

# **Flathead Valley Hockey Association Coaching Guidelines**

## **Mission of FVHA:**

*Flathead Valley Hockey Association offers the youth of the Flathead Valley of all ages and abilities the opportunity to participate in the sport of ice hockey.*

*The success of the youth in our Association is primarily dependent on our coaches. You are the frontline for developing players and creating both an enjoyable and growing experience for them. You are not only a coach for hockey skills, but a mentor and role model for teamwork, sportsmanship, and life skills. The Guidelines booklet is for you, whether you are a head coach or assistant. Its purpose is to help ensure that all FVHA coaches are on the same page. All coaches will be responsible for knowing, understanding, and following the philosophy, policy, and specific guidelines of FVHA. Please read this booklet carefully and familiarize yourself with its content.*

## **Coaching Philosophy**

***There's a lot more than hockey going on here***

1. FVHA coaching philosophy focuses on holistic growth and development of players not only as athletes but as healthy, well-rounded individuals and team players.
2. FVHA Coaching Philosophy includes the following areas:
  - a. **Goals:** The goals of the coach are to teach skills and athleticism, a greater understanding of the game of hockey, and team play while providing a safe and enjoyable environment that will keep players coming back and learn a love of the game. Hockey should be fun both in games and at practices. Most importantly, coaches are to help kids grow as people.
  - b. **Ethics:** FVHA seeks to uphold the highest ethical principles, including those laid out in the USA Hockey Code of Ethics (Please click on the link and read through this code).
  - c. **Player Development and Practices:** FVHA adheres to the American Development Model (ADM) developed by USA Hockey in partnership with the NHL. This is the standard model for developing hockey players in the United States. Created by experts in various fields (coaches, nutritionists, physicians, etc), ADM lays out age-specific guidelines for skills development, as well as age-specific practice plans with a strong emphasis on small area games and alternating stations.
    - i. Use of stations during practices: Using alternating, simultaneously run stations during practices provides for the best use of ice time and assistant coaches while keeping players active for the greatest period of time on the ice. Stations mitigate the problem of wasting ice time with players standing in line waiting for their turn while assistant coaches are left with nothing to do. The head coach should come prepared each

- practice with a plan to use all of his or her assistants through an appropriate use of stations for at least one third of the practice session.
- ii. We expect all coaches to follow the ADM guidelines and encourage fair play, sportsmanship, individual effort, skill development, character development. Go to <http://www.admkids.com> and familiarize yourself with ADM, especially for the age group you will be coaching.
- d. **Philosophy of Competition:** FVHA seeks to provide a proper balance of competition, fun, and fairness to all players.
- i. **Ice time:** Since hockey is an expensive sport and all players pay the same fees to play, coaches must balance the desire to win with fairness in giving ice time to all players. This can be a difficult balance to find, especially at the older ages and higher competitive levels.
  - ii. FVHA is a member of the Montana Amateur Hockey Association and the Treasure State League. As such, we are committed to being as competitive as our talent allows us to be.
- e. **Core Values** The following core values should inform and guide all activities, from games to practices:
- i. **Respect:** Treat others better than you expect to be treated.
  - ii. **Sportsmanship:** Foster a sense of fair play, humility in victory and graciousness in defeat, as well as friendship with teammates and opponents alike.
  - iii. **Integrity:** Demonstrate honesty and fair play, beyond simple strict adherence to the rules and regulations of the game.
  - iv. **Excellence:** Pursue the highest level of personal achievement as a player, and collective achievement as a team and an organization.
  - v. **Teamwork:** Learn the value of working together. Hockey is a team sport. Success on the ice, as in many aspects of life, is best achieved working as a team, towards a shared goal.
  - vi. **Loyalty:** Develop a loyalty to the ideals of the sport and the fellow members of the hockey community.
  - vii. **Enjoyment:** Have fun, and have satisfying and rewarding experiences that benefit all participants.

## ***Specific Coaching Rules and Policies***

1. **Selecting Coaches:** Head Coaches will be selected by the following criteria:
  - a. Application form completed and all requirements fulfilled.
  - b. Head coach accepted only after in-person interview.
  - c. Emphasis Depends on Level:
    - a. Mite/Squirt (focus on life skill)
    - b. Peewee/Bantam (balance between life skill and hockey skill)
    - c. HS: Coach hockey knowledge establishes competency in players' eyes
  - i. **Specific Questions Coaches will be asked in Interview:**
    1. What are your feelings about being in MAHA/ the TSL and how do you balance skill and competitiveness
    2. What most impressed and motivated you when you were a player?
    3. What one thing have you done with kids that most contributed to their success?
    4. What one word describing a coach most impressed you as a player?
    5. What was one of your worst experiences as a player?
    6. How do you discipline? How do you praise?
    7. How do you improve all players with a great difference in skills at the same time on the same ice?
    8. How do you envision using your assistant coaches?
2. **Coaches Meeting**
  - a. Late summer/pre-season
  - b. Mandatory attendance
  - c. Discuss Association coaching philosophy
  - d. Absences must be pre-approved by Programs or Coach Coordinator
3. **Communicating Rules and Policies**
  - a. FVHA strives for a high degree of openness, transparency, and timely communication between the Board and coaches; the Board and parents; and coaches and parents.
  - b. All coaches will receive a Rules and Policy Packet, which will also be made available as .pdf document on the FVHA website
  - c. Rules and policies will be communicated at the Pre-Season Team, Parents, and Coaches meeting, as well as through the following areas:
    - i. Website
    - ii. Emails
    - iii. Special coaches Meeting or at team meetings

- d. All administrators, Board members, coaches, volunteers, officials, and athletes are expected to know the rules that apply to them by reading and understanding all relevant documents and policies, staying abreast of changes
- e. You must sign the “Acceptance of Terms” commitment at the end of this document
- f. Coaches are encouraged, obligated to speak up if there is confusion about a rule or policy; or if you need help in enforcing or communicating a rule or policy if it is unclear to a player, parent, or other association member.
- g. The Coaching Coordinator is the liaison between the Association Board and coaches. His or her role is to communicate the philosophy and guidelines to the coaches, be an advocate for all members of FVHA (administrators, board members, coaches, volunteers, officials, parents and athletes), and mediate any issues that cannot be resolved by the coaches. All concerned parties may address any issue with the Coaching Coordinator in accordance with the policies and procedures laid out for addressing issues.

#### 4. **Playing Time**

- a. Playing time is regardless of age, gender, race, religion, or nationality.
- b. Unequal playing time based on skill, attitude, effort and commitment, however, is appropriate for travel teams in the older age groups (Pewees and above) at the coach’s discretion.
- c. Suggestion: coaches may use exhibition games/jamborees/tournaments to provide additional playing time for players who get less playing time in MAHA games.
- d. This must be discussed with players/parents at the pre-season team meeting
- e. House/Rec Teams:
  - i. House leagues are intended for players who wish to play in a less competitive environment, either because they are new to the game, less skilled, or unable to make the commitment involved in travel teams. For these reasons, house or non-travel teams will provide equal ice time for all players.
- f. Travel/Rep Teams:
  - i. Mites and Squirts should emphasize equal playing time for all players
  - ii. Pewees, Bantams and HS Level will be left to the coach’s discretion as per skill, attitude, effort and commitment noted above.
  - iii. At the Coach's discretion, and discussed with player and parent at the start of the season, players who are new to hockey may receive less ice time during games.
    - 1. All registered players shall practice with the team, but the player must achieve personal goals set by the coach before they begin to play in games.
      - a. Goals should be measurable and attainable

- b. Resources include participation in the House/Rec program, Skills Sessions, Stick and Puck, Open Skate and private lessons with Chad Goodwin in order to “catch up”.

**5. Practice/Absence Policy**

- a. House League: none
- b. Rep/Travel League:
  - i. One missed game period for every practice missed. No excused absences.
  - ii. Skill Sessions may be used for makeup after a practice is missed
  - iii. *Players/Parents must let coaches know well in advance if they will miss games of any kind.*

**6. Number of Games Per Season** - In alignment with ADM recommended practice:game ratios and MAHA/Treasure State league game minimums.

- a. Only MAHA games are mandatory.
- b. Jamboree and Exhibition Games are optional, but we should make sure that parents are aware of the USA Hockey guidelines on practices and games.

**7. Positions**

- a. Mites - Players should try all positions
- b. Squirt/Peewees - Players should have opportunity to play all positions. Player and coach may elect for player to specialize in one position in the 2nd half of the season
- c. Bantam/HS - Players will begin to specialize; players should be placed in different positions during practices/scrimmages to facilitate understanding of positions of opponents and teammates

**8. Exceptions:**

- a. Goalies - May begin to specialize at Squirt level
  - i. Strive to develop more than one goalie at each age level, preferably one at each birth year.
  - ii. If there are two Squirts teams than 3-4 goalies should be cultivated at that age level.

**9. Follow USAH ADM Manual and Player Development guidelines**

**10. Follow USAH SafeSport policies and guidelines**

**11. Player and Team Selection Policies---**

- a. Flames Teams:
  - i. Flames/Fusion teams will be open to all registered FVHA players.
  - ii. If more than one team per age group, selection will occur as follows:
    - 1. Communicate with MAHA rep to determine how other league teams are divided (evenly vs. A/B)
    - 2. If tryouts occur for A/B teams, all athletes must have equal opportunity to know the criteria
    - 3. If even teams are created, selection must be by mutual agreement of both head coaches

- b. Combinations with Whitefish (i.e. Fusion teams)
  - i. Players may register with either FVHA or GHA.
- c. Use of individual players for select teams (*needs revision*)
- d. Dual rostering:
  - i. MAHA allows for players to play up from their age division. FVHA policy is for players to remain at their age division.
  - ii. Girls playing Squirts/Peewees/Bantams/HS may play on U14/U19 teams (Or U14/U19 players may play on coed teams, but this is less likely).
  - iii. Players MUST declare a primary team commitment at the start of the season. Primary team league games/state tournament will have priority over any secondary team games.
  - iv. Secondary league games will have priority over primary team exhibition/tournament games.
- e. Guidelines for players on select teams external to FVHA
  - i. Select or club teams
    - 1. Player priority may go to select team, but player MUST inform Flames coach of their decision at start of season or at time of selection to select team.
    - 2. Missed practice/game policy still applies.

**12. Player Behavior – see:**

- a. Player Behavior and Disciplinary Policies - see Policy Manual
- b. USA Hockey rules and requirements
- c. MAHA Code of Player Conduct

**13. Coach Behavior:**

- a. **Positive and desired behaviors to be coached:**
  - i. All coaches must coach in accordance with Coaching Philosophy guidelines listed above and consistently display the FVHA Core Values
  - ii. Head Coaches are expected to attend all practices and games. In the event that it is not possible for a coach to attend either a practice or game he is responsible for designating an Interim Head Coach and providing a practice or game plan.
- b. **Negative behavior and consequences**
  - a. Coach Behavior and Disciplinary Policies - see Policy Manual
  - b. Unsportsmanlike behavior:
    - i. Game or Match Penalties
    - ii. Unprofessional Social Media comments
    - iii. Lack of Confidentiality and discretion in email communication
    - iv. Condoning or encouraging unsportsmanlike behavior in players
  - c. Consequences in accordance with FVHA Policy Manual

- d. In the case of Sexual Harassment or Illegal Activities where actions of others could cause liability to the Association, the Coach shall notify the Coaching Coordinator and the Board representative immediately. Confidentiality shall be maintained within necessary limits (within the law).
- e. In case of a Head Coach being in violation of behavior policy, assistant coaches, manager, parents, or players shall notify Coaching Coordinator and Board rep.
- f. Informing coaches of any charges, concerns
  - i. All coaches/volunteers/administrators will be privately informed of any charges against them as soon as possible.
  - ii. Any decisions will be communicated in a timely manner to the coach, along with the criteria upon which the decision is made
- b. Violations and Disciplinary Process**
  - i. If a coach violates the rules:
    - 1. Depending on the severity of violation, first be spoken to ensure coach knows and understands the rules.
      - a. Certain violations are zero tolerance:
        - i. Physical abuse
        - ii. Sexual Harassment
        - iii. Illegal Activities
        - iv. Drunkenness
    - 2. Second violation: Disciplinary action per Policy Manual

## 12. Coaching Evaluations

- a. All coaches are required to fill out an anonymous self-evaluation at the end of the season.
- b. All coaches shall ask parents and players to evaluate their coaching at the end of the season.
  - i. Eval forms will be provided
  - ii. Evals will be confidential and anonymous and only the coach and Coaching Coordinator will see them
- c. Coaches will be required to fill out a general evaluation at the end of the season for the betterment of our Association and our players.
- d. Post-season Coaching Meeting to review the season with other coaches

## 13. Dispute Resolution

- a. 24-hour cooling off period for all involved.
- b. Dispute with player
  - i. Schedule a separate time/venue to discuss
  - ii. Involve player's parent if it is an issue that cannot be resolved between coach and player in a satisfactory time period
  - iii. Coach may reduce playing time but must inform parents
  - iv. Involve Coaching Coordinator if the issue cannot be resolved with the player and parents

- c. Dispute with parents:
  - i. Do not discuss the issue at the game, esp. if parent is upset (24hr cooling off)
  - ii. Schedule a separate time/venue to discuss (in person or by phone)
    - 1. Consider Board Member or Coach Coordinator as neutral mediator
  - iii. Be an active listener:
    - 1. Listen, take notes, eye contact, affirm you heard, don't be defensive, show that you understand
  - iv. Clarify the problem
    - 1. Reflect back in your words to see if you understand
    - 2. Ask probing questions
    - 3. Stick to the facts and the current issue
  - v. Offer a range of solutions, promise to act if can, follow through
- d. Dispute with the board or committee(s)
  - i. Involve Coach Coordinator
  - ii. Clarify the problem - written email to Coaching Coordinator with facts may lead to solution better than initial verbal discussion
  - iii. Schedule separate time/venue to discuss
  - iv. Offer solutions
  - v. Coaching Coordinator for Follow-up
- e. Dispute with Referee
  - i. During game – remain calm, discuss rationally
  - ii. 24-hour cooling-off
  - iii. Schedule separate time/venue to discuss
  - iv. Involve Ref Coordinator (Kevin Jones if local, MAHA rep if at Travel game)
- f. Dispute resolution committee - convened in the event a dispute cannot be satisfactorily resolved
- g. Internal Appeal Process
  - i. Appeals will be addressed within one calendar week
  - ii. Written Appeal
    - 1. Describe the complaint
      - a. Have you spoken to the coach/parent about this?
      - b. Describe circumstances preventing resolution
      - c. What kind of resolution are you seeking?
    - 2. Steps:
      - a. Appeal to Coaching Coordinator
      - b. Appeal to the Board