



U S A H o c k e y  
S a f e t y M e d i a K i t

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# I n t r o d u c t i o n

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As the National Governing Body for the sport of ice hockey, USA Hockey is committed to promoting and fostering safety amongst its athletes, coaches and supporters. As such, it is the organization's role to educate its membership, through brochures, instructional videos and training seminars, on the meaning of fair play and respect for the individual. USA Hockey values the safety of all its participants, and aspires to make the game safe, fun and rewarding for its membership.

## **Facts About Safety and USA Hockey**

1. USA Hockey and USA Hockey InLine are not insurance companies and do not sell insurance. However, the organization does provide insurance coverage for all member players, coaches and referees participating in sanctioned activities.
2. More than 65% of USA Hockey's 500,000 players skate in a no-check hockey league. This includes all girls'/women's programs, USA Hockey InLine, programs for youth players aged 10 and under, some Pee Wee leagues for ages 12 and under and most Adult leagues.
3. USA Hockey has no influence over the education of non-members or of members competing in non-sanctioned play. While the organization is the authority for members playing in sanctioned leagues or tournaments, the organization cannot dictate policy to those outside its realm.
4. Most hockey injuries are accidental, and not a deliberate result of violence or illegal play. While some highly-publicized incidents at the professional level are

violent in nature, this is a disproportionate representation, and the vast majority of hockey injuries are unintentional.

## **USA Hockey Regulation**

1. The Safety and Protective Equipment Committee, led by Chairperson Dr. Alan Ashare, continually studies the game at all age levels for the purpose of developing means and methods of maintaining and improving player safety. The committee also has the duty to recommend rule changes pertaining to safety. The committee must consist of at least three members of the Board of Directors and/or District Registrars, appointed by the USA Hockey President, who shall designate the Chairperson of the Committee.
2. The Playing Rules Committee has a similar role to that of the Safety and Protective Equipment Committee. The Playing Rules Committee studies the playing rules of ice hockey, reviews proposals for changes and makes recommendations to the Board of Directors. The committee consists of at least five members of the Board of Directors and/or District Registrars, plus one representative of the NCAA, as appointed by the USA Hockey President, who shall also designate the Chairperson of the Committee.
3. The Risk Management Committee is charged with evaluating the risks inherent to the game and its facilities, and developing ways to minimize these

risks. The committee also makes recommendations to the appropriate committees and/or the Board of Directors and Executive Committee on all matters relating to risk management and insurance. The committee consists of a district risk manager from each of the 11 USA Hockey Districts as well as a National Coordinator, who serves as Committee Chair.

## S a f e t y T i m e l i n e



In 1972-73, the first modern rulebook was published under the leadership of Hal Trumble, the first full-time executive director of the Amateur Hockey Association of the United States (later USA Hockey), and Chet Stewart, a founder of the

Officiating Education Program and longtime USA Hockey volunteer. Titled *Official Rules of Ice Hockey*, this book is republished every other season, revising rules implemented by USA Hockey since the 1940's.

### Points of Emphasis:

Each edition of USA Hockey's *Official Rules of Ice Hockey*, features an introductory section devoted to points of emphasis. These points of emphasis, which began with the 1985-87 version of the rulebook, cover issues that require extra attention. Here are USA Hockey's points of emphasis:



1985-87:  
Penalizing contact above the shoulder.

1987-89:  
Establishing strict criteria and enforcement guidelines for aggressive fouls and stick work.

1989-91:  
Strict enforcement of aggressive fouls and the addition of a game misconduct penalty added to major penalties, for such infractions.

1991-93:  
Establishing strict enforcement of aggressive fouls.

1993-95:  
Penalizing body contact with the goalkeeper and carrying of sticks above the height of the shoulder. Also establishing a "Zero Tolerance" policy towards abuse of officials and unsportsmanlike behavior.

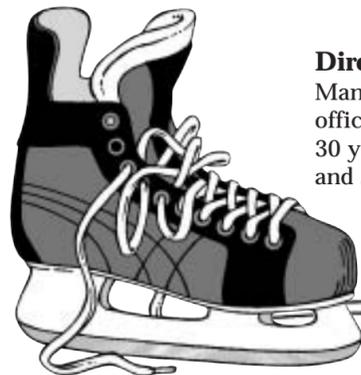
1995-97:  
Devoting extra attention to legal body checking and checking from behind.

1997-99:  
Establishing a "Zero Tolerance" policy towards unsportsmanlike behavior and penalizing violent behavior.

1999-01:  
Concentrating on parent/spectator behavior and violent behavior/contact above the shoulder.

2001-03:  
Paying extra attention to body checking, contact above the shoulder, sportsmanship and fair play.

2003-05:  
Increased awareness of avoidable contact after the whistle, fair play and respect and elimination of all stick infractions.



## Directives

Many directives regarding safety equipment for players and officials have been implemented by USA Hockey over the past 30 years. These changes have significantly reduced the number and severity of injuries in the sport at all levels:

<b>1972-73:</b> Recommended that all players, excluding goalkeepers, wear an approved mouthguard.	<b>1974-75:</b> Mandated that all players with the exception of goaltenders in the Junior "B" (under age 20) age classification and below wear an approved mouthguard.	<b>1976-77:</b> Required all players below Junior to wear either a full facemask or protective eye mask with external mouthguard. All players, except goalkeepers, are also required to wear an internal mouthpiece.	<b>1977-78:</b> Eliminated the internal mouthpiece requirement for Pee Wee players (aged 10-12) and below who are wearing a full facemask.	<b>1978-79:</b> Mandated all players below Junior to wear a full facemask. It is recommended that this facemask be Hockey Equipment Certification Council (HECC) approved.	<b>1980-81:</b> Mandated all players below Junior to wear an HECC approved facemask.	<b>1981-82:</b> Required all Junior players to wear a full facemask.	<b>1983-84:</b> Prohibited goalkeepers from wearing a form-fitted mask and required them to wear a full HECC approved facemask. Required all players between Bantam and Junior (aged 12-20) and girls between Pee Wee and Senior to wear an internal mouthpiece.	<b>1985-86:</b> Recommended that all on-ice officials wear a black helmet. Allowed a player who has reached the age of majority (18) and who is playing in the Junior classification to sign a waiver in order to play without a facemask.	<b>1987-88:</b> Required that goalkeepers in all age classifications wear a helmet and full facemask. Required that Pee Wee players wear an internal mouthpiece. Prohibited altered helmets or facemasks.	<b>1989-90:</b> Required all on-ice officials to wear a hockey helmet, recommended all players wear a HECC approved helmet and required all players to wear a helmet/facemask in the bench area.	<b>1991-92:</b> Recommended that internal mouthpieces be non-clear and form-fitted by a dentist.	<b>1993-94:</b> Required that internal mouthpieces be non-clear.	<b>1995-96:</b> Recommended that all officials wear a half-shield visor.	<b>1999-00:</b> Called for an immediate whistle anytime a player's (youth and girls/ women's) helmet or facemask becomes dislodged.	<b>2001-02:</b> Made it mandatory for all players to wear full facial protection. Players 18 years of age and older may wear a half shield (visor), provided they sign a waiver.	<b>2003-04:</b> Mandated that all youth players wear a HECC-approved helmet including ear protection. Also required that all 8 & Under youth and girls teams utilize the blue lightweight puck in all games and practices.
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## Rule Changes and Adaptations

Many rule changes and adaptations have taken place over the past 25 years, with the intent to create a safer game. Some changes involve players of all age levels, while others were targeted for a specific age or classification. These are the most notable:

<b>1978-79:</b> A minor penalty shall be assessed for body checking or pushing from behind, as well as checking with the forearm or hands above the shoulder. Also, body checking in the Squirt age classification is eliminated.	<b>1979-80:</b> Eliminated body checking in the girls' 19-or-under age classification and below.	<b>1981-82:</b> Called for an immediate whistle when a goalkeeper's helmet or facemask becomes dislodged. Other players must immediately replace dislodged helmet before participating in play. Also eliminated body checking in the Pee Wee age classification.	<b>1983-84:</b> Eliminated body checking in all girls'/women's games.	<b>1985-86:</b> Reinstated body checking into the Pee Wee age classification. Also added a major penalty option for checking an opponent above the shoulder with the hands or forearm.	<b>1987-88:</b> Added the Philosophy of Youth Hockey and the "Points of Emphasis" as prefaces to the Officials Playing Rules Book. Also added a double minor penalty option, at the discretion of the referee, for checking above the shoulder.	<b>1989-90:</b> Added a misconduct penalty to be assessed in every case where a player is assessed a minor penalty for checking from behind, spearing, butt-ending and head-butting. Also added an automatic game misconduct penalty to be assessed in every case where a player is assessed a major penalty for an aggressive foul. Also eliminated the double minor penalty option for checking above the shoulder.	<b>1991-92:</b> Added a misconduct penalty option to all major penalties involving aggressive fouls.	<b>1993-94:</b> Required teams from non-checking classifications to play under non-check rules when playing teams who are registered in a checking classification.	<b>1995-96:</b> Redefined the term "body checking" to emphasize the proper way to legally check an opponent. Also added a rule that penalizes a late, avoidable body check to any player who is no longer in possession and control of the puck. Also eliminated the automatic misconduct or game misconduct penalty to be assessed for some major penalties for aggressive infractions. Automatic game misconduct is still required if injury results.	<b>1997-98:</b> Changed "checking from behind" to become a stand-alone rule. Required that an automatic major penalty plus game misconduct be assessed in each instance where a check from behind causes an opponent to go head first into the boards or goal frame. Also redefined the term "body contact".	<b>1999-00:</b> Allowed a local league or governing body to establish non-checking leagues at all age levels.	<b>2001-02:</b> Added specific rule for checking to the head, which provides minor, double minor or major plus game misconduct penalty option. Also, required that a match penalty be assessed to any player or team official who deliberately injures or attempts to injure another participant.	<b>2003-04:</b> Added four non-checking divisions (12, 14, 16 and 18 & Under).
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## Programs



### Skill Development Program

In the 1993-94 season, USA Hockey introduced the Initiation Program, designed to enhance early hockey experiences. The theory is that if a beginner has fun while developing basic skills and building confidence, that player will go on to enjoy hockey for many years.

In 2004, the Initiation Program's name was changed to the USA Hockey Skill Development Program.



Although the main emphasis of the Skill Development Program is on fun and skill development, the program also allows kids to experience cooperation, fair play, fitness and safety.

The year-long program recommends twice per week practices of an hour each. The Skill Development Program draws heavily on parental input. Parents have the opportunity to attend their own instructional seminar in advance of their children and become on-ice instructors for the youth clinic. An instructional package is distributed with the program, consisting of six manuals which include the following information:

- Organizational and administrative details of the program,
- Special teaching considerations for the specific skill level of the group, and
- Four level-specific manuals with step-by-step lesson plans (one manual for each of the program's four instructional levels).

### Coaching Education Program

USA Hockey acknowledges that coaches are the backbone of its success, and strives to educate and work with coaches in making the experience



enjoyable for all involved. With a policy unlike any other in amateur sports, USA Hockey requires its coaches to

attend Coaching Education Program clinics. In these clinics, coaches progress through a series of classes and course levels covering topics including skill development, injury prevention and leadership.

The program uses the following mission statement:

*"The Coaching Education Program is committed to developing coaches who will be effective instructors and role models through a comprehensive education program at all levels. The Coaching Education Program shall emphasize the teaching of fundamental skills, conceptual development, sportsmanship and respect for the dignity of the individual athlete."*

The following components represent the five essential elements of the Program:

1. Sports Medicine/Safety/Legal Component: Provides instruction, references and competencies in the area of first aid, care and prevention of athletic injuries, safety and legal responsibilities.

2. **Psycho-Social Sports Science Component:** Provides instruction, references and competencies in the areas of leadership, humanistic coaching and behavioral aspects of athletic participation as related to coaches, athletes, parents and society.
3. **Bio-Physical Sports Science Component:** Includes basic nutrition, references and competencies in the principles of anatomical kinesiology, and physiological aspects of skill improvement, motor development and stages of human growth.
4. **Pedagogy Component:** Provides instruction, references and competencies in administration and organization, planning theory, teaching and coaching techniques, effective communication and coaching philosophy.
5. **Technical, Tactical and Conceptual Component:** Provides instruction, references and competencies in the technical, tactical and conceptual aspects of the sport.

USA Hockey has also produced an instructional series for players and coaches that is currently used in both the Coaching Education Program and the Player Development Program. This series is widely used by the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) and many of its member organizations.

In August 2002, USA Hockey introduced the Girls'/Women's National Coaching Workshop. The program is designed for coaches who have an intermediate level card, have been coaching for three years and are currently coaching a USA Hockey registered girls'/women's team.

### Officiating Education Program

The objective of the Officiating Education Program, a requirement for all USA Hockey officials, is to equip officials with knowledge of their responsibilities, and the skills of the game that will allow them to perform at the highest level. Using instructional and support materials, officials can improve their abilities, confidence and knowledge and therefore become more effective on the ice.



Each summer, the program holds development camps to further the education of selected officials at all levels, using the latest methods and techniques. Each year the officiating direct-registration program continues to exceed the previous year's total, with over 26,500 plus officials registered during the 2003-04 season. That season, over 450 seminars were conducted throughout the country. The Officiating Seminar Program has proven to be USA Hockey's most successful officiating education program to date.

The Officiating Education Program also implements instructional and educational videos, used by officials, coaches and parents.

To broaden the reach of the program, USA Hockey's top instructors travel the nation as part of the District Officiating Seminar Program. The instructors travel to different regions to work with top local instructors in three-day advanced level seminars. The program has been wildly successful, selling out in its many locations.

The USA Hockey Officiating Program also continues to be a world leader in training and providing officials for international competitions. 59 USA Hockey officials were granted IIHF licenses for the 2003-04 season and are eligible for assignment to international games. In addition, the Officiating Program boasts one referee at the National Hockey League level and had eight others (ages 21-25), invited to the National Hockey League prospects camp in August 2003.

### Informational Brochures

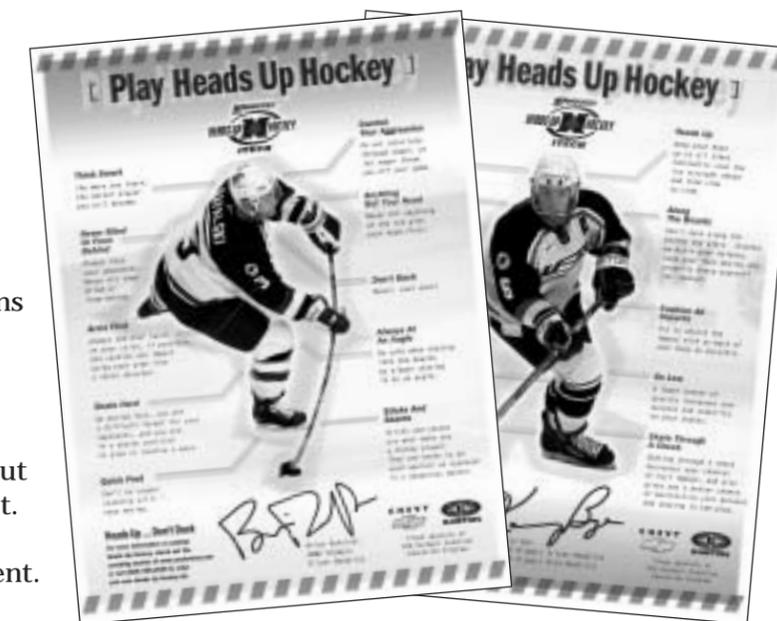
USA Hockey produces several educational brochures for both members and parents. The information teaches the sport while emphasizing ways to make the experience as rewarding as possible. Some of these brochures are as follow:

- **“Parents’ Introduction to Youth Hockey”** is an A-to-Z guide featuring rules of the game, basic skills and penalties and an overview of hockey jargon. It also gives an explanation of necessary equipment for beginners.
- **“Establishing a Good Relationship Between Coach and Parent”** discusses the importance of a good working relationship and its effect on the experience for all participants. The brochure stresses that the relationship is a two-way street, and that maintaining an open line of communication is critical.
- **“Hockey Talk”** answers some of the most commonly asked questions about the sport. It discusses the kind of equipment needed, and defines common hockey terms such as “body-check” and “boards”. It also outlines each of USA Hockey’s 11 geographical districts and provides contact information for each district representative.
- **“Sportsmanship: Why It Matters”** addresses the many reasons for playing hockey, those that go beyond winning and losing. It also outlines USA Hockey’s codes of conduct for youth hockey, with specific sections for players, coaches, parents, officials, spectators and administrators.
- **“Girls’ and Women’s Ice Hockey”** gives a history of the sport and explains the differences between men’s and women’s ice hockey. It also gives an overview of the Skill Development Program.
- **“Keeping Inline Hockey Fun”** spells out USA Hockey InLine’s codes of conduct. They are based on sportsmanship, fair play and a fun and positive environment. Codes of conduct are spelled out for players, referees, coaches, parents, spectators and administrators.

### Heads Up Hockey

Heads Up Hockey is a program funded by a grant from the USA Hockey Foundation designed to teach players, coaches, referees, parents and administrators how to maintain a safe and injury-free environment for all participants. The program was implemented in 1996 by USA Hockey’s Safety and Protective Equipment Committee. Its main focus is on the prevention of head and spinal cord injuries. The program provides an informational kit, which includes an instructional DVD, featuring NHL player, Paul Kariya, National Hockey League coach Ron Wilson, a program guide for coaches and officials, posters for rinks and pro shops and other instructional materials. The key points of the program are as follow:

- **Section One** focuses on how spinal injures and concussions can occur in hockey, and what can be done to reduce the risk.
- **Section Two** describes common instances in hockey where injuries take place and incorporates practice drills that can reduce the chance of injury.
- **Section Three** explains the basics of protective equipment and cautions against the “Superman Syndrome” and reckless play.



- **Section Four** teaches the symptoms of a spinal injury or concussion and stresses the importance of telling a coach or parent.

The DVD is available to USA Hockey administrators free of charge by calling (888) 806-7337. The kit is available to the public for \$29.95 plus shipping and handling.

### Risk Management

Along with the aforementioned programs, USA Hockey works in conjunction with other organizations to provide risk management solutions focusing on safe play and reducing the chance of injury.

Several training videos are available, including “Checking” and “Body Contact for Non-Check Hockey: Playing Within The Rules.” Among the many other videos designed to help promote skill development and a safe playing environment are “Puck Control,” “Passing and Receiving,” “Fundamental Skills for Defensemen” and “Defensive Concepts.”

### Serving The American Rinks (STAR)

STAR, a joint venture by USA Hockey and the U.S. Figure Skating Association, is a non-profit organization providing productive and cost-effective programs and services to benefit rinks and arenas throughout the United States. Currently in its fifth year of existence, STAR offers a comprehensive package of programs designed to make facilities work more effectively, including technical and management training, quality programming, expense reduction and insurance coverage.

In the spring and summer of 2002, seven STAR regional training programs were conducted to allow facilities with limited budgets to access much-needed information. Programs were held in California, Colorado, Michigan, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York and Texas.

STAR’s mission is to be:

*“...the premier national organization designed to foster the development, growth and success of ice-skating rinks and in-line facilities in the United States.”*

In working toward this goal, USA Hockey has developed a STAR membership magazine, in conjunction with *RINK Magazine*, and has established various partnerships to benefit the arena industry and its membership.

## Rules for safer play



### Body Checking

Simply put, a body check is contact instigated by a defensive player. The main purpose of a body check is to put oneself in a position to regain possession of the puck. In the *2003-05 USA Hockey Official Rules of Ice Hockey*, a body check is defined as when...

*“... a player checks an opponent who is in possession of the puck, by using hip or shoulder from the front, diagonally from the front or straight from the side, and does not take more than two steps / strides in executing the check.”*

The tactic of checking allows for a legal separation of the puck carrier from the puck by physical contact. Body checking also allows the checker to neutralize the attacker.

The three major functions of checking are:

- To regain possession of the puck.
- To separate the puck from the puck carrier in a legal and safe manner.
- To delay or contain the opponent from entering a specific area on the ice.

### Roughing

As previously mentioned, only one-third of USA Hockey playing leagues allow legal checking. Therefore, in most hockey leagues, checking is prohibited and is penalized under the “Unnecessary Roughness” or “Roughing” rules, according to the *2003-05 Official Rules of Ice Hockey*. A penalty should be assessed under this rule whenever a player impedes the movement of a puck-carrying opponent by pushing him/her with the hands or arms or deliberately contacting

him/her with the shoulder, hip or any other part of the torso.

However, there are some instances in non-checking leagues where body contact between a puck carrier and an opponent is legal. The definition of body contact, as is stated in the *2003-05 Official Rules of Ice Hockey*, is:

*“Contact that occurs between opponents during the normal process of playing the puck, provided there has been no overt hip, shoulder or arm contact to physically force the opponent off of the puck.”*

Likewise, no penalty shall be assessed if the puck carrier unsuccessfully attempts to skate through too small an opening between the boards and a stationary opponent and a collision occurs, unless there has been a clear intent to body check the puck carrier. It is important for players to learn proper body contact techniques at an early age, before they encounter such discrepancies in size and strength.

### Giving And Receiving A Check

Learning how to properly give and receive a check minimizes the chance of injury. Here are three pointers in properly giving a safe body check:

1. **Adjusting Your Speed:** at the time of contact, your speed should be equal to or slightly greater than that of your opponent. As “contact” speed increases, the likelihood of injury also increases. Although it may seem safer to slow down

or stop if a hit is coming, your balance and momentum will be much better if you keep your legs moving and concentrate on skating right through the impact.

2. **Angling Your Opponent:** skating into the boards at an angle affords players a better approach angle to the puck, and by giving the body an optimal position to accept an impact with the boards, it allows players to keep skating and gain control of the puck. Further, when players skate into corners at an angle, the risk of hitting the boards with their helmets first is greatly reduced. A leg, an arm, or a side of the body will absorb most of the impact.
3. **Keep Your Hands Down:** keeping your hands and stick at chest level minimizes the risk for injury. Once contact is made, keep your opponent pinned to the boards, and use your feet to kick the puck free as quickly as possible.

Likewise, there are also pointers to safely receiving a body check:

1. **Keep Your Head Away:** the more players can avoid impact with their heads, the more likely they are to come through safely and in control. They should take the impact with anything else first.
2. **Know Where Your Opponents Are:** as players become more experienced, and as they start thinking more about strategy and less about skating, their peripheral vision and overall awareness should start to improve. When they know where their opponents are, they'll be less likely to get checked without any warning.
3. **Keep Your Hands On Your Stick:** the best way to cushion an impact with the boards is to absorb the impact over as much of the body as possible. This is done by keeping both hands on the stick, if possible, and keeping the arms out, thus creating a three-part "shock absorber."

### Illegal Body Checking

The *2003-05 Official Rules of Ice Hockey* defines several forms of illegal body checks and how each should be punished. In all of these instances, a minor (two minutes) or a major (five or more minutes) penalty should be assessed, and if an injury occurs as a result of the infraction, a game misconduct (and a one-game suspension) will be charged. They are as follows:

- **Board-Checking:** When a player body-checks, cross-checks, elbows, charges or trips an opponent in such a manner that causes the opponent to be thrown violently into the boards.
- **Charging:** When a player runs or jumps into or charges an opponent (if more than two steps or strides are taken, this is considered "Charging").
- **Checking From Behind:** When a player body checks or pushes an opponent from behind.
- **Cross-Checking:** When a player "cross-checks" an opponent ("cross-check" shall mean a check delivered with both hands on the stick and no part of the stick on the ice).
- **Head-Checking:** When a player intentionally or recklessly contacts a player in the head, including with the stick or by an illegal body check.
- **Unnecessary Roughness (Roughing):** When a player commits an avoidable body check to an opponent who does not have possession and control of the puck, uses his/her forearm or hand to check an opponent above the opponent's shoulder or makes physical contact with an opponent after the whistle has been blown if, in the opinion of the referee, the player has had sufficient time after the whistle to avoid such contact.

## Equipment



Wearing the proper protective equipment is important in preventing or reducing the risk of all injuries. However, as effective as hockey protective equipment is, there is no piece of gear that can prevent a player from receiving an injury.

USA Hockey states its guidelines for protective equipment in Section 3 of the *2003-05 Official Rules of Ice Hockey*. To summarize the main points:

- All players in all classifications must wear a hockey helmet, with the helmet strap properly fastened. This includes all players on the bench and in the penalty box.
- All players, including goalkeepers, in the Pee Wee through Midget (including High School) and in the Girls/Women 10-and-under through 19-and-under age classifications must wear a colored internal mouthpiece. This mouthpiece must cover all the teeth of one jaw, customarily the upper.
- USA Hockey highly recommends, but does not require, that every player wear protective equipment for all games, warm-ups and practices. Such equipment should include gloves, shin pads, shoulder pads, elbow pads, hockey pants and protective cup in addition to all head protective equipment as required by USA Hockey.
- All goaltender equipment, with the exception of skates and stick, must be constructed solely for the purpose of protecting the head or body.
- Any player wearing dangerous equipment shall be imposed a minor penalty. Dangerous equipment includes, but is not limited to: pads and protectors made of

metal, uncovered casts and splints made of hard or unyielding materials, gloves in which all or part of the palm has been removed or cut and uncovered jewelry.

In order for protective equipment to provide the maximum safety, these points should be considered:

- Helmets should fit snug on the top, back and sides of the head and all padding and manufacturer's hardware should be in place.
- In regard to facemasks, plastic shields should have no cracks or scratches and wire cages should have no bent or missing bars.
- Chin straps should be fastened snugly against the chin.
- Mouthguards should cover all the teeth of one jaw (usually the upper) and fit so that breathing is not inhibited when in place.
- Shoulder pads should have fiber caps, which should extend to the tip of the shoulder.
- Elbow pads should be properly fitted so they don't slide.
- Shin pads should protect the knee and shin completely.
- Skates should allow for no more than 1/2" for growth, and should offer adequate protection for the ankle, toe and instep areas.

### Hockey Equipment Certification Council (HECC)

The leading organization pertaining to hockey equipment and the safety of hockey players is the Hockey Equipment Certification Council (HECC). The HECC, a non-profit organization, was established in

1978 through the joint efforts of the Amateur Hockey Association of the United States (AHAUS, now USA Hockey) and numerous interested volunteers representing several professional organizations. The HECC, while maintaining a close association with many amateur hockey governing bodies, is an independent organization with its own Constitution, By-Laws and Board of Governors.

The HECC examines the needs and wishes of the various amateur hockey governing bodies as they pertain to equipment and safety. The HECC seeks out and selects codes of standards, including test methods and other requirements for certifying playing

equipment and facilities used in the sport of ice hockey. In addition, the HECC promotes the use of certified products and monitors the effectiveness of its certification programs on the sport.

The HECC is also responsible for promoting and sponsoring research in prevention and/or reduction of ice hockey injuries. This is accomplished by studying playing rules, attitudes, playing surfaces, officiating, training, conditioning and administration, among other factors.

All USA Hockey players must wear a helmet and facemask approved by the HECC. Only the Adult age classification is exempt from this rule.

**The Hockey Equipment Certification Council, Inc.**

Dr. Alan Ashare, President  
 St. Elizabeth Medical Center  
 736 Cambridge Street  
 Brighton, MA 03135  
 617-789-3000 ext. 2828

**S t a t i s t i c a l  
 D a t a**



Over the past two decades, the sport of ice hockey in general, and USA Hockey in particular, has made great strides in promoting a game with fewer injuries and more fun. Not only is protective equipment better, but the playing rules create a safer environment, and coaches, officials and players are better prepared to deal with the injuries that do occur.

**Risk of Injury**

While USA Hockey takes great pride in promoting and fostering a safe sport, the organization itself does not track hockey-related injuries. However, during the 1994-95 and 1995-96 seasons, USA Hockey, in conjunction with Health South Rehabilitation

Centers, completed an ice hockey injury surveillance program to determine injury risk, contrast the type and severity of injury at various levels and allow comparison of injury rates with other sports. Among the major findings from this research:

1. Youth ice hockey was determined to be a relatively safe sport.
2. Risk of injury increases according to age and level of participation.
3. Collision with the boards or other players was identified as the cause of most injuries (65 percent).
4. The majority of injuries are mild, with the most common severe injury being fractures of the wrist.
5. Goaltender is the safest position on the ice.

**Sports Injury Rates**

The sport of ice hockey compares favorably with other major sports when it comes to the occurrence of injury. A good example of this claim comes from taking data from selected sports injury rates from 1998:

Rank	Sport	Estimated Injuries	Participation (1,000s)	Injuries per 1,000 Participants
1.	Basketball	631,186	29,417	21.5
2.	Football	355,247	17,091	20.8
3.	Bicycles	577,621	43,535	13.3
4.	Soccer	169,734	13,167	12.9
5.	Baseball	180,582	15,856	11.4
<b>6.</b>	<b>Ice Hockey</b>	<b>22,231</b>	<b>2,131</b>	<b>10.4</b>
7.	Skateboards	54,532	5,782	9.4
8.	Softball	132,625	15,595	8.5
9.	Ice Skating	33,741	7,799	4.3
10.	In-Line Skating	110,783	27,033	4.1
11.	Tennis	22,665	11,227	2.0
12.	Golf	46,019	27,496	1.7
13.	Swimming	49,331	58,249	0.8

*Source: R. Murphey, Murost Enterprises, LLC (compiled Jan. 7, 2002)*

According to these injury estimates, ice hockey ranks safer than perceived “non-contact” sports such as baseball, bicycling and soccer, all of which have a higher rate of injuries per 1,000 participants.

### The National Electronic Injury Surveillance System (NEISS)

The National Electronic Injury Surveillance System (NEISS), operated for nearly 30 years by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, provides timely data on consumer product-related injuries occurring in the U.S. NEISS gathers its information from the emergency departments of 100 hospitals, which provides a solid selection sample.

According to NEISS’s 2001 Product Summary Report, 56,972 emergency room visits mentioned some version of hockey in association with the injury. Over 40 percent of these injuries took place among those aged 15-24. The figure was significantly less than that of other sports. For example:

- 653,661 emergency room visits were associated with basketball, over 11 times the number related to ice hockey.
- Nearly 550,000 visits were associated with bicycling injuries.

- Football was a cause of 414,607 emergency room visits.
- Over 300,000 injuries concerned baseball and softball.
- 175,470 visits to the emergency room dealt with soccer-related injuries.
- Skateboarding resulted in nearly twice as many emergency room visits as hockey.
- Almost 100,000 injuries dealt with the use of unpowered scooters.
- Trampolines, fishing, swimming, weight lifting, horseback riding, swing sets, snowboarding and volleyball were all mentioned more times among emergency room patients than was ice hockey.

Not only does hockey compare favorably with these other sports and activities, but ice hockey has become significantly safer within the past several years. According to the 1998 NEISS Data Highlights, 78,570 people were treated in emergency rooms for ice hockey-related injuries, meaning the sport experienced a 27.5 percent reduction in emergency room visits between 1998 and 2001. During this same period, USA Hockey’s membership grew by nearly 18,000, meaning the number of injuries decreased while the number of participants increased.

Below is a chart comparing NEISS’s findings on ice hockey between 1995-2001:

Year	Est. No. of Injuries	RATE PER 100,000 BY AGE						%Male
		0-4	5-14	15-24	25-64	65+		
2001	56,972	Information Not Available						
2000	73,636	3.9	64.0	73.2	13.3	0.8	82.4	
1999	71,484	2.6	66.9	73.3	11.8	0.2	86.3	
1998	78,570	6.5	74.8	74.8	14.0	1.0	85.6	
1997	77,492	5.8	73.6	82.5	12.4	0.8	81.7	
1996	77,930	7.1	72.5	87.1	12.5	0.0	81.7	
1995	76,837	6.1	78.5	85.7	11.4	0.6	83.1	

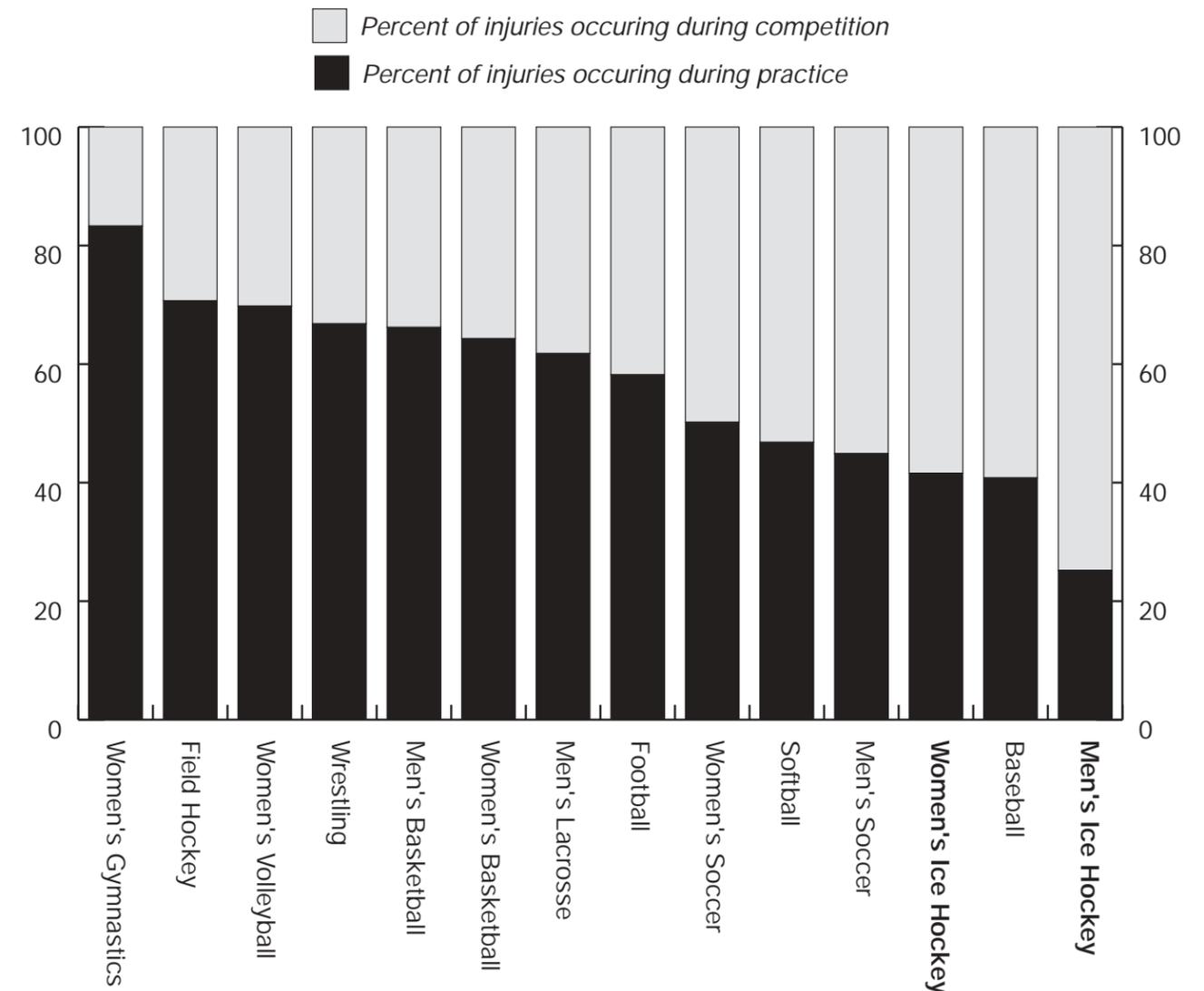
### The NCAA’s Injury Surveillance System (ISS)

The National Collegiate Athletic Association’s (NCAA) Injury Surveillance System (ISS) was developed in 1982 to provide current and reliable data on injury trends in intercollegiate athletics. The NCAA ISS tracks injury data for 17 intercollegiate sports, including men’s and women’s ice hockey.

Among the major findings was the determination that ice hockey is one of the

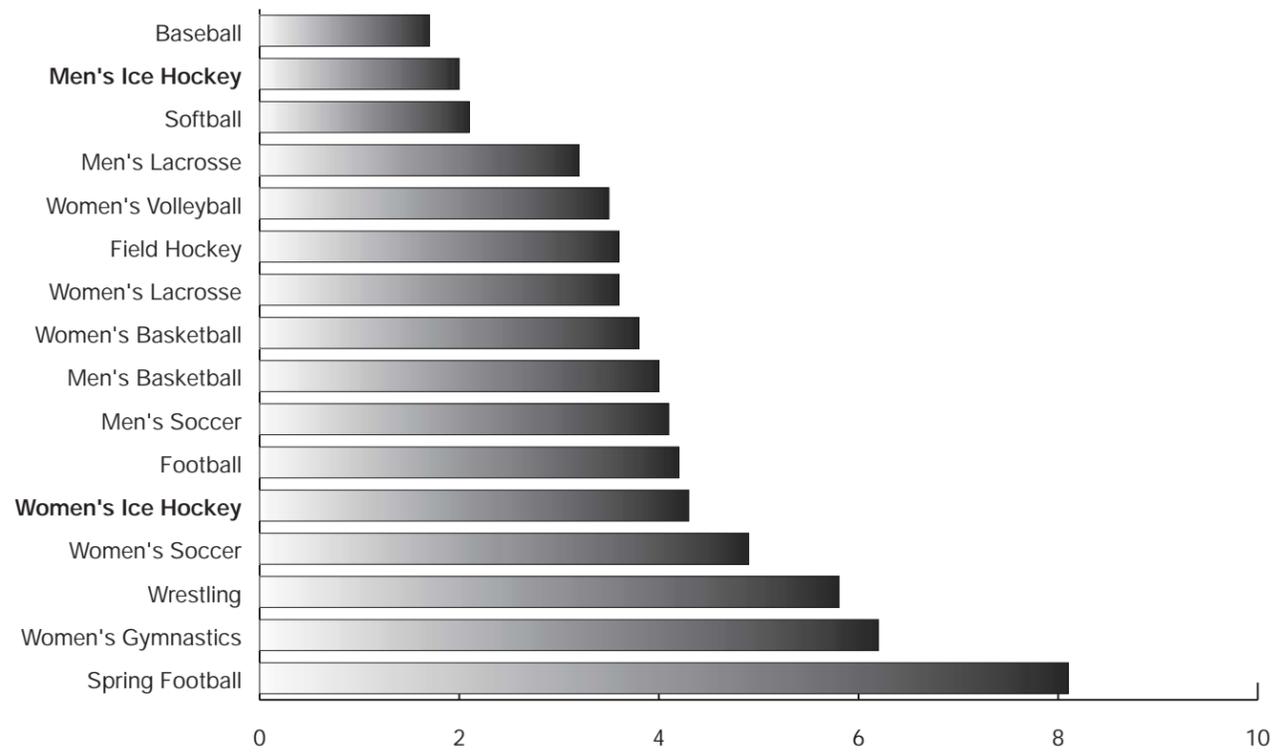
safest sports in terms of the number and percentage of injuries occurring during practices. The chart below outlines the percentage of all injuries occurring in practices and games in the 2001-02 season (note: the relatively few injuries that occurred in the weight room were not included in the practice and game percentages. These calculations are based only on the absolute number of injuries and do not take exposures into consideration.):

INJURY RATES  
Practice vs. Competition



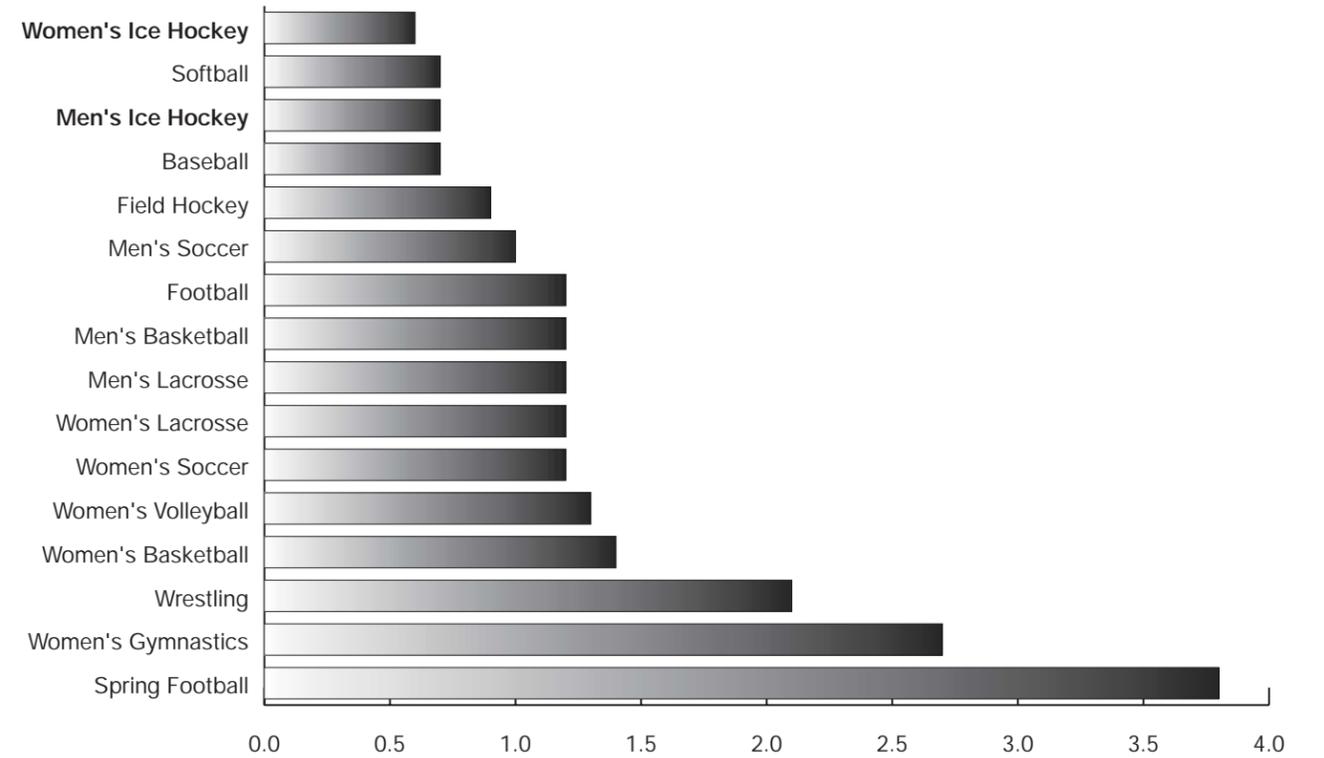
In terms of the average practice injury rate, ice hockey compares favorably to other intercollegiate sports, with men's ice hockey among the safest (note: the chart below expresses the average practice injury rate as injuries per 1,000 athlete-exposures during the 2001-02 season.):

**AVERAGE PRACTICE INJURY RATES**  
(per 1,000 A-E)



According to the NCAA ISS, ice hockey is also one of the safest sports in terms of severity of injuries. The chart below represents the number of practice injuries (per 1,000 athlete-exposures) that resulted in restricted or missed participation for seven or more days:

**INJURY SEVERITY RATE**  
(per 1,000 A-E)



## R e s e a r c h

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USA Hockey has conducted and/or sponsored several studies over the past decade that have helped reduce the risk of injury in the sport and created a general awareness of the need to improve safety.



Dr. Stuart

For example, “Injuries in Junior “A” Ice Hockey,” was a definitive study of injuries in elite players from age 17 to 20. Conducted by USA Hockey Chief Medical Officer and Team Physician Dr. Michael J. Stuart, M.D., the study examined ice hockey injuries in elite amateur players ranging in age from 17 to 20 years. Published in 1995, the study determined that:

1. A player was 25 times more likely to be injured in a game than in practice.
2. The face and the shoulder were most frequently injured.
3. A facial laceration was the most common injury.
4. A shoulder separation (acromioclavicular joint sprain) was the second most common injury.

*Note: This study was conducted in Junior “A” where injuries are more prevalent than the average, partly due to the lack of facial protection. Nearly all members of USA Hockey play in leagues where injury rates are lower.*

### Facial Protection

A more recent study regarding the benefits of facial protection in ice hockey was conducted by the Mayo Clinic, funded by USA Hockey, and published in the January/February 2002 issue of the *American Journal of Sports Medicine*. This study found that players who do not wear facial protection are seven times more likely to suffer a head or facial injury compared to those with full facial protection, and more than twice as frequently as those with a half shield or visor. The risk of eye injury was 4.7 times greater for players wearing no protection compared with those wearing partial protection. The Mayo Clinic study also determined that full facial protection does not increase the risk of neck injuries or concussions, a finding that prompted USA Hockey to strengthen its rules on facial protection. All players are now required to wear full facial protection, with the exception of players 18 or older who can opt to wear a half-shield or visor.

The study also looked at the effect of mouth protection, and determined that 63 percent of players injured were not wearing any mouth protection at the time of injury.

USA Hockey has been a proponent of facial protection for over 25 years. In the 1976-77 season, a directive was implemented requiring all players at the Junior level and younger to wear either a full facemask or protective eye mask with external mouthguard. Also, all players, except for goaltenders were required to wear an internal mouthpiece. Dr. Stuart’s study shows that this directive is clearly justified.

In his study, Dr. Stuart, who is also a member of the Safety and Protective Equipment Committee, concluded that “the benefits of facial protection are beyond dispute. USA Hockey should be commended for funding this study, and then acting to protect players on the basis of our scientific evidence. This is a prudent, responsible action.”

### Symposium On Safety In Ice Hockey

Dr. Alan Ashare, the Chairperson of USA Hockey’s Safety and Protective Committee and President of the Hockey Equipment Certification Council, is one of the world’s leading authorities on safety in the sport of ice



Dr. Ashare

hockey. In 1997, Ashare organized and chaired the Third Symposium on Safety in Ice Hockey, sponsored in part by the USA Hockey Foundation. From the symposium, Ashare compiled 25 peer-reviewed papers, which were published as the Third Volume of the Safety in Ice Hockey series. Topics covered in the book included injury surveillance, protective equipment and spinal injuries and concussions.

### Body Checking Task Force

Body checking is another issue that has stemmed debate and research. USA Hockey has looked into this issue seriously, and between 1992 and 1994 created a Body Checking Task Force. The task force, appointed by former USA Hockey President Walter L. Bush, Jr., concluded, after careful review and research, that no changes should be made to the current rules allowing body checking in the 12-or-under age classification. However, the report did emphasize the following points:

1. On-ice officials should strictly enforce the current rules, with special attention paid to rules pertaining to body checking and personal fouls involving illegal use of the stick.
2. A strong, specific notification should be issued to all coaches, players, parents, and others involved in USA Hockey indicating the desire to eliminate illegal and violent actions from the sport.
3. USA Hockey’s Coaching Education Program must make special efforts to provide education programs to assist coaches in developing proper body checking skills with their players.

On the recommendation of the committee, USA Hockey has followed through and enforced all of these aspects.

## Behavioral / conduct policies



### Sportsmanship

USA Hockey highly values sportsmanship and proper codes of conduct among all participants, including players, coaches, administrators, officials, parents and spectators. The policies and guidelines that USA Hockey has adopted regarding these issues not only provide a responsible environment for hockey at all levels, but also help safeguard against unnecessary injuries and setbacks.

### Core Values

As a result, the organization has adopted seven core values, which are spelled out in the *USA Hockey Annual Guide*. The seven core values are:

1. **Sportsmanship:** the most important value is learning a sense of fair play. Foster friendships with teammates and opponents alike.
2. **Respect for the Individual:** treat all others as you expect to be treated.
3. **Integrity:** practice honesty and fair play beyond mere strict interpretation of the rules.
4. **Pursuit of Excellence at the Individual, Team and Organizational Levels:** all members of the organization should seek to perform each aspect of the game to the highest level of his or her ability.
5. **Enjoyment:** it is important for the hockey experience to be fun, satisfying and rewarding to all participants.
6. **Loyalty:** remain true to the ideals of the game and to your fellow players.
7. **Teamwork:** value the strength of learning to work together. The use of teamwork is reinforced and rewarded by success.

### Codes of Conduct

In addition to its core values, USA Hockey has established Codes of Conduct. These are designed to guide the organization’s members in their planning, programming and play, now and in the future.

USA Hockey’s Codes of Conduct are as follow:

#### Administrators Code of Conduct:

- Follow the rules and regulations of USA Hockey and your association to ensure that the association’s philosophy and objectives are enhanced.
- Support programs that train and educate players, coaches, parents, officials and volunteers.
- Promote and publicize your programs; seek out financial support when possible.
- Communicate with parents by holding parent/player orientation meetings and be available to answer questions and address problems throughout the season.
- Work to provide programs that encompass fairness to the participants and promote fair play and sportsmanship.
- Recruit volunteers, including coaches, who demonstrate qualities consistent with positive role models in the sport.
- Encourage coaches and officials to attend USA Hockey clinics, and advise your board members of the necessity of their training sessions.
- Make every possible attempt to provide everyone, at all skill levels, with a place to play.
- Familiarize oneself with the contents of the *USA Hockey Annual Guide* and *Official Playing Rules of Hockey*.

- Develop other administrators to advance to positions in your association, perhaps even your own.

**Coaches Code of Conduct:**

- Winning is a consideration, but not the only one, nor the most important one. Care more about the child than winning the game; remember, players are involved in hockey for fun and enjoyment.
- Be a positive role model to your players; display emotional maturity and be alert to the physical safety of players.
- Be generous with your praise when it is deserved; be consistent and honest; be fair and just; do not criticize players publicly or privately; learn to be a more effective communicator and coach; don't yell at players.
- Adjust to personal needs and problems of players; be a good listener; never verbally or physically abuse a player or official; give all players the opportunity to improve their skills, gain confidence and develop self-esteem; teach them the basics.
- Organize practices that are fun and challenging for your players. Familiarize yourself with the rules, techniques and strategies of hockey; encourage all of your players to be team players.
- Maintain an open line of communication with your players' parents. Explain the goals and objectives of your association.
- Respect and foster the overall development of your players. Stress good health habits and clean living.
- To play the game is great, to love the game is greater.

**On-Ice Officials Code of Conduct:**

- Act in a professional and businesslike manner at all times and take your role seriously.
- Strive to provide a safe and sportsmanlike environment in which players can properly display their hockey skills.
- Know all playing rules, their interpretations and their proper application.
- Remember that officials are teachers. Set a good example.

- Make your calls with quiet confidence; never with arrogance.
- Control games only to the extent that is necessary to provide a positive and safe experience for all participants.
- Violence must never be tolerated.
- Be fair and impartial at all times.
- Answer all reasonable questions and requests.
- Adopt a "zero tolerance" attitude toward verbal or physical abuse.
- Never use foul or vulgar language when speaking with a player, coach or parent.
- Use honesty and integrity when answering questions.
- Admit your mistakes when you make them.
- Never openly criticize a coach, player or other official.
- Keep your emotions under control.
- Use only USA Hockey-approved officiating techniques and policies.
- Maintain your health through a physical conditioning program.
- Dedicate yourself to personal improvement and maintenance of officiating skills.
- Respect your supervisor and his/her critique of your performance.

**Parents Code of Conduct:**

- Do not force your children to participate in sports, but support their desires to play their chosen sport. Children are involved in organized sports for their enjoyment. Make it fun.
- Encourage your child to play by the rules. Remember, children learn best by example, so applaud the good plays of both teams.
- Do not embarrass your child by yelling at players, coaches or officials. By showing a positive attitude toward the game and all of its participants, your child will benefit.
- Emphasize skill development and practices and how they benefit your young athlete. De-emphasize games and competition in the lower age groups.
- Know and study the rules of the game, and support the officials on and off the ice. This approach will help in the development and support of the game.

Any criticism of the officials only hurts the game.

- Applaud a good effort in both victory and defeat, and enforce the positive points of the game. Never yell at or physically abuse your child after a game or practice - it is destructive. Work toward removing the physical and verbal abuse in youth sports.
- Recognize the importance of volunteer coaches. They are important to the development of your child and of the sport. Communicate with them and support them.
- If you enjoy the game, learn all you can about hockey - and volunteer.

**Players Code of Conduct:**

- Play for fun.
- Work hard to improve your skills.
- Be a team player - get along with your teammates.
- Learn teamwork, sportsmanship and discipline.
- Be on time for practices and games.
- Learn the rules and play by them. Always be a good sport.
- Respect your coach, teammates, parents, opponents and officials.
- Never argue with an official's decision.

**Spectators Code of Conduct:**

- Display good sportsmanship. Always respect players, coaches and officials.
- Act appropriately; do not taunt or disturb other fans; enjoy the game together.
- Cheer good plays of all participants; avoid booing opponents.

- Cheer in a positive manner and encourage fair play; profanity and objectionable cheers or gestures are offensive.
- Help provide a safe and fun environment; throwing any items on the ice surface can cause injury to players and officials.
- Do not lean over or pound on the glass; the glass surrounding the ice surface is part of the playing area.
- Support the referees and coaches by trusting their judgement and integrity.
- Be responsible for your own safety - be alert to prevent accidents from flying pucks and other avoidable situations.
- Respect locker rooms as private areas for players, coaches and officials.
- Be supportive after the game - win or lose. Recognize good effort, teamwork and sportsmanship.

**Local Organizations**

Many local organizations and associations have taken USA Hockey's policies and guidelines regarding sportsmanship and molded them into their own guidelines. A good example of this is the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA), which has published a sport handbook in an effort to raise the quality of amateur hockey in the state. Like USA Hockey's guidelines, the MIAA's handbook spells out the proper way for players, referees, off-ice officials, spectators and site managers to conduct themselves before, during and after games and practices.

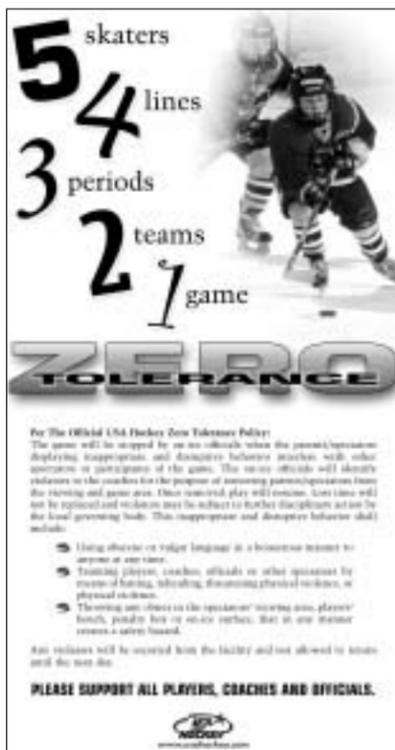


## Policies

The organization also has a series of policies that help protect all members against unsportsmanlike play, sexual and physical abuse, suspicious volunteers and mood-altering substances. These policies outline what constitutes an infraction under these guidelines and how the individuals involved should be punished.

### Zero Tolerance Policy

The Zero Tolerance Policy is a key USA Hockey initiative focusing on unsportsmanlike behavior and the appropriate penalties for such actions. For players, a minor (two-minute) penalty shall be assessed whenever a player:



1. Openly disputes or argues any decision by an official.
2. Uses obscene or vulgar language at any time, even if it isn't directed at a particular person.
3. Visually demonstrates any sign of dissatisfaction with an official's decision. A misconduct and, if necessary, a game misconduct penalty should result if the player continues such action.

A minor penalty shall be assessed whenever a coach:

1. Openly disputes or argues any decision by an official.
2. Uses obscene or vulgar language in a boisterous manner at any time.
3. Visually displays any sign of dissatisfaction with an official's decision with the intent of inciting the officials, players or spectators. A game misconduct penalty shall be assessed any time a coach persists in any of these actions.

While officials cannot receive penalties for inappropriate behavior, they are required to conduct themselves in a businesslike, sportsmanlike, impartial and constructive manner at all times. Officials are ambassadors of the game and must always conduct themselves with this responsibility in mind.

Officials also have the responsibility to stop a game whenever parents or spectators displaying inappropriate behavior interfere with other spectators or with the game. Officials will identify all violators to the coaches, who will then remove them from the spectator's viewing and game area. Play will resume when the violator is removed. Officials also have the right to assess a minor penalty against the team whose fans display inappropriate behavior.

Disruptive behavior by parents and spectators includes, but is not limited to:

1. Use of obscene or vulgar language in a boisterous manner at any time,
2. Taunting of players, coaches, officials or other spectators
3. Throwing of any object in the spectators viewing area, player's bench, penalty box or ice surface, directed in any manner as to create a safety hazard.

### Sexual and Physical Abuse

USA Hockey's policies on sexual and physical abuse are comprehensive and severe, with the intent that no such actions are allowed and, if committed, the violator can be permanently banned or suspended by USA Hockey sanctioned programs and/or its

Affiliate Associations. Follow-up hearings and possible disciplinary action can also be conducted by the local association.

### Mood-Altering Substances

The organization's policy on the consumption/use/abuse of mood-altering substances is broad in scope. The policy is designed to protect the interests of all participants, including players, coaches, referees and all others involved. USA Hockey prohibits use of mood-altering substances by any participant during active participation in its programs. Upon discovery of such violation, USA Hockey shall take action to remove the violator from participation in its programs for what it deems a reasonable period of time.

"Mood-altering substances" are defined by USA Hockey as:

1. Intoxicating beverages, including, but not limited to, alcohol.
2. Non-prescription or controlled substances used without a prescription.
3. Prescription or prescribed controlled substances when used to an excess in violation of doctors orders or when used to produce the state of intoxication.

USA Hockey has also adopted a program of drug abuse awareness for players through age 20, their parents or guardians and coaches. This program was established through the Safety and Protective Equipment Committee.

### Screening Policy

USA Hockey recognizes that child abuse is a significant social problem, and has thus established a Screening Policy for all employees and volunteers who have routine access to minor aged children. According to the policy, any volunteer or employee who has such access must consent to the USA Hockey screening process. Further, USA Hockey requires all affiliates to adopt this policy as a condition of affiliation.

A person may be disqualified and prohibited from serving as a USA Hockey employee or volunteer if the person has:

- Been convicted of a crime of child abuse, sexual abuse of a minor, physical abuse, causing a child's death, neglect of a child, murder, manslaughter, felony assault, any assault against a minor, kidnapping, arson, criminal sexual conduct, prostitution-related crimes or crimes involving a controlled substance;
- Been adjudged liable for civil penalties or damages involving sexual or physical abuse of children;
- Been subject to any court order involving any sexual abuse or physical abuse of a minor, including, but not limited to, a domestic order of protection;
- Had their parental rights terminated;
- A history of complaints of sexual or physical abuse of minors with another organization;
- Resigned, been terminated or been asked to resign from a position, whether paid or unpaid, due to complaints of sexual or physical abuse of minors; or
- A history of other behavior that indicates they may be a danger to children in USA Hockey.

### Hazing

It is the policy of USA Hockey and USA Hockey InLine that there shall be no hazing of any participant involved in any of its sanctioned programs, its Training Camps, Hockey Clinics, Coaches Clinics, Referee Clinics, Regional and National Tournaments or other USA Hockey or USA Hockey InLine events by any employee, volunteer, participant or independent contractor.

**Definition:** Conduct which is insulting, intimidating, humiliating, offensive, or physically harmful. Any player, team official, executive member of a Team, club or association having been party to or having had knowledge of any degrading hazing, or initiation rite, without reporting it or taking action, shall be subject to suspension from playing or holding office with any team, club or association affiliated with USA Hockey.

# Notes

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U S A H o c k e y , I n c .

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1775 Bob Johnson Drive  
Colorado Springs, CO 80906-4090  
(719) 576-USAH  
Fax (719) 538-1160  
[www.usahockey.com](http://www.usahockey.com)