



ACADIA MINOR HOCKEY ASSOCIATION (AMHA)

U9 POLICY

1. Purpose and Philosophy

The AMHA U9 Program aligns strictly with the Hockey Canada U9 Player Pathway and Hockey Nova Scotia (HNS) regulations. The primary objective is to deliver a fun, safe, and positive environment that emphasizes foundational skill development, high engagement, and equal opportunity for all players aged 7 and 8.

2. Player Eligibility, Evaluations and Team Structure

- Age Requirements: The U9 division is exclusively for players who are 7 or 8 years old as of December 31 of the current playing season.
- Exceptions to Age Requirements: HNS Regulation 5.14 states that U7 players are not permitted to be assessed or participate in on-ice activities at the U9 age levels without approval. The approvers of these requests are both the HNS Regional Director (RD) and Conference Coordinator (CC).
 - AMHA has established internal criteria for these requests prior to supporting their furtherance to both the HNS RD and CC for approval:
 - A clear roster opportunity must exist on either a recreation or intermediate tiered team. A player will not be eligible to play on an advancing tiered team.
 - The player in question must be able to prove they have played two seasons of hockey/ice sports (QS1+QS2 would be the most likely example but 1 year of hockey and another year of ringette/speed skating may also be considered);
 - The player in question must receive a full endorsement from AMHA's U7 Coordinator after a request is received. If a player were to be a new resident to AMHA's catchment area and request this exception wherein the U7 Coordinator has no prior knowledge of the player, the player in question may participate in U9 evaluations wherein the U7

Coordinator will make an assessment on the player's suitability for their consideration;

- The player in question must submit a written request to the AMHA board's attention prior to 1 September of the playing season;
 - The AMHA board will communicate in writing whether the request is approved or denied no later than 5 calendar days prior to U9 evaluations commencing. Should a player need to take-part in U9 evaluations to validate a criterion then the AMHA board will communicate in writing to the applicant whether their request is approved or denied prior to the U9 roster announcements that follow U9 evaluations.
- Evaluations: Children registered under "U9 Travel Hockey" will have the opportunity to take part in evaluations so that AMHA can place players in the correct tier based on our skill-based tiering approach. Teams will be structured progressively to ensure meaningful competition and optimal player development
 - AMHA strictly enforces a no-cut policy. No player shall be cut, released, or excluded from participating in the U9 program based on skill level.
 - Should a player want to play travel hockey but not participate in the evaluations; this is more than acceptable and AMHA asks that this request be communicated to AMHA's U9 Development Chair prior to the beginning of the evaluations.
 - Should a player want to participate in evaluations but not be considered for the advancing tier: this is more than acceptable and AMHA asks that this request be communicated to AMHA's U9 Development Chair prior to the beginning of the evaluations.
 - If AMHA finds that registration numbers are robust enough to support more than one team in a tier, the scoring from the evaluations shall be used in an effort to balance the multiple teams. AMHA will also make an effort to coordinate closely with parents prior to finalizing team rosters in order to benefit the membership in terms of pairing players with their friends, and in some cases where the logistics surrounding players being teammates makes sense (for example: carpooling).
- Roster Sizes: Target roster sizes will be 16-18 players per team (including goaltenders).

3. Ice Setup and Game Play Regulations

- Ice Dimensions: All games in the first half of the season must utilize a modified half-ice/cross-ice format. Hockey Nova Scotia allows U9 to play full-ice games starting the first of February to a maximum of 12 games.

- **Game Format:** Games will feature 4-versus-4 play with a goaltender. AMHA has goaltending gear available to players who may be interested in trying the goaltending position. If a team finds itself in a position where there is a lack of goaltenders, players may be asked to rotate and take turns playing the goaltending position.
- **Shift Length:** Line changes generally occur on a timed buzzer (typically every 60 or 90 seconds) to guarantee equal ice time for all participants.
- **Scoring and statistics:** In alignment with Hockey Nova Scotia's developmental focus, no official scores, standings, or player statistics are kept or published.

4. Practice and Development Framework

- **Core Curriculum:** Coaching staffs must dedicate at least 70% of practice time to fundamental technical skills (skating, puck control, passing, and shooting), 20% to individual tactics, and 10% to team play.
- **Practice-to-Game Ratio:** AMHA aims to have a 2:1 practice to game ratio. For the development tier, they will be allocated two ice times per week while intermediate and advancing will have three.

5. Code of Conduct and Fair Play

- **Equal Ice Time:** AMHA follows Hockey Nova Scotia's Fair Play guidelines. This means we promote safety, respect, equal participation and integrity. Equitable ice time for all players in all situations, including the closing minutes of close games is important to AMHA.