

FOOTHILLS RECREATIONAL HOCKEY LEAGUE GUIDELINES

Version Date: September 22, 2013

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1.0 Background

The Foothills Recreational Hockey League (FRHL) started in 1995 with the towns of Cochrane, Bragg Creek, Millarville and Priddis, and has since grown to include three additional communities – Canmore, Black Diamond/Turner Valley, and Okotoks. The main goal of those involved in the FRHL is to offer a fun, non-contact, family-oriented hockey league that promotes sportsmanship and involvement in hockey for any child, regardless of their ability, and to offer recruitment and retention opportunities for new players and those seasoned players that are seeking an alternative forum in which to play “the game”.

During one hockey season, each team plays approximately 8 scheduled home games, and 8 scheduled “away” games. Opportunities for playing additional games within the league (for example, during practice times or when extra ice is available on weekends), or exhibition games with other Pond Hockey teams in the Calgary area, are also encouraged if the coaches, parents and kids are keen to participate.

The League recognizes that there is a wide variety of talent among the players in the Foothills Recreational Hockey League, however it is **each coach's responsibility to ensure that each player is given an equal opportunity to play and develop an enjoyment for the game of hockey and team play.**

2.0 Teams and Organization

The League is comprised of four age/skill groupings:

- Tyke (5-7 years old)
- Atom (8-10 years old)
- Pee Wee (11-13 years old)
- Midget (14-16 years old, with involvement of 17 year olds on a case-by-case basis)

Generally, children are assigned to teams based upon their age on or before December 31st. As well, the skill level of the child may be taken into consideration when assigning them to a team. Given the fun nature of the league, the priority is to match skills rather than age when preparing team rosters.

Children are allowed to play on a higher-level team providing both parent and coach give approval. Generally, this situation arises when a team is short of players, or when the player is looking for more challenging play.

One Coordinator is required to represent each community. Each Coordinator will work with other community Coordinators to facilitate scheduling of season games and tournaments. As a community representative, the Coordinators' mandate shall be to uphold the spirit of Alberta Pond Hockey and facilitate fair play and sportsmanlike conduct among its players, coaches and parents. In the event a situation arises before, during or after a league sanctioned game

between the players, coaches and/ or parents of opposing teams that cannot be resolved at the coaching level, the Coordinator shall intervene and work with the opposing team's Coordinator in reaching a fair and equitable solution. The Coordinators' joint decision shall be final and binding.

3.0 Games and Practices

3.1 League Games

All league games are held on Saturdays and/or Sundays between October and March (weather permitting). Generally, any games that cannot be played due to poor weather or driving conditions are lost games and are not re-scheduled. However, if mutually agreed to by both coaches, re-scheduling of games is possible, depending on rink and player availability.

Games are generally cancelled when the temperature is below -20°C (-15°C for Tykes), when ice conditions are poor, or when road conditions for travel are unsafe.

The decision to cancel games due to weather conditions will reside with Coordinators. However, recognizing the unpredictable nature of Alberta weather, should the need arise to cut short a game already in progress, the assessment and decision will be at the discretion of the respective Coaches.

1 hour and 15 minutes is the recommended length of time for games. This allows for a 10-minute warm-up, and three 20-minute periods (non-stop time) with a short break between the periods. Teams may switch ends after each period.

Both coaches and the referee(s) must mutually agree to any changes to the above.

In order to ensure games are as competitive and fair as possible, the league suggests a 3-goal per game maximum for any individual player (including tournaments). If one team is significantly disadvantaged from a goal perspective, then this limit may be lifted to help even out the score.

3.2 Annual Tournament

The league organizes an annual tournament for all teams in March every year. The tournament schedule is organized in a round-robin format.

The league has decided against having shoot-outs when games end up tied during tournament play. Overall goals for/against will serve as a tie-breaker in the event that two teams end up winning the same number of games.

Players on teams for tournament games must:

- be part of the Group Insurance Plan,
- be eligible to play in the respective age group

- be on the team roster, and
- have played at least 75% of the season games with the team

Exceptions must be reviewed with the tournament committee prior to the tournament start.

3.3 Practices

Each team is responsible for its own practices.

4.0 Equipment

4.1 General

Players that participate in the Foothills Recreational Hockey League must wear a full set of hockey equipment which includes: helmet with face guard, neck guard, shoulder pads, elbow pads, gloves, pants, jock/jill strap, shin pads and skates (no picks).

Any player not wearing all of the above mentioned equipment will not be allowed on the ice. Referees and Coaches are required to enforce this.

In the event of cold weather during outside games, players will need extra layers that are not normally needed for inside games or warmer weather. Some tricks include wearing thin wool gloves inside hockey gloves, a balaclava or thin tongue under the helmet, and a thin wool/polypropylene underwear as a first or base layer.

4.2 Goaltenders

Goaltenders must have proper goalie equipment: goalie shoulder/chest/arm protector, goalie leg pads, pants, jock/jill strap, blocker and catching gloves, goalie mask (or hard plastic neck protector added to certified helmet and face guard) and neck guard. **Any goaltender not wearing all of the above mentioned equipment will not be allowed on the ice. Referees and Coaches are expected to enforce this.**

The above goalie equipment is required for the Atom, Pee Wee and Midget divisions as players in these age groups have hard and accurate shots and there are a lot of scrums in front of the net.

Some substitutions can be made at the Tyke level as long as the safety of the child is maintained (e.g. road warrior foam pads may be substituted for leather pads, which may be too heavy for this age group).

5.0 Rules & Regulations

5.1 General

The League generally follows the rules and regulations of Hockey Alberta. The main exception is rules relating to body checking or purposeful body contact, since this is a no-contact league. The following describes some of the areas of emphasis and exception.

PENALTIES - Minor penalties (as defined by Hockey Alberta) are 3 minutes in duration. These include ----- . Three minor penalties in one game by any player will result in a game ejection, and the player is eligible to play the next game (no write up is required). If this becomes a pattern with any particular player, that player's Coach must assess the situation and take appropriate action in consultation with the respective League Coordinator. Major penalties (as defined by Hockey Alberta) include an automatic "game misconduct" penalty, and include other offences such as ----- . A game misconduct call will require a write up by the Referee who makes the call, which is then to be forwarded to the respective League Coordinator. It will also result in an automatic one game suspension plus any additional games as warranted by the respective League Coordinator.

Please note that the assigning of penalties is different for each division (Tyke, Atom, Peewee and Midget) - please refer to the relevant section(s) below.

PHYSICAL CONTACT - This is a non-contact league, and body checking is not allowed. A player who body checks another player, or attempts to body check another player, will be given a minor penalty and the situation will also be assessed to determine if there was an intent to injure another player. Reckless actions that may or do result in injury will not be tolerated. Incidences where a player could have avoided body contact, and did not try to, will result in a 3 minute penalty (i.e. 'skating through' another player to get the puck, or racing for the puck and not avoiding contact). Physically using the body to gain positioning for the puck will be called for a 3 minute penalty. All other physical play will be addressed as per Hockey Alberta rules (i.e. hooking, holding, tripping etc.).

HEAD CONTACT - Every player must be accountable for any contact with an opposing player's head, whether intentional or not. This includes contact being made by part of their own body or stick to the opponents head. Unintentional contact will be a 3 minute penalty (i.e. player is falling and their stick hits an opponent's head). Intentional contact will be a 6 minute penalty (i.e. an elbow or a slap to the head). Contact to the head with intent to injure will result in a game misconduct (i.e. a deliberate punch to the head with no puck play involved), the player will be ejected from the game, and will be suspended for at least one more game following the game in which the incident occurred.

STICK HANDLING - Only 'snapshots' (that is, shots with a back swing that do not rise above the waist) are permitted. A 'slapshot', or a shot with a back swing that rises above the waist, will result in the play being stopped immediately (similar to the result of a high stick when a stick makes contact with the puck above the shoulder). Improper use of the stick is not allowed. Players are encouraged to use the stick for passing and shooting the puck only and not to interfere with another player. Any other use may result in a penalty.

5.2 Tyke

5.2.1 General

In the Tyke division, the players are encouraged to develop their skating and puck handling abilities by following the puck and moving it in the general direction of the opponents net.

Icing, offsides, and penalties are not called at this level, so there are very few opportunities to stop the play and allow players to change. To ensure everyone has equal playing time, the referee will stop the play every ± 3 minutes and ask for a line change. Play resumes with a face-off at one of the five face-off circles nearest the puck at the time of the whistle. (Note: the blueline circles are not used for face-offs; it causes too much confusion for the players trying to find their positions. In this case, it's better to use the centre ice circle.)

It is important for the referee to be sensitive to the proper time to stop the play and ask for a line change; typically, this is when there is a slowdown in the play around the three (3) minute mark. If there is a lot of action at the three (3) minute mark, then it is more important to let the kids keep playing than to stop the play.

Ideally, one referee and two on-ice coaches (one from each team) are required to 'officiate' these games. The referee is responsible for keeping time and scheduling line changes, and the coaches are responsible for providing the players with encouragement, guidance, advice on where to position themselves during face-offs, and to wipe the occasional tear.

If the score is posted, the differential between the teams should not exceed 5 goals.
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5.2.2 Penalties

None.

5.2.3 Icing and OffSides

None.

5.3 Atom

5.3.1 General

At this level, players have started to develop puck-handling abilities, the sense of positional play and a competitive spirit that leads to the occasional minor penalty for tripping and lots of good-natured complaints to the referee about all of the 'body checking'!

Games may be officiated by either one referee or preferably two referees. It is the responsibility of the home team to supply at least one referee. When possible, it is ideal for the visiting team to also supply a referee. In cases where a visiting referee is not available then a second referee from the home team is advisable.

In a one-referee system, the official needs to play from goal line to goal line (or at least face-off circle to face-off circle). There are numerous scrums around the net which requires a 'quick' whistle when the puck is out of sight.

There are some limitations with a single referee. Firstly, the offside calls at the blueline are questionable at times because the official isn't in proper position. Secondly, the referee is not able to give advice to players who demonstrate questionable play (see section 5.3.2 - Penalties).

The two-referee system is the preferred method for the Atom division. Each official plays from goal line to opposing blue line. This mitigates the limitations of the single referee system described above. Of particular importance is the ability to talk with the players about questionable play. A discussion about behaviour or actions is much more effective at this age than a penalty.

5.3.2 Penalties

All penalties are called consistently and will be served by the player in the penalty box. The player's team will play short-handed until the penalty expires or the other team scores a goal. There are to be no penalty shots, unless as directed by Hockey Alberta rules (i.e. tripping during a breakaway).

5.3.3 Icing and Offside

To prevent injuries to players racing for the puck at the end of the rink, icing is called immediately when the puck crosses the goal line.

Blueline offsides are the most common call in the Atom division and are called consistently. This reinforces the concept of positional play. Coaches are encouraged to teach this concept, especially to new players that are moving from the Tyke division.

Two-line passes are rare but are called consistently as well.

If the score is posted, the differential between the teams should not exceed 5 goals.
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5.4 Pee Wee

5.4.1 General

The kids are starting to put on a little weight, gain some speed and become more competitive, so we start to see some physical play that isn't considered body checking, but more like the bumps that occur in soccer. Sometimes it's very difficult to distinguish between a bump and a check, so it's important to follow the play at all times to observe the intent of the player that is key to making the call. Also, we start to see retaliatory play. You may judge a player's actions as a bump, but the player at the receiving end will sometimes take retaliatory action that has the intent. These types of actions are penalties and must be called at all times. Failure to call these types of penalties will lead to bad behaviour/habits in the future.

With the need to be observant of intent at all times, a two-referee system is very important in this age category. A single referee can carry the game, but it is a lot of work and has the potential to get out of hand very quickly. It is the responsibility of the home team to supply at least one referee. Where possible it is ideal for the visiting team to also supply a referee. In cases where a visiting referee is not available then a second referee from the home team is advisable.

The other aspect of the game that intensifies at this level is the play around the net. The two-referee system allows one official to be positioned on the goal line beside or behind the net at all times. This ensures that the whistle is blown quickly when the puck is not longer visible ('smothered') to prevent injuries to players around the goal, especially the goalie. Again, the competitive spirit has intensified from Atom, so a quick whistle is a must.

5.4.2 Penalties

All penalties are called consistently and will be served by the player in the penalty box. The player's team will play short-handed until the penalty expires or the other team scores a goal. There are to be no penalty shots, unless as directed by Hockey Alberta rules (i.e. tripping during a breakaway).

5.4.3 Icing and Offside

See Atom.

If the score is posted, the differential between the teams should not exceed 5 goals.
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5.5 MIDGET

5.5.1 General

Although the FRHL is a non-contact hockey league, midget-aged recreational hockey can still be fast and physical. It is absolutely vital at this age for officials to keep control of the game by having a zero-tolerance policy towards body checking and disrespectful behavior. Given the speed of some of these players, a two-referee system is the only effective way to adequately officiate Midget games. It is the responsibility of both teams to supply at least one referee who should have some experience and/or training in officiating hockey games.

The other aspect of the game that intensifies at this level is the play around the net. The two-referee system allows one official to be positioned on the goal line beside or behind the net at all times. This ensures that the whistle is blown quickly when the puck is not longer visible ('smothered') to prevent injuries to players around the goal, especially the goalie. A fast whistle is a must in these situations.

5.5.2 Penalties

All penalties are called consistently and will be served by the player in the penalty box. The player's team will play short-handed until the penalty expires or the other team scores a goal. There are to be no penalty shots, unless as directed by Minor Hockey rules (i.e. tripping during a breakaway).

5.5.3 Icing and Offside

See Pee Wee.

6.0 Insurance

Players that participate in the Foothills Recreational Hockey League are registered through the Pond Hockey program of Hockey Alberta. Part of the registration fees from each child represents the premium for the Group Insurance Policy under Pond Hockey Alberta Hockey. This insurance policy is mandatory.

NOTE: this Group Insurance Policy covers only registered players, coaches, referees and coordinators. Volunteers (excluding registered coaches and referees) are not covered under this policy. Some communities have created Sports Associations that may provide additional insurance coverage; please check with your local League representative.

Sample Sportsmanship Agreement

Background

As part of the Foothills Recreational Hockey League, the ♦ Minor Hockey Association (♦MHA) offers a recreational hockey program that allows players an opportunity to play hockey in a respectful environment with an emphasis on non-contact, sportsmanlike play. ♦MHA will provide the support necessary to make the hockey program successful, and the purpose of this Sportsmanship Agreement is to outline the requirements of players and parents.

Each family must ensure that this agreement is initialed where required, and signed, before their child or children is/are allowed on the ice to play hockey for the 2013/2014 hockey season.

1. Goals of the Foothills Recreational Hockey Program

The goals of the Foothills recreational hockey program are to: (1) make hockey fun and accessible to everyone who wants to play the game, (2) provide a place for all participants to learn hockey and continuously develop their hockey skills and abilities, and (3) demonstrate excellent sportsmanship and respect to all players and towns that participate in the Foothills Recreational Hockey League.

_____ **Player initials** _____ **Parent initials (1)** _____ **Parent initials (2)**

2. Parent Responsibilities

I agree as a parent to demonstrate good sportsmanship skills at practices and games, and I will respect and show appreciation for the volunteers who give their time to help my child. I understand that aggressive play, on-ice fighting or verbal abuse will not be tolerated and will likely result in a player receiving a suspension and not being allowed to play in the CMHA recreational hockey program.

I agree to do my best to ensure that my child/children is/are able to be a meaningful team player by attending as many practices and games as possible. I acknowledge that there may be scheduling conflicts periodically, but it is also important to support my child and my child's team by facilitating excellent attendance.

_____ **Parent initials (1)** _____ **Parent initials (2)**

3. Player Responsibilities

I agree to respect my opponents and do my best to be a true team player. I also will remember that winning is not the most important part of the game, but that having fun, improving skills, making friends and doing my best are also important. I will remember that coaches and officials are there to help me. I will accept their decisions and show them respect. I agree to control my temper and acknowledge that fighting or "mouthing-off" can spoil the game for everyone, so for all games I also agree to the following:

- (1) not to push or contact another player or official in a purposeful or aggressive way, direct verbal language at another player or official which is intended to be disrespectful or hurtful, or cause or attempt to instigate an on-ice argument, and
- (2) not to throw hockey sticks, helmets, or other hockey equipment on the ice or in the penalty box, or to leave a game early without shaking hands with the other team.

If I engage in any of the actions identified above, I understand that the President of CMHA has the authority to suspend my involvement in the recreational hockey program for the remainder of the hockey season. This decision will be made in consultation with the recreational hockey program co-ordinator, and the other board members of CMHA.

_____ **Player initials**

Agreed to and signed this ____ day of _____, 201_

Player signature

Parent (1) signature
Parent name:

Parent (2) signature
Parent name:

