



2024 Boys Player Development Program FAQ

Q: WHAT IS THE ATLANTIC DISTRICT BOYS PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM?

A: The goal of the Atlantic District Boys Player Development Program (PDP) is to offer a six-year development program that delivers evaluation, exposure, and unique, high-level training and competitive opportunities to elite youth hockey players in the Atlantic District.

The Atlantic District Player Development Program has dual missions:

- As mandated by USA Hockey, we select the top 15-, 16-, and 17-year-old players in our District to participate in USA Hockey National Development Camps
- We offer high-level evaluation, training, and competitive opportunities to hundreds of players at the 12, 13, 14 and 15 age levels

The physical, emotional, and psychological health of every member of our community is our highest priority and we are committed to providing a safe environment for our players. Bullying is unacceptable in the Atlantic District Player Development Program, and we have Zero Tolerance for racial, ethnic, religious, sexual, homophobic, or ableist slurs or name-calling of any kind. All reports of hateful and discriminatory language will be thoroughly investigated, and offending players will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including expulsion from the Player Development Program.

Q: WHAT ARE USA HOCKEY NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT CAMPS?

A: Each year, USA Hockey gives each District a player allotment at the 15, 16, and 17 levels which varies from one year to the next and is based on demographic and performance data. Our 2023 allotment at the 15 level was 9 forwards, 6 defensemen and 2 goalies; our 16 allotment was 6 forwards, 5 defensemen and 1 goaltender; and at 17 our allotment was 8 forwards, 4 defensemen, and 1 goaltender. In addition, the National Team staff has an allotment of at-large spots at each level that allow them the flexibility to invite players who were not selected at their District level for various reasons, including but not limited to injuries or local allotment limitations.

Players who are selected at the District level or are invited by the National Team staff attend the USA Hockey National Player Development Camps held in Amherst, New York. These players receive concentrated on- and off-ice training along with the opportunity to compete against the top players in the country. During the camp, players are evaluated by members of the National Team staff; the most promising 15 players are invited to participate in the National Team Development Program (NTDP) Orientation Camp and the most promising 16 and 17 players are invited to participate on the National Select Team and/or NTDP.



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Q: WHAT DOES THE ATLANTIC DISTRICT PDP OFFER FOR PLAYERS 15 AND YOUNGER?

A: For the past twenty years, the Atlantic District PDP leadership has sought to broaden the program's reach and serve as many players as possible. With the understanding that ice hockey is a late-developing sport, we have used the Long-Term Athlete Development Model to provide a growing number of players with exceptional training, exposure to a wide range of high-level coaches and unique opportunities for travel and competition.

Because the Atlantic District is geographically small, yet enjoys a high concentration of hockey professionals, we have been able to expand beyond our historical role as a clearinghouse for local talent and offer unique programs including:

- The Quebec program for 12-year-olds, which gives 54 players the chance to train and compete at the Quebec International Pee-wee Hockey Tournament in February on one of three Atlantic District-run teams
- The Austria program for 14-year-olds, which gives up to 40 players the chance to spend a week training with and competing against teams throughout Europe
- A multi-day training & development camp for 13- and 14-year-olds, where up to 106 players receive on-ice and off-ice training
- The Select 15 Festival hosted by the Mid-Am District for 24-30 players who are not selected to attend the National Development Camp

Q: WHAT IS LONG-TERM ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT?

A: Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) is a research-based model that has been successfully used around the world to help young athletes reach their maximum potential. LTAD focuses on developing players' trainable capacities including stamina, strength, speed, skill, and suppleness while educating them in other areas that will affect their athletic achievement including nutrition, academics, and sport psychology.



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Q: HOW DOES THE PLAYER EVALUATION AND SELECTION PROCESS WORK?

A: Ultimately, evaluations are at the heart of every PDP program. The staff collects data on each player during every tryout, camp, and tournament. Coaches are interested not only in players' on-ice performance; they are also observing their attitude, work ethic, behavior, respectfulness, coachability, and willingness to take risks to improve as players.

By the time players are 15 years old and vying for limited spots at the National Player Development Camps, the coaches will have compiled information that will be taken into consideration during the evaluation process. However, a player's body of work is only a piece of the puzzle and the main criteria we consider when making selections is the player's performance at tryouts. Evaluators are looking at a player's current skills relative to his peers, how he performs in the high-pressure environment of tryouts, how he reacts in various situations, how coachable he is, his projected development, and numerous other factors.

The selection process has been fine-tuned over the years to be as objective and unbiased as possible. High school, prep school, college, junior, NHL, USA Hockey, and unaffiliated coaches are an integral part of the evaluation process because they view the players with fresh and impartial eyes. Final selections are made by consensus among the evaluators and no one person has the power to veto or force a selection. We are always looking to add additional reliable, and knowledgeable coaches to our staff.

As with any evaluation process, there is some degree of subjectivity inherent in our player selection process. Additionally, different programs call for different selection criteria. For example, when we are selecting our Quebec teams, we are looking to put together a well-rounded group of players who will work well together. Depending on the makeup of the team, we may look for different types of players to fill the last few spots from one year to the next. On the other hand, when we are selecting individual players to attend the USA Hockey National Player Development Camps the selection process is focused on identifying highly skilled players who are most likely to succeed in that specific environment.

Q: WHAT IS AN OPEN TRYOUT WAIVER, AND HOW DOES MY PLAYER GET ONE?

A: The primary purpose of the Open Tryout is to give every eligible player in the Atlantic District the opportunity to participate in the PDP. Rather than re-evaluating familiar players, we would rather give as much ice as possible to less familiar players. We therefore offer some returning players an Open Tryout waiver which allows them to advance directly to the Main Tryout (15, 16, and 17) or Training & Development Camp (13 and 14). Not all returning players from one year to the next will receive a waiver; if they did, there would be no room to add new players to the program. Players receiving an Open Tryout waiver will be notified via email no later than February 1, 2024.



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Q: WHO IS ON THE EVALUATION AND SELECTION STAFF?

A: The Atlantic District PDP staff consists of volunteers from the NHL, USA Hockey, colleges, junior teams, prep schools, high schools, and youth hockey organizations. We value diversity and we are always looking to add additional reliable and knowledgeable coaches with a variety of backgrounds and affiliations to our staff.

Q: DO PLAYERS FROM SPECIFIC ORGANIZATIONS RECEIVE PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT? DOES MY PLAYER HAVE A BETTER CHANCE OF ADVANCING IF THEY PLAY FOR A PARTICULAR ORGANIZATION?

A: No. Player selections are made by consensus, and no staff member has the ability to advance a player without the agreement of the evaluation staff. Any coach who tells you that your child will have a better chance of advancing in the Player Development Program if he plays for that coach/organization is being dishonest with you. In addition, any coach who uses the Player Development Program as a tool for recruiting players is in violation of our Code of Ethics and is risking disciplinary action up to and including permanent dismissal.

Q: WHY DO WE SEE THE SAME HANDFUL OF STAFF MEMBERS YEAR AFTER YEAR?

A: The Atlantic District has a core staff of long-serving coaches who are responsible for various elements of tryout and camp operations including on-ice activities, off-ice activities, and administration. Their dedication and experience allow the program to run smoothly so we can offer a positive, well-organized, efficient, and productive experience to our players. Each year we supplement our veteran staff with various prep school, college, junior and professional coaches whose sole responsibility is evaluation and selection. We value diversity and we are always looking to add additional reliable and knowledgeable coaches with a variety of backgrounds and affiliations to our staff.

Q: MY ATHLETE IS A GOALIE. IS THE PROCESS DIFFERENT FOR HIM?

A: Goalies will go through the same evaluation and selection process as the skaters and are expected to attend all assigned skates including scrimmages, small games, skill-based sessions, and goalie-only sessions. Our Director of Goaltending and his staff are on hand to thoroughly evaluate goalies at each tryout.

Q. MY ATHLETE WAS NOT SELECTED FOR THE PEEWEE QUEBEC TEAM/TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT CAMP/NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT CAMP. IS THAT GOING TO HOLD HIM BACK?

A: Hockey is a late-developing sport and there are plenty of players who do not get invited to participate in the PDP at first but who go on to be selected for the program later. Every player has his own unique timeline and path towards long-term success, and we have designed our program to offer multiple identification and evaluation opportunities over the course of six years.



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Q: MY ATHLETE WAS NOT SELECTED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ATLANTIC DISTRICT PDP LAST YEAR. HOW DO I GET HIM BACK INTO THE PROGRAM?

A: All players who do not receive a 2024 Open Tryout waiver must re-enter the program through the 2024 Open Tryouts whether they participated in the 2023 PDP or not. We have a strict allotment of players, and we are unable to add additional players once selections have been made. If a player who is selected chooses not to participate, we will contact the next player on the depth chart to invite him to join the program.

Q: MY ATHLETE WAS NOT SELECTED TO ADVANCE. CAN I GET FEEDBACK FROM THE COACHES?

A: Our coaches take notes on each player but given the number of participants it is impossible for us to collect detailed feedback on everyone. We are not always able to compile a set of master notes during our events, but we are happy to share the feedback we receive from our evaluators.

Q. WHAT IS THE SELECT 15 FESTIVAL? IF MY ATHLETE WAS NOT SELECTED TO ATTEND THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT CAMP, IS IT WORTH ATTENDING THE SELECT 15 FESTIVAL?

A: The Atlantic District PDP nominates 28-32, 15-year-old players who were not selected for the USA Hockey National Player Development Camp to attend the Select 15 Festival hosted by the Mid-Am District in late July. Several Districts send teams to this event, and it is a great chance for our players to receive top-notch training, face challenging competition, gain exposure to a wide range of coaches and athletes, and build relationships with their peers.

Q: MY ATHLETE WAS NOT SELECTED TO ATTEND THE USA HOCKEY NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT CAMP. WHAT SHOULD I DO TO GET HIM EXPOSURE?

A: While the National Player Development Camps are an excellent way for promising young players to receive exposure, they are only one of many possible paths available to aspiring athletes. Evaluations take place at specific moments in time and only a very small percentage of players who try out are selected. Additionally, some players have skill sets that would not be displayed to their best advantage in the National Camp environment. Scouts are paid to uncover talent and they are very good at their jobs; few high-level athletes finish their youth hockey careers without showing up on anyone's radar. The best way for your child to gain exposure is to play for a reputable organization whose coaches are well-regarded in the hockey community and to attend a few high-profile tournaments during the season and over the summer.



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Q: MY ATHLETE HAS A SCHEDULING CONFLICT WITH ONE OF TRYOUT OR CAMP SESSIONS. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

A: In accordance with LTAD model, the Atlantic District PDP recognizes the importance of family, school, and other sports and activities. However, given the competitiveness of the tryout process, space limitations, and budgeting, administrative, and logistical concerns, attendance at all tryouts and camps is mandatory.

It is obviously impossible for our staff to evaluate a player relative to his peers if he is absent from tryouts, and his body of work cannot be the only criteria by which he is assessed. *Parents should keep in mind that it is unfair for a player to try out and take a spot if he does not plan to participate; there are literally dozens of players who would welcome the opportunity to be a part of the program.*

Parents may contact the PDP if there are extraordinary circumstances, such as an injury or important family commitment, that prevent a player from attending tryouts or camps. Depending on the circumstances we may or may not be able to make accommodations, but we will at least have the cause of the player's absence on record going into the following year's tryouts.

Q: IS MY PLAYER ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ATLANTIC DISTRICT PDP?

A: The Atlantic District comprises New Jersey, Delaware, and eastern Pennsylvania. At the 12-year-old level, players who reside or play within the Atlantic District are eligible to participate, but the Quebec Tournament rules state that players must live within 100 miles as the crow flies of their home rink (RWJ Barnabas Health Hockey House in Newark for the Devils, Jefferson Health Northeast Skate Zone in Philadelphia for the Flyers, and The Lawrenceville School in Lawrenceville for the Phantoms) regardless of where they play. At the 13 and 14 age levels, all players who reside or play within the Atlantic District are eligible to participate.

At the 15, 16, and 17 age levels, when players are trying out for spots at the USA Hockey National Festivals, players must permanently reside within the Atlantic District to be eligible to try out here regardless of where they play. A player's permanent residence is defined as the primary residence of the player's custodial parent(s) or legal guardian(s). Players at these age levels who play and/or temporarily reside in the Atlantic District but permanently reside in another District are not eligible to participate in the Atlantic District Player Development Program. This includes players who billet, or who live with extended family or friends in the Atlantic District during the school year. Vacation homes, rental properties, and other non-primary residences located in the Atlantic District should not be considered a player's permanent residence.

15, 16, and 17 players who play in the Atlantic District but reside elsewhere must try out in the District of their permanent residence. Please note that many Districts hold their tryouts earlier than we do, and their registration deadlines can be weeks or even months prior to the event. If your player will be trying out in another District, be sure to check that District's PDP website well in advance.



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Q. I SEE THAT THE TRYOUTS FOR THE QUEBEC PROGRAM ARE DIVIDED NORTH AND SOUTH. WHICH SESSIONS SHOULD MY PLAYER ATTEND?

A: Players who reside within the Atlantic District should try out according to the area code of their residential land line (or the area code they would have if they had a land line). The North includes area codes 201, 551, 862, 973, 908, 848, or 732 and all players who live in New York; the South includes area codes 609, 640, 856, and all players who live in Pennsylvania, Delaware, or Maryland. Some players will not try out with their regular season teammates, but it is important that players observe these rules to make the process as fair as possible for everyone. The Devils team will include only players from the North, and the Flyers team will include only players from the South. The Phantoms team will be comprised of the next 18 players regardless of residence. Please note that the Quebec Pee wee International Tournament rules state that players must live within 100 miles as the crow flies of their team's home rink. The home rink for the Devils team is RWJ Barnabas Health Hockey House in Newark, NJ, the home rink for the Flyers is Jefferson Health Northeast Skate Zone in Philadelphia, PA, and the home rink for the Phantoms is The Lawrenceville School in Lawrenceville, NJ.