioned play, prevent the occurrence of situations where USA Hockey's insurance could potentially be





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asserted to apply in a non-sanctioned event, and will also help make Individual Participants (and their parents or guardians) aware of which games or events are under USA Hockey rules and oversight and are covered by USA Hockey insurance and other benefits.

- USA Hockey Rules & Regulations, Section IV., provide as follows:

Any youth player (male or female) rostered on a Tier I or Tier II youth or girls'/women's team and a Junior Program team as of December 31, can only play for one team after December 31. If the player plays in a Junior game after December 31, he/she loses all eligibility on his/her youth team for the remainder of the season, regardless of how many games are played at the Junior level.

This rule should be applied to any games played at the Junior level with any organization. The purpose of this rule is that players playing on youth teams during the latter half of the playing season should not also be playing Junior hockey. Further, not having Junior players participating in Youth national tournaments protects the integrity of the USA Hockey National Championships. By applying the rule regardless of the sanctioning body that governs the applicable Junior team, all Junior teams are treated equally.

- Affiliates and officials' organizations may establish and use reasonable criteria, rules and procedures for selection and scheduling of officials for games within their jurisdiction. There are numerous valid reasons why an Affiliate, officials' organization or scheduler may select one official over another for a particular game, league or level of play. However, no USA Hockey official may be penalized, threatened, excluded or made ineligible for officiating USA Hockey games based on that official being certified by or officiating games that are not sanctioned by USA Hockey or are sanctioned by some other entity. Many USA Hockey officials work games not under USA Hockey's authority (e.g., NCAA, Canadian Hockey League, East Coast Hockey League, High School Federation, etc.). To be sure, an official will not receive the benefits of USA Hockey, including insurance coverage, supervision, disciplinary processes and enforcement, etc., while officiating a game not sanctioned by USA Hockey, and that official is not permitted to wear a USA Hockey crest/patch on their jersey during a game not sanctioned by USA Hockey. To reiterate, no Affiliate may, and no Affiliate shall permit an official's organization or scheduler under its control to, punish, threaten, blackball or make any official ineligible for USA Hockey games, based on the official becoming certified by another entity or officiating games that are not sanctioned by USA Hockey. Most hockey programs and officials associations endeavor to consider their officials to be independent contractors; to place restrictions on officials from officiating non-sanctioned games may place that independent contractor status at risk, and subject the hockey program or officials association to other liabilities.
- USA Hockey may amend or supplement these guidelines.
- For questions related to these guidelines or other rule scenarios, please contact Casey Jorgensen at USA Hockey at 719-538-1143 or cjorgensen@usahockey.org.

