



12 October 2021

NDAHA Players, Parents & Coaches,

NDAHA hopes you are all well and are enjoying the start to each of your organizations hockey season.

As the weather turns colder, we want to make you aware of the very serious issue that is occurring in every single state in the country that operates organized hockey within USA Hockey's umbrella and is unfortunately happening right here in our own backyard to NDAHA and to the Affiliates of NDAHA - ***the severe referee shortage.***

As you may or may not be aware, around the entire country, as of this date, a large number of referees have not returned for this season & have decided that officiating isn't something they wish to continue to pursue. NDAHA is severely down in registered officials for the upcoming 2021-22 playing season.

While we are still hopeful for an increase in registered officials prior to the start of games actually being played, NDAHA's initial findings to the dwindling referee population, along with other state's investigations has determined that the biggest reason cited is the abuse they receive from coaches, parents, and players. The constant harassment over calls over the split-second decisions they are making on the ice has taken its toll.

Taking a few trips down the social media lane via Facebook, Twitter & Instagram the past 30 days, I have seen that affiliates of USA Hockey around the country have already experienced several troubling incidents, including:

- A referee needing a police escort after a 8U game
- A young female referee quitting in the middle of a set of games due to the harassment she received during the first contest
- A parent coming on the ice trying to get at a referee
- A parent entering the scorer's box to berate a player on the other team for a penalty against their child.

Taking that same trip down the social media lane, one will start seeing the ever increasingly post that reads something like this,

- "Supposed to play a hockey game today but the host team couldn't find officials!", "so no game today for Charlie"

These are just a few examples of what has gone on in some arenas, associations and clubs already this season and we are only in the beginning of October.

Please also don't think that these are scenarios that don't happen here in good ol' North Dakota. One would be surprised to the amount of discipline hearings NDAHA has each year. And unfortunately the number of them each year only seems to keep going up...not down.

The referee pool is dwindling, not just in our sport of hockey, but in just about every sport our children learn to love and play and we need to take steps in a positive manner to reverse this. Our officials are everyday people who have real jobs but try to work a side job to help our kids play a game, earn a little extra income and give back to the game. It would appear that many people, for whatever reason, have lost this understanding and somehow believe that our officials need to be at the same level as what they see on TV or in person at the junior, college or NHL level.

Just as a player will turn a puck over or a coach will make a wrong decision during a game, NDAHA realize's that our officials can miss calls that may or may not have an impact on a game. That said - this does not give anyone (parents, players, coaches) the right to abuse them. Please talk to your children about respecting the referees. Players should not be arguing every call against their team. Unfortunately, this is what is happening far too often and is unacceptable.

NDAHA and USA Hockey does have a Zero Tolerance Policy for abuse of officials. If someone is found abusing officials, including a player, coach or a parent, they will be subject to discipline from NDAHA including suspension and/or being banned from attending future games. Those individuals may also be subject to discipline through their affiliate. Holding discipline hearings for players, coaches or parents is certainly the last thing NDAHA wants its Board of Directors and your affiliates to have to deal with.

Irony or coincidence? When I stated above that the trend for officials registered is going down in our own backyard, but yet I also stated that the number of incidents during the same time frame is going up in that same backyard? I will leave that one for each of you that is taking the time to read this.

We ask you to practice patience and good judgement. We all need to make a better effort to respect the officials and keep them working and our children playing.

"Our Children" deserve this and most importantly "Our Game" they play deserves it even that much more!

Lastly, if you or someone you know is interested in becoming an official, please visit <https://www.ndaha.org/page/show/82419-certification-information> or visit [www.usahockey.com](http://www.usahockey.com) to start the process.

Matt Stockert

President ~ NDAHA

- We are not professional referees

- We are learning, just like the players

- We do our best every game

- We are not perfect

- There will be decisions we get wrong and calls we miss

- We attend seminars, study the rulebook and are tested on the rules

- We listen to positive feedback, but abusive language and yelling are not tolerated

**Hello!**  
**We Are Your Officials Today.**

- We have full time jobs and officiate during our spare time

- We love this game and we want your child to love this game



USAHOCKEY.COM/OFFICIALS