



From the desk of
Tom Berry:

Youth Tier I
SPRING 2026
2026-27 Regular Season

To: Head Coaches, Association Presidents, MAHA Representatives

I wanted to take a few minutes to remind everyone of the MAHA and USA Hockey tryout rules and also emphasize that the rules for the MAHA Spring 2026 Season are the same as for the MAHA 2026-2027 Regular Season including those for rostering.

TRYOUTS

The MAHA has very specific rules on when tryouts can begin for Post Season (Spring 2026) and Regular Season (2026-27 fall/winter) play. Publicly in print, make it clear that the tryouts you are hosting are for the Spring 2026 Season team. These dates are shown on the MAHA website: <https://www.maha.org/2026tryouts>

The District Chairpersons have already received complaints of tampering and tryout violations. From the MAHA Vice-President of Youth Hockey: *"The basic rule of thumb is to be fair to opponents and respectful to players who may not be on your team next season. The wording from MAHA reads: No team may recruit or solicit players, offer contracts, hold tryouts, conditioning skates, or any activity that could be construed as a tryout/solicitation or recruitment or player evaluation until specific dates... Some options for coaches interested in recruiting would be to attend player's games, review LiveBarn video, or watch a practice. Everyone is allowed to have a wish list; you just have to wait to act. This rule applies to all team ice and activities."*

The MAHA Vice-President of Youth did clarify that you are not allowed to have anyone from outside your Association/Club on your current season (2025-2026) ice (or any ice for that matter with you or your staff present on the ice), even with the other coaches written permission.

Attachment 1 is a summary of the MAHA rules on tryouts/tampering.

This is the current language from USA Hockey:

"Tryout" means any process on or off-ice that evaluates a player or group of players for the purpose of choosing players for a program or team. A Tryout also includes any team practices, off ice training sessions, open skates, skills sessions, or identification skates which include a player that is not on a regular season USA Hockey Roster with that association's teams or program. USA Hockey programs, coaches and administrators are not permitted to operate a program outside of USA Hockey as a means of avoiding the prohibitions on tryouts or recruiting. While USA Hockey does not restrict a coach's private business, if a coach runs a private camp, meeting, event, skate or skills clinic outside of USA Hockey for one or more players, then the coach and/or team/program should be investigated as Code of Conduct/tampering and the player should face disciplinary action.

A player's obligation to his/her regular season team ends on April 30 of the current season or when his/her regular season team becomes inactive prior to that date. A team becomes inactive when their ice contract ends. An "interest" skate is considered a tryout. An "open skate" is considered a tryout.

Players on your current roster should not be skating with any other non Association/Club team, no exceptions.

The USA Hockey Coaching Ethics Code provides:

"Coaches will not recruit a participant who is already a member of another USA Hockey team. Direct contact by a coach or his/her staff or indirect contact through an agent or parent during the playing season with a participant who is a member of another USA Hockey team is considered tampering and is prohibited."

POSTING OF TRYOUT DATES

The MAHA has posted dates on when tryouts can begin. Here is the link for when your tryouts can begin.

<https://www.maha.org/2026tryouts>

Please note the distinction between Spring 2026 (Spring Tryouts) and the 2026-2027 Season (Fall Tryouts). In many cases the dates are different.

The MAHA recommends that tryout dates be posted on the Association/Club website. You may post elsewhere, but at a minimum, postings should be on the Association/Club website. Postings should include: National/Non-National bound, Age Classification, Tier, Youth/Girls', Date, Time, Location, Cost. MAHA has also added a Tryout

Locator to their website: <https://www.maha.org/2026tryouts> You are encouraged to post your tryouts on the MAHA site in addition to your Association/Club website.

ELECTRONIC SIGNUP

Associations/Clubs are encouraged to have some sort of electronic sign up.

USA Hockey membership numbers should be a required field in the electronic signup. This protects both the player and the Association/Club.

OUT OF STATE PLAYERS YOUTH TIER I REVISED FOR 2026-2027

10U Tier I – Zero (0)	11U Tier I – Zero (0)	12U Tier I – One (1)
13U Tier II – Four (4)	14U Tier I – Four (4)	150 Tier I – Six (6)
160 Tier I – Six (6)	18U Tier I – minimum 51% affiliate residency	

At 160 and 18U, you must have 51% or more of your roster from Michigan per USA Hockey rules.

Players that hold USA citizenship or Native American Status living in Canada are considered out-of-state players. If a player is not a USA Citizen then they must reside in the USA and hold the proper visa type to play youth hockey.

Tier 1 organizations are restricted to only two players per team that are non-US citizens.

12 YEAR OLD PLAYERS

No player 12 years of age or younger (as defined in the age classification chart for the 2026-2027 Season is eligible to play on a team to compete in the District or National Championships or playoffs leading thereto.

YOUTH TIER 1 PLAYER MOVEMENT RESTRICTION

ALL AGE CLASSIFICATIONS

MAHA rule applying to all Tier I teams: “For the 2026-27 Regular Season, once a player is approved on a MAHA Tier I roster, said player may not roster with another MAHA Tier I team for the 2026-27 Regular Season. Players wishing to leave said team may move to a Tier II program only. These players would fall under the financial policies in the MAHA Affiliate Agreement for MAHA Tier I players. In the case of a team-initiated player release, said player may roster with another MAHA Tier I or Tier II team and the financial policies in the MAHA Affiliate Agreement for non-Tier I players apply. There are no exceptions and no appeals.”

As a reminder, in the 2026-27 Regular Season, once a player contract is signed the player is bound to the team and the team is bound to the player. There is no such thing as a “skill based cut”. In a situation where a player is perceived not to be at the appropriate skill level required by the Club/Association, the Club/Association should work with the player and player’s family to identify this concern and work out a plan that accommodates the player and the team which might include the relocation of the player to a different team which would then be considered a “mutual agreement”. Associations/Clubs can contact the MAHA Vice President for Youth for guidance.

NATIONAL BOUND YOUTH CLASSIFICATIONS

USA Hockey rule applying to all National bound Tier I teams: refer to the *USA Hockey 2025-26 Annual Guide*, pages 164 - 172

III. Team and Member Registration
 B. Tryout/Player Selection

Prior to the completion of the National Championships, coaches are allowed to talk to players from other teams (talk only); the rules pertaining to “tryouts” are in full effect.

The penalties for non compliance are severe for the coaches, players and associations [who will be guilty automatically by affiliation].

You will be able to initiate the agreements beginning 48 hours after the 2026 National Championships.

MULTIPLE SPRING TEAMS, YOUTH TIER 1 ONLY

Youth Tier 1 organizations will only be allowed to have one (1) Tier 1 (AAA) team in each age classification. For the 18U/160/150 Tier 1 teams, it is possible to roster a second team under the high school classification if desired.

HOW MANY PLAYERS CAN BE ROSTERED

64th MAHA Annual Guide

II. Registration and Rostering: Participants and Teams

O.

4. Spring/Summer type teams formed to play between the end of the last USA Hockey Youth/Girls National Championship and August 31, have a limit of twenty-five (25) players on a roster and may dress twenty (20) players per game.

For the 2026-27 Regular Season, Youth and Girls' Tier I teams at the 18U, 16U and 150 youth classifications and 19U Girls' classification may roster and dress 22 players, of which not more than 20 shall be skaters.

MAHA RULES REGARDING COACH/MANAGER MOVEMENT

64th MAHA Annual Guide, page 32

IV. Youth Age & Division Classifications;

A. Tier I Category and AAA Division Teams

8. Limiting Coach Movement Among Tier 1 Teams

Definition: Team personnel are defined as and include Coaches, Managers, Advisers, "Influencers" or any other administrative personnel who have participated in the routine operation of the team or organization in the previous (IE: For the 2025-26 season that would mean the 2024 - 25 regular season and the Spring 2024 season) or current regular season.

- a. No more than one (1) Team personnel from a MAHA Tier 1 organization may move to a different MAHA Tier I organization in a team capacity at an age category that includes players from the team in which they participated in the previous season. Under this rule, said personnel may move organizations with only their own child(ren).
- b. Any inquiries received by a MAHA Tier I organization, from personnel currently serving under a different MAHA Tier I organization, for the purposes of seeking future opportunities with the organization contacted should be immediately reported to the Tier I Director of the inquirer's MAHA Tier I organization. Conversations should be documented between both Tier I Directors, and no resolutions agreed upon by the Directors may violate the movement criteria.
- c. In an instance where the above movement criteria may have been violated, The State Playoff Committee shall investigate and may choose to hold an administrative action process under USA Hockey Bylaw 10.
 1. Any parties found responsible for violation of the movement criteria as determined by the State Playoff Committee, shall be suspended, at minimum, for the remainder of the season.
- d. Any exceptions to this rule need to be submitted and forwarded with recommendations by the Tier 1 Committee and approved by the State Playoff Committee.

TAMPERING RULES

64th MAHA Annual Guide

VII. COACHING REQUIREMENTS

REVISED FOR 2026-2027

11. No coach, manager, or other team official, connected with a rostered team may directly or indirectly entice, influence or contact a player on a rostered team. Violation of this rule will result in a recommended suspension of not less than one year.

64th MAHA Annual Guide

XIV. SPRING/SUMMER LEAGUES

3. A player's obligation to his/her regular season team ends on April 30th of the current season, or when his/her regular season team becomes inactive prior to that date.
4. A player who is a member of an active regular season team may register and play in spring/summer leagues and conditioning programs if he/she has the written permission of his/her regular season team coach or manager.
5. A player's obligation to his/her spring/summer league or conditioning program ends with the completion of the league or conditioning programs schedule, or when he/she is released in writing prior to that date.

You are not allowed to talk to players/families prior to your first MAHA approved tryout date; except for those Tier 1 National bound teams.

ROSTERING

All teams will be required to be rostered for Spring whether they play games or not.

Rostering rules should follow the 2026-2027 Regular Season.

If you have coaches that will be moving up an age classification this Spring (example: 8U to 10U), the coaches will need to complete the age based modules in order to be on the roster. They can begin now meeting this requirement.

If you have new coaches, those coaches will need to register with USA Hockey as a coach, complete the USA Hockey background check, complete Safe Sport training, complete concussion training, and the age based modules prior to being placed on a roster. They can begin now meeting these requirements.

64th MAHA Annual Guide

XIV. Spring/Summer League

10. Spring/Summer players must play in the USA Hockey age classification they will be in for the next Regular (winter) hockey season.

DUAL ROSTERING

In all Youth divisions, a player may register and play with a maximum of two teams at a time in the Spring/Summer season.

MAHA MICHIGAN RESIDENCY REQUIREMENTS POLICY

This policy applies to all Tier 1 players; it also applies to Tier 2 National bound players; who have moved or are moving to Michigan. More information at: <https://www.maha.org/page/show/1208140-youth>
This is a very time intensive process.

CONCUSSION TRAINING

Michigan's Sports Concussion Law requires coaches and other adults involved in youth sports to complete online concussion awareness training *every three years*. Anyone with a certificate on file prior to 4/2023, will need to recertify and provide an updated certificate prior to rostering to the Association/Club.

HELMETS

All Districts will continue with the USA Hockey required 30-day suspensions for on-ice helmet violations. This is a serious matter that could affect the USA Hockey Insurance for everyone involved. If anyone is on the ice including skill instructors, without a helmet, the suspension is to the head coach.