



ALTOONA AREA YOUTH ICE HOCKEY ASSOCIATION

PARENT / PLAYER GUIDEBOOK

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INTRODUCTION

This resource was developed to provide everyone involved with youth hockey an opportunity to become acquainted with the philosophies, policies, rules, and expectations that shape the Altoona Area Youth Ice Hockey Association (AAYIHA) program. We encourage you to review it carefully. This resource will provide you with information about the structure, size, and complexity of AAYIHA. It is hoped that it may also spark your interest to become more involved.

Many hours of planning are required to get our program ready for opening day each year and dedicated volunteers are needed throughout the season to help the Association run smoothly. Your help is essential. As you read through the material, please note areas where your particular talents or expertise may be of value to the Association. The only way an organization like ours can successfully function is with active parent participation and support.

MISSION STATEMENT

AAYIHA is a non-profit organization intending to teach the youth of our community the sport of ice hockey and to develop team play and individual ice hockey skills emphasizing sportsmanship, cooperation, self-discipline, self-confidence, individual responsibility and respect for others, while providing the best possible ice hockey experience for all.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

AAYIHA strives to teach the basic hockey skills of skating, stick handling, passing, and shooting which facilitate the development of motor skills, hand/eye coordination, quickness, and endurance. Physical size is not an important factor in becoming a skilled and successful hockey player. Every player participates in the game, which is exciting and fast-moving. Each player is encouraged to do the best he/she can and to contribute to the success of the team. In doing so, each skater learns to win with pride and to lose with dignity.

As a team sport, hockey affirms the importance of commitment, self-discipline, and sportsmanship among participants (Team = Together Everyone Achieves More). It is the rare child who grows up to become a National Hockey League player. Our commitment is to assure that all young people who participate will develop skills and values, which will have lifelong benefit to them and to society.

The AAYIHA is more than just hockey. Specific benefits participants in youth hockey receive include:

- Development of the skills necessary to play ice hockey
- Knowledge of the rules and strategies of the game
- Enjoyment and recreation
- Commitment to teamwork
- Building self-esteem
- Building a good work ethic
- Good sportsmanship
- Respect for teammates, coaches and opponents
- The opportunity to meet and become friends with children from many different schools, homes and backgrounds. Not everyone who plays at AAYIHA is from Altoona!

MEMBERSHIP IN AAYIHA

Membership of parents/legal guardians in the AAYIHA is automatic with the registration of a player and membership will correspond to the term of player registration and will automatically terminate upon withdrawal from the program, failure to re-register or (in the case of officers) be re-appointed. Membership is contingent upon being in good financial standing with association policies.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Board of Directors consists of all officers, each head coach, first assistant coach, ACE Administrator, and team manager of individual association teams.

The By-Laws of AAYIHA authorize the Board to oversee the operation of the Association and carry out its goals.

TEAM SUPPORT

There are many areas where parents can contribute to the welfare of the team. Two very important functions for individual teams are:

Team Manager:

Each team, regardless of level, must have a manager. Team Managers act under the direction of the head coach to support the teams off ice responsibilities. Managers serve as a liaison between the coach and parents and have administrative responsibilities for items such as attending Board meetings; obtaining minor officials for home games (scorekeepers, penalty box officials, and timekeepers); notifying parents of schedule changes; completing game score sheet rosters; and, especially, for facilitating communication between coaches and parents throughout the hockey season. Away game responsibilities include providing directions to game locations and any lodging, transportation, and meal support as needed.

In an effort to keep the lines of communication open between coaches and parents, AAYIHA discourages spouses of head coaches or Executive Board members from serving as Team Managers, unless another parent does not volunteer. AAYIHA also discourages individuals from serving as a Team Manager on more than one team, unless another parent does not volunteer.

Minor Officials:

Each team is responsible for providing Off Ice Officials, i.e. scorekeeper, announcer, timekeeper, and Penalty Box Official at their home games. These are relatively easy tasks to perform once you become familiar with the procedure. These responsibilities also offer a new perspective to the game. Teams may also have their own equipment managers, tournament coordinators, and social chairpersons.

AAYIHA Off Ice Officials shall conduct themselves in a professional manner and **remain impartial** at all times. Please refer to the *USA Hockey Off Ice Official Manual* for further clarification. On Ice Officials do have the authority to remove any Off Ice Officials of their duties.

COMMUNICATIONS

AAYIHA believes that communications between the Associations' officials and the general membership is critically important. This guidebook is one example of how we want to keep our members informed.

Our web site, www.altoonatrackers.com, has attracted attention throughout the hockey community in Pennsylvania. Team schedules, scores, team news and notes, tournament information, and tryout information are on the web. Members can submit items for inclusion on the web site.

Your Team Manager is an excellent source of information. He/she will have the most up to date information on schedules and practices, and team and Association activities. Your Manager is also your primary facilitator with the team coach and Board.

ASSOCIATION SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

Each year, at the end of the season, the Association holds its annual Celebrate the Season Banquet, where each team is recognized for its accomplishments. The Banquet is planned and organized by a group of AAYIHA volunteers, known as the Banquet Committee. Each team must have a representative volunteer to serve on the committee.

ICE TIME

Ice time is a precious commodity, which consumes a majority of the AAYIHA budget each year. Traditionally, each AAYIHA team receives two ice slots per week for practice. The amount of practice ice time depends on the number of teams being fielded by the Association.

Weekday ice slots are shared with another team (e.g. each team has half the ice for practice purposes). AAYIHA attempts to provide teams with as many full ice practices as possible both in the pre-season and during the regular season. Again, full ice practice slots depend on availability of ice time and our budget.

Our web site will have practice schedules for all teams as they are released. The site will be updated as frequently as possible; however, it is always wise to check with your Manager for any last-minute changes, cancellations or additions.

There are times when some teams will decide to purchase extra ice time on their own. These practices are considered voluntary and are in addition to time provided by AAYIHA. Families will be asked to share the cost of the extra ice time.

TEAM JERSEYS & SOCKS

Jerseys

Jersey numbers are managed by AAYIHA to avoid duplication of numbers. Numbers can not be duplicated within two years of your player's birth year (above or below). Example: If your player's birth year is 1996 his/her jersey number can not duplicate anyone's between and including birth years 1994 through 1998. Once you receive a number you own that number as long as you are a member of AAYIHA. When a player leaves the association his/her number will become available. Home and Away Tracker jerseys are not included in your fees. The cost of jerseys is based on the cost to the Association and may change each season. At your first team meeting of the season, your team manager will tell you the price of the jerseys and take your jersey order. Jerseys are to be kept in good game shape condition. Jerseys with loose or damaged numbers or logos or jerseys with stains may be deemed unacceptable by the AAYIHA Executive Board. These unacceptable jerseys will need to be repaired or replaced at the expense of the player. Jerseys are to be worn for AAYIHA games or authorized events only. Players should not wear game jerseys for team practices. No patches, artwork, or other insignia may be placed on the jersey without the expressed written permission of the AAYIHA.

If you already own your jersey:

If you already purchased your jerseys, you do not need to purchase another set until your player needs a larger size or the condition of the jersey becomes unacceptable for play. You will have to provide your team manager with three number choices in the order you want them and a number will then be assigned to you.

If you do not have Tracker jerseys:

If you do not have a set of Tracker jerseys, you will have to purchase a set. The cost of a new set of jerseys will be set at the beginning of each season. If you would like to purchase a set of used jerseys the cost is \$35. These will be available while they are in stock.

If you wish to purchase new jerseys, your team manager will take your size and a selection of three jersey numbers your player would like, in the order they like them. If you wish to purchase used jerseys, your team manager will take your size and will provide a list of numbers your player can chose from.

Socks

Home and Away Tracker socks are not included in your fees. The cost of socks is based on the cost to the Association and may change each season. At your first team meeting of the season, your team manager will tell you the price of the socks and take your sock order. Socks are to be kept in good game shape condition. Socks with holes or stains may be deemed unacceptable by the AAYIHA Executive Board. These unacceptable socks will need to be replaced at the expense of the player. Socks are to be worn for AAYIHA games or authorized events only. Players should not wear game socks for team practices.

Players should always bring both home and away jerseys and socks to all games regardless of the location.

EQUIPMENT REQUIREMENTS

Selection of hockey equipment is a key issue for players, parents, and coaches. When purchasing and fitting hockey equipment, remember two important factors. First, make certain the player is adequately protected, and second, be sure the fitting allows freedom of movement so the player can properly perform the necessary skills.

Shop around for the best values - hockey equipment doesn't have to be the most expensive to meet your skaters needs.

Each skater must wear the following USA Hockey and PAHL required equipment when participating in games or practices.

- **Hockey skates** (not figure skates) - allow no more than ½" for growth. Seek adequate protection in the ankle, toe, and instep areas. Improperly fitted skates will hamper your child's ability to skate.
- **Helmet** - USA Hockey-approved protective helmet with full-face protection of any style, with the Hockey Equipment Certification Council (HECC) seal of approval. Size at the time of purchase to fit properly.
- **Face mask** - required at all levels and must be approved by HECC.
- **Ice hockey stick** (not a plastic street hockey stick) - the length should generally extend from the ice to the player's chin (with skates on).
- **Neck/throat protector** - AAYIHA recommends neck protectors made with ballistic nylon.
- **Hockey elbow pads** - fitted properly so they do not slide.
- **Hockey gloves** - allow for good finger and hand mobility.
- **Hockey shin pads** - the length should protect the knee and shin completely.
- **Hockey shoulder pads** - adjust to fit at the time of purchase. A fiber cap is extremely important in preventing shoulder separation and should extend to the tip of the shoulder.
- **Hockey padded pant.**
- **Mouth guard** - colored internal mouth guards are mandatory.
- **Protective cup/supporter** (pelvic protector for girls)
- **Jersey** - home and away game jerseys
- **Goalies** - Goalies require special leg pads, chest protectors, gloves and blockers.

SAFETY

Providing a safe playing environment is of paramount importance to USA Hockey, PAHL, and AAYIHA. As such, several rules exist to ensure coach, player and fan safety:

- Coaches and instructors must properly wear an approved ice hockey helmet during all on-ice sessions, including practices, controlled scrimmages and coach and referee clinics (seminars).
- Players must wear all of the required equipment (see above) at all times during games and practices. A player may be removed from the ice by a coach or referee if any protective item is missing or deemed defective.
- It is AAYIHA policy that a USA Hockey-registered coach or assistant coach must be on the ice for all practices. If a coach is not available to supervise a practice, the practice may not be conducted and players may not be on the ice.
- Players may not be on the ice when the Zamboni is on the ice. All players must wait to enter the ice surface until after the Zamboni doors have been closed. Similarly, at the end of a game or practice, all players must leave the ice promptly when the Zamboni doors are opened.
- An EMT must be present and sign the score sheet at all PAHL regular season and playoff games at all levels. The EMT must be "in the rink" and available to go onto the ice surface when asked by the referees. In the case of a dual rink facility where two games are being played simultaneously, two EMTs must be present (e.g. one EMT cannot cover both games at the same time). If these conditions are not met, the game cannot be played.
- An EMT is not required to be present for scrimmages at any level, but is highly recommended. All team managers have contact information for the AAYIHA EMT service.
- It is AAYIHA policy that any non-participating players, or children under the age of 18, who are on the bench or in the penalty box during a game or scrimmage, must wear a USA Hockey approved helmet with face guard.
- Fans and parents are not permitted to go onto the ice surface or enter the bench area, penalty box, or score keepers area during any game, scrimmage, or practice unless requested to do so by an EMT, coach, team official, or referee. Going onto the playing surface without such a request is a violation of the Zero Tolerance Rule and will be dealt with accordingly.
- When an EMT is present, fans, parents, coaches, and referees ARE NOT to interfere with treatment of an injured player. ONLY the EMT is permitted to provide treatment.

The spinal cord **is a** very vulnerable structure which connects the brain to the body, and is located in the middle of the cervical spine, protected by bony structures.

Ice hockey and other sports can contribute to neck injuries of varying degrees of severity, including neck fractures and cervical spinal cord injuries (SCIs). A fractured (broken) neck is a very serious matter, but in many cases, the patient can make a full recovery and regain all neurological function. A neck fracture can sometimes lead to a complete SCI, which will result in some degree of paralysis or even death. Therefore, our coaches have been instructed to recognize the potential for a player to have incurred a

cervical spine (**neck**) **injury** and immediately call 911 for professional assistance. A person with a neck injury should not be moved without competent medical care, which should be summoned immediately. It is important to recognize the possibility of a neck fracture because injuries **that are** severe enough to cause a head injury or other trauma, may often also cause a **cervical spine injury**.

REGISTRATION

Player Registration

- Players must have completed all USA Hockey required documents and paid all prescribed fees prior to participation in scrimmages, exhibition games, tournaments, or P.A.H.L. league games.
- Players that are not registered with AAYIHA are absolutely not permitted to participate in any on-ice or off-ice (dryland) practices with an AAYIHA team. Participation by unregistered players in AAYIHA practices voids the USA Hockey insurance for all team members and the Association and places the coach, parents, and Association at risk. The only exception to this policy is when a player or players are participating in a practice for the purpose of team placement evaluation by the Association. In this case, advance approval for the player's participation must be obtained from both the AAYIHA Vice President and President.

Coaches Registration

- Coaches must have completed a USA Hockey “Individual Membership Registration”, Mid-Am and paid all fees prior to participation in any on ice try-outs, practices, scrimmages, exhibition games, tournament games, or P.A.H.L. League Games.
- Participation by unregistered instructors voids the USA Hockey insurance for all team members and the Association and places the players, parents, and Association at risk.
- The Head Coach and all rostered Assistant Coaches must have attained at least the level of coaching Certification as required by USA Hockey.

BACKGROUND SCREENING

In an effort to provide a safe and fun environment for our players and volunteers, AAYIHA & Mid-American Hockey requires that all new volunteers, including Coaches, Team Managers, Referees and all on-ice instructors submit to a background screen before they have routine access to children who participate in our organization. The screening is valid for a period of three years. Each individual will be responsible for paying the associated fee to undergo this process for certification. A link to the Mid-Am Screening can be found on our web site.

TEAM AND PLAYER CLASSIFICATION

Altoona Area Youth Ice Hockey Association is a registered member of USA Hockey, Inc. and abides by all of its rules and regulations governing amateur hockey. AAYIHA also belongs to the Pittsburgh Amateur Hockey League (PAHL) and abides by all of its rules and regulations governing league play.

Player participants are placed in one of six age groups at the beginning of the competitive season. The groups are determined by a participant's age as of January 1 preceding the beginning of a season. The age classifications are as listed on the USA Hockey website.

PLAYING "UP"

AAYIHA discourages players from playing above their age classifications. Players may move upward in age classifications only under the following circumstances and under the guidelines recommended by USA Hockey, the PAHL, and AAYIHA policy.

At the request of the parent:

The player must register and participate in both tryout sessions. The player must demonstrate that he/she is among the top five players of the older age classification, and that he/she demonstrates the mental maturity to compete at the older age classification. The player CANNOT displace an age-appropriate player from a higher age classification team.

If no age appropriate team is available:

If there is no team at the player's appropriate competitive level in his/her classification, and the player is capable of playing at a higher age classification. For example, if a child is capable of playing at Bantam AA but AAYIHA is not fielding a team at that level, the player may play at the Midget A or AA level if he/she is capable of doing so.

Other circumstances: AAYIHA understands that there might be circumstances in which a player could be considered to play at one level higher (one year) than their age appropriate playing level. In such circumstances, parents must submit a letter to the AAYIHA Executive Board detailing the reasons why they are requesting such a move. The Executive Board will then make a decision whether to grant the move or not.

Coaching need:

If a coach is needed at a higher level, the coach's child may play up, provided the player is capable of playing at the age classification to which the coach has been assigned.

All requests for playing up are a special circumstance and will be evaluated on an individual basis at the discretion of the ACE Administrator and the Coaches Committee.

In all cases, a parent or legal guardian must sign a USA Hockey waiver form permitting the player to tryout and/or play at the higher age classification.

In addition to the circumstances listed above, the Executive Board must also consider whether moving a player up would limit the organization's ability to field a competitive team at the player's actual age level.

COACHES

AAYIHA coaches come from a variety of backgrounds, but all share two important characteristics; they are ALL volunteers, and they all care about the development of our children. Head Coaches are selected by the AAYIHA Coaches Committee and are responsible for all on ice decisions of the team which include but are not limited to selection of assistant coaches and team managers, practice organization, roster selection, player positions, playing time, and tournament participation.

Criteria for becoming a coach are:

- Coaches must possess a thorough knowledge of the strategies and skills required of the game.
- Prior hockey coaching experience is strongly preferred; however, a combination of thorough knowledge of the game and other youth team coaching experience is an acceptable substitute.
- Desire and ability to teach young people the skills required in the sport.
- Sincere desire to develop and nurture young people.
- Commitment to the values, mission, and goals of USA Hockey and the Altoona Area Youth Ice Hockey Association.
- Ability to receive clearance under Act 34 (screening for prior arrests/convictions under child abuse/endangerment laws).
- USA Hockey coaching certification. -- All coaches must meet USA Hockey coaching requirements by December 1 of the current playing season, or he/she will be removed. USA Hockey provides training to individuals who wish to coach through its Coaching Achievement Program. This program is administered through affiliate State Associations in the form of clinics. These clinics are specifically designed to supply each coach with the knowledge of his/her responsibilities and skills of the game that will equip him/her to do the best possible job at whatever caliber of hockey he/she is involved with. The AAYIHA requires all persons interested in becoming coaches to attend these clinics. Clinics are typically held in the fall.

AAYIHA has a written statement of expectations and standards for its coaches. This document can be obtained from any board member or your team manager.

If you have an interest in coaching or assistant coaching, please contact the AAYIHA.

ACE ADMINISTRATOR

The ACE Administrator will coordinate the activities and training of all coaches and act as a mentor to help coaches teach the game of hockey to their players. By providing a systematic program for individual player and team skill development, the ACE Administrator will outline the duties of all coaches at each age level for the benefit all parties. The ACE Administrator will also relay all USA Hockey coaching clinic information to the coaches and the Board of Directors. This is a voting board position.

The ACE Administrator will oversee the following association functions:

- Coaching Selection Committee
- Tryout Process
- Player Placement
- Team Placement
- Player Review
- Team Review
- Coach Review

In essence, the ACE Administrator is the director of player and coach development and reports to the Executive Committee and Board of Directors.

COMPETITIVE HOCKEY

All AAYIHA teams are registered and play under the rules established by USA Hockey. Teams are formed in all age divisions and will compete as "AA", "A" Major and/or Minor, or "B" divisions. If there are sufficient numbers of available players, multiple teams may exist at each age level. All AA teams Pee Wee age or older are classified as Tier II and are eligible to participate in the state tournament qualifier. The remaining teams are registered with USA Hockey as "house rec".

AAYIHA hockey is intended to offer a progressive, developmental hockey experience for all players. Each competitive level has differing objectives and goals:

"B"

This level's focus is the development of the basic skills needed to play hockey and learning the fundamentals of game and position play. The emphasis is on learning and developing, not winning. Typically, "B" teams at the Mite through Bantam levels are comprised of players who are first year players or returning players who are still developing their hockey and game skills at that particular level.

"A"

The A level introduces a more competitive team-based level of play while continuing to enhance individual skills. These players typically are returning players who understand the concepts of team and position play, game situations, and have the necessary skating and other skills to be successful at this level. Of the three competitive levels, the A level will often have the broadest range of skill attainment by individual players. The A division is further defined by the "Major" and "Minor" categories, and teams are formed at these levels depend on the number of players available and the skills of those players demonstrated during tryouts and early season scrimmages.

"AA"

The AA level is the highest competitive level in the PAHL. Players at this level are highly developed in their skating, hockey, and game skills. Coaching and development at this level is focused on refining concepts of team play, introduction of more complex game strategy, and honing the individual's hockey skills. At the Pee Wee, Bantam, and Midget level, these teams are considered to be "Tier II" and may elect to compete in the post-season playoffs to qualify for the USA Hockey National Championship tournament.

It is important to note, that AAYIHA's philosophy of competitive play emphasizes participation by ALL team members. AAYIHA coaches are to provide all players equivalent playing opportunities as game conditions permit. At the same time, players earn playing time by effort in practice and playing team hockey as well as a player's attitude and respect for his/her teammates and respect for the game. All players will play a reasonable amount of time each game to be determined by the head coach. At the Mite and Squirt levels, playing time should be similar for all players provided that players have fulfilled their practice obligations. Mite AA, Squirt AA, Pee Wee, Bantam, Midget, and Girls U19 divisions are more competitive and some imbalance of playing time may occur due to penalty kill and power play situations. In the last eight minutes of any game, the head coach has the option to shorten the bench based upon the score of the game.

If you believe that this philosophy is not being followed properly for your child, you should first observe a 24-hour cooling off period, then contact your Team Manager with your concerns and arrange a discussion with the head coach if necessary. Most of the time, your concerns can be addressed at this level. However, if you do not believe the issue has been satisfactorily resolved, you are asked to notify any AAYIHA board member to assist in the process.

All players are expected to attend scheduled practices to be considered for equal play. Players or their families are required to inform the head coach in advance if a practice cannot be made.

TEAM PLACEMENT

AAYIHA attempts to field teams at each competitive level in each age division. The number and level of teams are determined after the tryout process and are based on the number and skill level of the players attending the tryouts.

While the initial team placement is made following tryouts, the level at which the team plays during the coming season may be changed under two conditions.

1) Association/Coach/Parent Decision: Many things can occur during the summer that could change a team's competitive potential: children develop and grow, the group of children as a team is greater than or less than the individual skill they showed in the tryouts, players may decide not to play for AAYIHA, or families may move out of the area.

2) If it becomes apparent during the pre-season practices that the team was placed at an incorrect level, and it is felt that a change is in the best interest of the children, the team's placement may be changed. The final decision may be made jointly by the Head Coach, team parents, and the AAYIHA Executive Board.

PAHL Review:

All team placements are submitted to the Pittsburgh Amateur Hockey League (PAHL) Placement Committee for approval. The PAHL committee reviews all team placement requests from every PAHL association and may make changes to promote a competitive balance in each division and to provide the proper developmental opportunities for each team. The decision of the PAHL review is final and no appeal of the decision is permitted.

TRYOUT PROCESS

Team players are selected after a series of open tryouts. Tryouts are typically held in the spring of each year. Players are required to attend all tryout sessions at their selected level to receive proper evaluation for placement.

The goal of the tryouts is to assess the comparative skill levels and playing abilities of each child to place him or her on a team that is best suited to their current skill level and that will enable the child to develop during the coming season. The AAYIHA also attempts to assemble teams that have the best opportunity for success in a competitive environment.

Following the tryouts, players will be offered a spot on a team roster. Once a player is offered and accepts a team assignment, he/she is expected to fulfill their commitment for the entire season. Any player who quits a team after accepting a roster spot prior to September 1st, will be responsible for his/her portion of the team's summer ice cost as determined by AAYIHA Executive Board as well as their commitment fee. Any player, who quits a team after September 1st, will be responsible for the entire fee. The player will not be released from AAYIHA until his/her financial responsibility is satisfied. There may be circumstances (ie. a player moving out of the area) that the Executive Board may release the player without the financial responsibility. These circumstances would have to be brought to the Executive Board's attention.

All players are subject to USA Hockey eligibility rules, and team rosters are limited to a maximum of twenty players. A minimum of nine skaters and a goalie must be on a team in order to compete in the PAHL.

Injured players:

If a returning AAYIHA player is injured and unable to attend the tryouts, the player will be tentatively offered a spot on either an A or B team. The player will then be evaluated in the fall at one or two team practices before the season begins for final team placement. The player will be reassigned to a higher competitive level ONLY IF a roster spot exists on the other team and the player demonstrates the ability to play at the higher level. The AAYIHA does not guarantee placement at any particular level for any injured player, but will make every effort to place the player at the proper competitive level.

FILLING ROSTER SPOTS AFTER TRYOUTS

AAYIHA exists to provide children the opportunity to play hockey. We will make every attempt to provide an appropriate roster spot to a child who wishes to play hockey but contacts AAYIHA following our team selection and player placement process.

If a roster spot becomes available between the time player placement is completed in the spring and the beginning of the competitive season in September, AAYIHA will first consider those players who attended our spring tryouts and have accepted roster spots on lower classified teams. If a player was evaluated as having the ability to play at the higher level but insufficient roster spots were available for him/her at the time of original team placement, the player may be offered the opportunity to "move up" to the higher competitive level.

AAYIHA may also hold a supplemental tryout in the late summer to fill open roster spots. Current AAYIHA players on lower competitive level teams may attend supplemental tryouts for higher level teams, along with any non-AAYIHA members who are interested in participating in our program.

If a roster spot becomes available on a team after pre-season practices begin, a single tryout session may be held. Current AAYIHA players on lower competitive teams, and/or non-AAYIHA member players can be evaluated for the open roster spot. The open roster spot will be offered to the child who demonstrates the best ability and potential to compete at the team's level. AAYIHA may charge a small fee to cover the cost of additional ice time for the evaluation.

Players who contact AAYIHA after our teams are selected will be evaluated for placement only if a roster spot is available at the child's age group. Roster additions after the start of the competitive season may be made with the approval of the AAYIHA Board and after an assessment of the player to be added. Roster additions can be made through December 31 of the competitive season. Any additions to rosters after the start of the competitive season are subject to review by the PAHL and could, possibly, result in the disqualification of the team from playoff participation. For this reason, additions to rosters at this time may be (but are not required to be) placed to a vote by the parents of the team.

OFF SEASON TEAMS

AAYIHA officially rosters its teams with USA hockey for the period beginning in late August through the conclusion of the USA Hockey National Tournaments (April). During this time, AAYIHA registered players and teams may participate in scrimmages, regular season play, and tournaments as a representative of AAYIHA.

During the time not covered above (roughly from the conclusion of the USA Hockey National Tournaments to the beginning of the AAYIHA/PAHL pre-season), teams may not practice or play exhibition games registered under the name of AAYIHA, nor use the name of AAYIHA, or wear the AAYIHA logo on their uniform without the expressed written consent of AAYIHA.

Coaches may not conduct any mandatory AAYIHA team practices, games, or other functions in the off-season. AAYIHA players cannot be required to participate in any independent team during the off-season as a condition of being a member of an AAYIHA team during the regular season.

This policy does not prohibit players and coaches from participating in/on independent teams, spring leagues, or other independent teams during the off-season.

REGULAR SEASON PLAY

The PAHL specifies the number of games for each age and competitive level, ranging from 14-18 per season at the Mite level, to 18-20 per season at the older age levels. The games are evenly divided between home and away games.

PAHL teams are located throughout Western Pennsylvania, Maryland, and West Virginia. It is possible that a team may have to travel to such areas to play some of their away games. The PAHL establishes the divisional structure for the regular season based on the number of declared teams at each competitive level.

The PAHL provides AAYIHA with a list of the teams each of our teams must play during the season.

In addition to the regular season games, teams often have scrimmages in the pre-season or during the year to provide additional game experiences for their players. Home scrimmages are usually scheduled when the team has a full ice practice, but the team can elect to purchase additional ice time for scrimmages. The team is responsible for securing and paying any officials or EMT's for the game. Scrimmages do not count in the PAHL regular season standings; however, hat trick, playmaker, and shut out awards can be earned.

TOURNAMENT PLAY

AAYIHA teams participate in only USA Hockey sanctioned tournaments in the U.S. and Canada. If there is a tournament that the Head Coach wishes the team to play in, team parents are given details of the tournament, including dates and costs.

Tournament participation for any team will be made by the head coach in consultation with assistant coaches and the team. The head coach will select the skill appropriate level for the team and has the option of adding players based on the skill level of the tournament and the current roster size. Tournament playing time may be more uneven than the regular season as tournament points are most often based on period scores versus game scores. Players may not play on another tournament team if there is a schedule conflict without the permission of the head coach. Tournaments may require additional practices for preparation, and all team members must agree to the additional practices for tournament participation.

Tournament fees are in addition to any AAYIHA required fees and charges.

AAYIHA also sponsors its own tournament each season: March Madness. This tournament has grown into one of the most prestigious youth hockey tournaments in Western Pennsylvania and attracts teams from Ohio, New York, Maryland, and West Virginia. The tournament coordinator and committee determine the divisions and levels of participation each season and require each participating AAYIHA team's parents to assist in the operation of the tournament. Failure by any parent to assist in the operation of the tournament may result in the player not being permitted to participate.

If a team does not have enough players to fill a team roster and wishes to participate in a tournament, players from an equal or lesser level team may be asked to participate. A special USA Hockey Roster must then be completed. Contact the AAYIHA Registrar for more information on special rostering requirements.

HOCKEY PARENTS

As parents or guardians, we are the most important influence on our players' attitudes toward the game of hockey and on their behavior. Parents and coaches can work together to demonstrate AAYIHA's philosophy "to develop the skills of hockey and to promote the growth of each player, promote good sportsmanship and team play, and for each player to have fun." AAYIHA has developed a "Parents Code of Conduct and Behavior Guidelines" that is consistent with the AAYIHA philosophy. This is distributed at the beginning of the season and must be signed by each parent/guardian.

Above all, the motivating factor for most children who enter an organized youth sport program is their desire to have fun. With a supportive attitude and a fundamental understanding of the "basics" of hockey, everyone will come away from their youth sports experience with a positive feeling.

The degree to which a child benefits from his or her youth hockey experience is as much the parent's responsibility as it is theirs. It is important for you to show support and offer encouragement while maintaining a genuine interest in the team.

Be Positive:

It is important to allow your children to establish their own goals and play the game for themselves. Be careful not to impose your own standards or objectives. The best way to help children achieve goals and reduce their natural fear of failure is through positive reinforcement. No one likes to make mistakes. If your child does make a mistake - and he/she will (they are kids, remember) keep in mind that mistakes are an important part of the overall learning process. Be supportive and point out the things that they do well. Make your child feel like a winner!

Let the Coach, coach:

Most coaches have a well-defined plan for season practices and games that are focused on developing each player. Parents are responsible for supporting and respecting the coach's decisions and abilities and it is unfair to put children in the position of having to decide who to listen to - their parents or the coach.

Avoid Over-Emphasis on Winning:

A recent survey indicated that 72% of children would rather play for a losing team than ride the bench for a winner. Avoid placing an exaggerated emphasis on winning.

At Practice:

For a child to improve, he/she has to practice, not just play games. Practice emphasizes the importance of teamwork, establishing goals, discipline, and learning to control emotions, all of which are important lessons children can use both in and away from sports. While conflicts are sometimes unavoidable, it is important that your child attend all his/her team practices.

Car and Home:

Some parents spoil the fun for their kids in the car, believing that this is the perfect place for instruction. Keep things in perspective. There's more to life than hockey, and the car and home are not the places to coach. The most important aspect of your child's youth hockey experience is for them to have fun while developing physical and emotional skills that will serve them for life. A healthy, risk-free environment that emphasizes the importance of fair play, sportsmanship, discipline, and fun will be invaluable for your child as he or she continues to develop a positive self image.

In the Stands and at the Rink:

Negative and rowdy behavior in the hockey rink reflects directly and poorly on the whole organization. We must foster good relationships between our young players, within the Association and with our competitors as well.

Children are great imitators. As parents, our children look to us as positive examples for them. Parents and fans are encouraged to enjoy the game and cheer for good plays. Kids often mirror the actions of their parents; if they see mom or dad losing their cool in the stands, they probably do the same on the ice.

It is worth stating that in accordance with USA Hockey's policy of ZERO TOLERANCE, the following actions are not acceptable:

- Yelling at or threatening referees, opposing players, or coaches before, during, or after games or practices.
- Direct confrontations with parents or players.

- Demonstrations of frustration or anger after a game loss.
- Unnecessary or exaggerated celebration of a goal scored or a game won that would embarrass or demean the opposing team.
- Any physical or verbal abuse of any other person.
- Approaching the bench during a game situation unless summoned by a player or coach.

Disruptive or abusive parents may be asked to leave the rink and compliance is expected. The PAHL has invested the referees with the authority to suspend any game action until a disruptive or abusive parent or fan has left the rink area. Play will not resume until the offender has left, and the curfew clock will not be adjusted for the delay in the game.

AAYIHA will enforce the Zero Tolerance rule. If notified of a parent/fan infraction of the Rule, the President of AAYIHA will suspend the parent/fan from attending their player's next game. Successive infractions will receive additional game suspensions or will result in further disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from AAYIHA membership.

If a parent/fan refuses to abide by the suspension, the parent/fan's player will serve the game. Any monetary fines issued by PAHL, Mid-Am, or USA Hockey for infractions of the Zero Tolerance Rule will be the responsibility of the offending member.

Any member who wishes to register a complaint regarding an on-ice official should send the complaint in writing to the AAYIHA Board of Directors who will contact the proper authorities within the PAHL or USA Hockey programs.

In the locker room

All players need to get dressed for practice and games in the assigned team locker room. Players should not be getting dressed for practices or games in public areas such as the lobby. Locker room time is important for team building before and after practice and games.

Only Mite and Squirt parents and parents with a player with special needs (upon Association approval), are allowed to help dress their players in the locker room but must vacate the locker room 15 minutes before game time and shall not enter the locker room after the game until instructed by the coaches or team manager.

During practices and games, the only persons permitted in the locker room areas and behind the benches are participating players, coaches, off ice officials, and referees, except parents as noted above. During game time, parents and spectators are not permitted past the Zamboni doors. Parents and spectators have the option to view the game in the stands, at ice level behind the goals, or in other designated areas in the rink.

PARENT/COACH RELATIONS

As stated previously, parents and coaches must work together to demonstrate the philosophy of AAYIHA. With this in mind, AAYIHA emphasizes the following points of the Parent/Coach relationship:

- Let the coach do the coaching.
- Support and assist the coaches whenever possible.
- Know the rules of the game and the guidelines, policies, and practices of AAYIHA, PAHL, and USA Hockey.
- If an incident occurs between players, let the coaches handle the situation.

Dealing with concerns - 24-hour "Cooling Off" period.

If a parent has a concern with a Coach (or any other issue with the association), he/she is required to wait 24 hours before taking up the issue with the team's Manager. This "cooling off period" provides an opportunity for all parties to separate themselves from the immediacy of the situation, and then discuss it in a calm, non-emotional manner.

Team officials are not required to deal with an upset or emotional parent unless the 24-hour cooling off period has been observed.

If, after discussion, a mutually agreeable resolution to the issue cannot be achieved, a formal complaint or request for intervention can be submitted in writing to the ACE Administrator who will then report to the AAYIHA President. The AAYIHA President and other Board members will investigate the situation and meet with the parties to facilitate a resolution.

Likewise, a coach who has a concern about a parent must follow this same procedure.

PARENT AND PLAYER BEHAVIOR, CONDUCT, AND DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS

The rules in this handbook are designed to establish procedures and guidelines to support young people who participate in the AAYIHA. Many of the rules are those enacted by USA Hockey, Inc., which governs youth hockey. AAYIHA is committed to ensuring that they are observed.

The AAYIHA Board of Directors and its coaches, team managers, and volunteer parents all have a vested interest in providing a safe, fun-filled environment for each player. In return, each parent and player must understand that coaches, assistant coaches, team managers, and parent helpers are to be treated with respect and consideration. AAYIHA players are expected to be attentive to coaches' directions and instructions and to avoid disruption. The Board of Directors will support the coaching staff in cases where reasonable discipline must be exercised in order to maintain an organized and enjoyable learning environment.

USA Hockey and AAYIHA have written Codes of Conduct for players and parents, which are expected to be signed at the beginning of the season. It is expected that a parent and/or player will conduct her/himself in a controlled manner while representing AAYIHA both on and off the ice while participating in team functions. Team functions include, but are not limited to, games, practices, team meetings and team trips, and may include, but are not limited to, locker rooms, hotels, team benches, on ice, or any other location of a team function.

Foul language and direct insubordination is unacceptable behavior and will be dealt with accordingly.

Ice time is valuable. All players should arrive at games and practices in sufficient time to allow for suiting up and the necessary pre-game/practice instruction and/or warm up. Unless you have been told differently by your coach, it is recommended that you be ready to "take the ice" at least 15 minutes before the scheduled starting time of any practice or game.

Reliable attendance is essential to personal skill development and the development of team continuity. AAYIHA Head Coaches have the authority to implement a reasonable practice and game attendance policy to avoid disruption to the team.

DISCIPLINE

The initial authority for player discipline is vested in team coaches and the AAYIHA President. Team Coaches have the authority to discipline any player(s) on their teams for just cause, including wrongful conduct that occurs during any team function as defined above.

Disciplinary actions may include, but will not be limited to, benching a player for all or part of a game, suspension from a game(s) or practice(s), or recommendation to the Executive Board that the player be dismissed from the team.

All disciplinary actions must be reported to the AAYIHA President who is authorized to impose changes or additions to the disciplinary actions imposed by the Team Coach(s).

Appeals of disciplinary actions:

Any member(s) may appeal the disciplinary action decision to the AAYIHA President after observing the 24-hour cooling off period. The AAYIHA President will determine if the action(s) is appropriate to the situation, and will uphold, or make changes to, the action based on the facts in the case.

An appeal of the decisions or disciplinary actions of the AAYIHA President can be made to the AAYIHA Executive Board of Directors who will review the facts and make an appropriate decision on each case.

AAYIHA will adhere to all USA Hockey and PAHL league rules with respect to minor and major penalties. All match or gross misconduct penalties whether in a PAHL game, a tournament game, or a scrimmage, will be reported to the PAHL Level Statistician and the AAYIHA President and/or Vice President. It is the responsibility of the Team Manager to report such infractions to the PAHL and AAYIHA Board within 24 hours of the occurrence.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

As described in previous paragraphs, appeal procedures exist to deal with player, coach, team, or association issues. Any complaints or grievances should first be addressed by the team coach or business manager following the 24-hour cooling off period. In some cases (as outlined in the Disciplinary section, above) the first appeal should be made in writing to the AAYIHA President.

If the parent/guardian is not satisfied with the resolution of the problem, a written appeal should be prepared and presented to the AAYIHA Board of Directors within 10 days of the action or decision by the team officials or AAYIHA President. The Board will review the appeal and initiate appropriate problem solving actions.

In some situations, decisions by the AAYIHA Board can be appealed to the PAHL, Mid-Am, or USA Hockey authorities which have rules governing their grievance procedure.

FINANCES AND FEES

Registration fees are established annually by the AAYIHA Board and are based on the projected budget for the coming season.

A number of factors determine annual playing fees, but the two most significant variables are our expected ice costs and the number of players we expect to roster for the season. Other important variables include sponsorships and changes in EMT and Referee charges.

AAYIHA requires that all players who attend AAYIHA team tryouts to pay a non-refundable tryout fee, and a \$150 commitment fee at the time they register for tryouts. The \$150 commitment fee is refunded if a roster spot is not offered to a player, or if the player declines the roster spot.

Any player who quits a team after accepting a roster spot prior to September 1st, will be responsible for his/her portion of the team's summer ice cost as determined by AAYIHA Executive Board as well as their commitment fee. Any player, who quits a team after September 1st, will be responsible for the entire fee. The player will not be released from AAYIHA until his/her financial responsibility is satisfied. There may be circumstances (ie. a player moving out of the area) that the Executive Board may release the player without the financial responsibility. These circumstances would have to be brought to the Executive Board's attention.

A payment plan is available to give player families the ability to spread their fees over multiple payments. This option does not exist to provide a “pay-as-you-go” plan. If a player gets injured, sick or chooses to stop playing hockey part way through the season, that player is still responsible for the remaining balance of that season’s fees.

Payments are due by the 1st of every month starting September 1st. All payments received after the 15th of each month will be assessed a \$25 late fee to the player’s account. Any delinquent account after February 15 will be assessed a \$100 late fee.

Members who do not maintain their payment schedule, or who do not complete their payments to AAYIHA will have their players suspended from participating in any AAYIHA activities until the account balances are made current.

Tournament fees, extra ice times beyond those provided by AAYIHA, EMT and referee expenses for scrimmages, travel expenses to and from games and tournaments, equipment and other incidental expenses are not included in the registration fee and are the responsibility of the individual member.

A \$20 fee will be charged for personal checks which are returned by the banking institution for insufficient funds.

FUNDRAISING

We recognize that hockey is an expensive sport to play. Ice time, USA and PAHL hockey fees, and equipment costs - they all add up. We try to reduce these costs both to the association and to the individual through a variety of fundraising programs.

Voluntary fundraising:

AAYIHA offers families a variety of voluntary fundraising programs during the season. These fundraisers include selling Yankee candles, Marianna’s hoagies, Sheetz MTO coupons, or other items on which the individual member can make a profit to offset playing expenses. Voluntary fundraiser information for the summer months will be available at tryouts. Additional voluntary fundraising activity will be available throughout the season and communicated to you by your team’s manager or via the web site.

Team fundraising:

Occasionally teams wish to do their own fundraising. This is certainly acceptable, however, individual team fundraising requires approval by the Board of Directors to ensure that the activity is consistent with the mission and goals of AAYIHA and does not conflict with the Association's fundraising programs. AAYIHA does not provide capital or services for any individual team's fundraising activities, and the AAYIHA will be held harmless regarding any and all liabilities arising from such team activity.

SPONSORSHIPS

AAYIHA actively seeks corporate sponsors to underwrite regular season expenses which helps reduce all player fees. These sponsorships can be any amount, with AAYIHA providing a wide array of benefits to the sponsor. Tournament sponsors receive special recognition in all of our tournament publicity and publications. If you, or someone you know, are willing to be a corporate sponsor of youth hockey, please contact the AAYIHA President.

DISCLAIMER

Nothing in this guidebook is to be construed as a guarantee or contract to or with any player, parent, coach, official, or member of the Altoona Area Youth Ice Hockey Association. This publication is intended to serve as a guideline for operation of the AAYIHA, and any part or portion of the handbook can be changed, modified, or amended at anytime by the officers of the AAYIHA.