
Return to Hockey Plan

Table of Contents

1.	INTRODUCTION	2
2.	PROGRAM OBJECTIVES	3
3.	REQUIREMENTS	4
4.	REFUNDS	6
5.	RESPONSIBILITIES	7
6.	FACILITIES	8
7.	RETURN TO HOCKEY	
8.	LINKS	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Hockey Alberta Cohort Examples</i>• <i>Alberta Government Guidance on Cohorts</i>• <i>Hockey Canada Officiating & Insurance</i>• <i>Alberta Government Guidance for Sport</i>	



1.0 INTRODUCTION

Health and safety have been at the forefront for Wainwright Minor Hockey's Executive Members as they have been thoughtfully planning what a return to hockey participation will look like. WMHA has actively monitored Hockey Canada, Hockey Alberta & Alberta Health Services in developing this "Return to Hockey Plan".

We are in a very fluid, changing environment as new rules and regulations are updated and put in place by our governing authorities, AHS and HA. This plan is updated as of August 22, 2020 and will continue to evolve as we enter different stages as outlined by AHS and HA.

This plan relies heavily on the honesty and integrity of our association, athletes and their families and a commitment by all participants to abide by the rules of the plan.

This plan is subject to change based on orders from the Chief Medical Officer, the Province of Alberta, the Town of Wainwright and Hockey Alberta

As you review the documents provided in this information package, please note, this is our "New Normal" in our current Covid-19 environment and will not be a typical hockey season as it will look different. It is our belief that the program provided will allow for continued individual player and team development and allow our players to grow on and off the ice. We currently have four phases to the "Return to Hockey" Plan that are outlined throughout this document:

- 1. Off Season Skill Development and Training Phase** – The main focus of this phase is on enhanced skill development and conditioning to provide players the opportunity to prepare for the upcoming season for their evaluations and tryouts, this phase will take place during the month of August and early September.
- 2. Skill Development and Evaluations Phase** – This phase will take place during the month of September and will continue to focus on skill development, training and conditioning and will facilitate creating like skilled 'Cohort Groups' of less than 50 players. The Skill Development and Evaluation phase should be completed through 'Physically Distanced' skill-based evaluations
- 3. Modified Competition Phase** – Once players have been sorted into 'Cohort Groups', they will now be permitted to practice and compete in mini-game environments within their 'Cohort Groups'. As per Alberta Health Services and Hockey Alberta Cohort rules and regulations, players may be permitted to play in regional 'Pods'. This phase will NOT commence before Nov 1, 2020
- 4. Regular Season** – This would be a return to regular season play and is the final stage of our plan. Depending on the current rules in place by Alberta Health Services and Hockey Alberta, this stage could be pushed back or moved ahead during the fall period.

2.0 PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The Covid-19 Pandemic has forced us to think differently about the way we operate for the 2020-2021 season and into the future. While there will be differences in some of the programming this season, it was developed to meet the needs of the players as we remain focused on the following key objectives:

1. **Safety!** Create a safe and healthy hockey environment for our players, coaches, officials, volunteers and spectators.
 - Safety is paramount, this plan was built in compliance with Alberta Health Services, Hockey Canada and Hockey Alberta guidelines to minimize the risk for all participants.
2. **Fun!** Maintain a culture of Fun! Ensure Participants can enjoy the game they love in a safe environment.
 - WMHA is returning to Train and Play in a way that allows kids to have fun and be kids.
3. **Development!** Facilitate a competitive environment that allows players to develop and grow both on and off the ice.
 - Skill and Team Development is essential and can be accomplished in all phases of the Return to Hockey Plan.
4. **Tiering!** Facilitate an environment where players may be grouped in appropriate skill levels.
 - Some tiering ranges may differ slightly than in previous seasons, however, we believe they will be within an acceptable range for skill and team development.
5. **Game Play!** Facilitate an environment where 'Game Play' exists beginning with limited small area games during phase two and three until phase four resumes with regular season game play.
 - Games will operate in a number of different formats up to the point that the regular season phase may resume. Some of these formats will include the following, 5v5, 4v4, 3v3, etc...
6. **Flexibility to Transition!** These phases will provide us with the flexibility to transition our program as things evolve during the season by way of changes with Alberta Health Services and Hockey Alberta requirements and protocols.
 - This will ensure we continue to adhere to all Alberta Health Services and Hockey Alberta guidelines and protocols while providing a safe and healthy environment for all of our participants.

3.0 REQUIREMENTS

1. Within the current Alberta Health Services Phase two, there are two different formats that can be considered to operate our programs. Hockey Alberta and WMHA will utilize both of these formats in facilitating our programs:
 - **With Physical Distancing** – All participants must remain 2 metres apart at all times including coaches and team personnel.
 - Skill and Development based programming.
 - **Using Cohort Groups** – A Cohort Group allows up to 50 participants to group together to participate in a program where physical distancing cannot be achieved for on ice activities. However, physical distancing is still required, and players and coaches must maintain a 2-metre distance apart on the players bench and in dressing rooms.
 - Cohort Groups must remain together for the duration of ‘Stage 2’ unless participants enter a two-week (14 day) isolation period, after which an athlete may establish themselves as part of a new ‘Cohort Group’.
 - Programs should operate within a specified community, zone or region where travel is limited.
2. Any Member Association operating during phase one and two will be required to track all participants and interactions while maintaining records of each session in a secured location for thirty days from the completion of the activity. This will be completed when players complete their daily check in to ensure they are symptom free.
3. There will be no competition or any interaction between other teams/cohorts during phases one and two. Only pre-season camps, skill development and conditioning, systems training and mini games will be permitted within phases one & two and only within the same ‘Cohort Group’.
4. All members must follow Facility Guidelines (see Section 6.0 below)
 - Facilities are required to adopt standards as per Alberta Health Services, which may differ slightly depending on the facility and municipality.
 - All Member associations must understand these standards and ensure they are followed.
 - Facilities, not ‘Member Associations’ will determine spectator access, dressing room use and may have stronger requirements with regards to participation.

5. Personal Protective Equipment (Masks)

All programs and activities are expected to follow the guidelines put in place by the Government of Alberta, the municipality and facility with respect to the wearing of masks in public areas. During all HA sanctioned activity it is recommended that coaches, team officials, instructors, players, volunteers and parents that will be interacting with a Team (for example, assisting with equipment in the dressing room), wear masks when they are not separated by a physical barrier or are unable to keep a two-metre distance from all other participants. Other PPE may be appropriate depending on the task as well (e.g. First Aid).

- **When participating via Cohorting:**
 - Players and team officials are not required to wear masks in the dressing room, on the player's bench or in the penalty box area, or on the ice.
 - These areas are considered within the "field of play" for the sport.
- **When participating via Physical Distancing:**
 - Players and team officials must maintain two-metre physical distancing, and wear masks within the dressing room.
 - Players may only remove their mask immediately prior to placing their helmet on and leaving the dressing room to go to the ice.
 - Team officials are to wear masks while on the bench but can remove them while coaching/ instructing on the ice.

6. League Play

- Traditional league play is not permitted during phases one, two or three.
- Mini games are only permitted within your 'Cohort Group' and can consist of 3v3, 4v4 or 5v5. (Considered SAG "Small Area Games")

7. Travel Permits and Tournament Participation

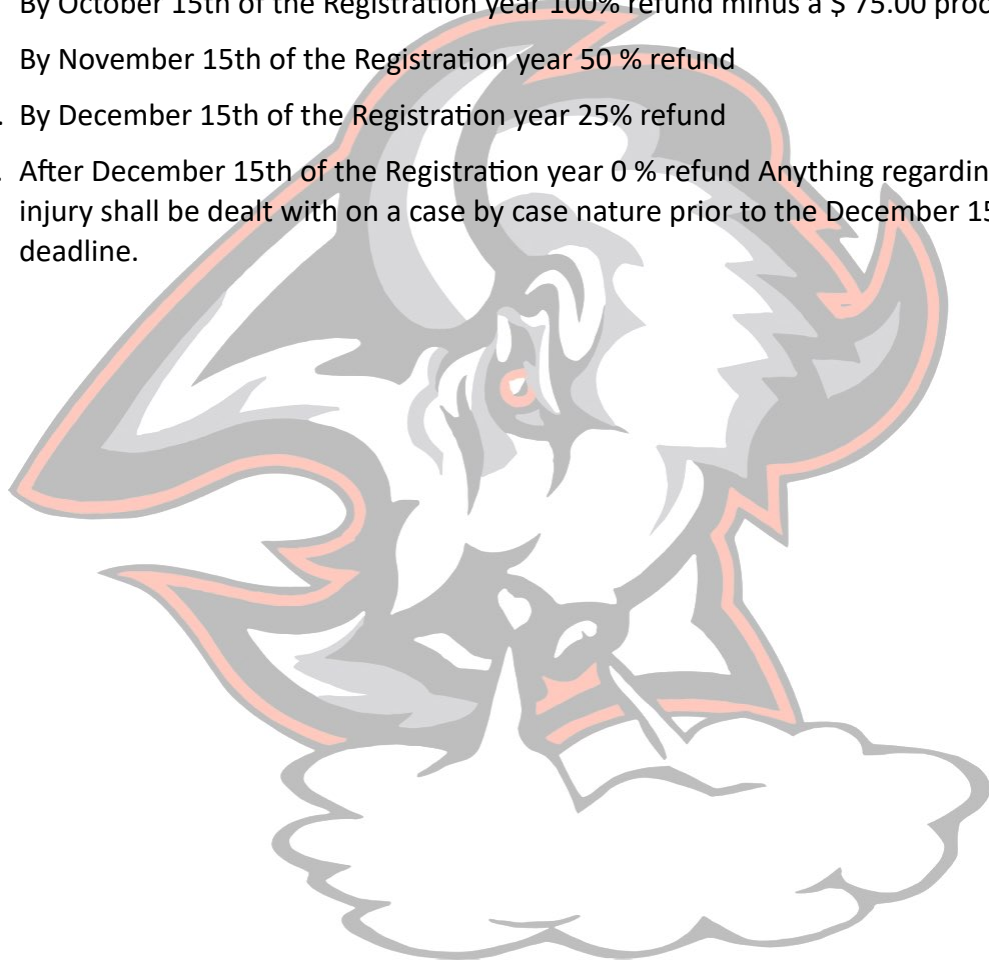
- Tournaments are not permitted during **STAGE TWO** of AHS relaunch.
- No exhibition games, travel or tournament permits will be approved prior to the approval of Hockey Alberta sanctioning for member organizations.

4.0 REFUNDS

This is an unprecedented time which makes predicting the future incredibly difficult. There are still many unanswered questions and uncertainty around what may lie ahead in the future which makes it difficult to have concrete answers about refund policies in the event of a lockdown, quarantine or other event that impacts the season.

It shall be the policy of the Wainwright Minor Hockey Association that requests for registration refunds are to be in writing and shall be as follows:

- I. By October 15th of the Registration year 100% refund minus a \$ 75.00 processing fee
- II. By November 15th of the Registration year 50 % refund
- III. By December 15th of the Registration year 25% refund
- IV. After December 15th of the Registration year 0 % refund Anything regarding an injury shall be dealt with on a case by case nature prior to the December 15th refund deadline.



5.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

PARENTS AND PLAYERS

Parents and players play key roles in the Return to Hockey. Their responsibilities include:

- stay at home if experiencing any symptoms.
- become educated on the safety protocols and procedures prior to attending session, and adhere to them while at the session.
- ensure each player has his/her own water bottle which is sanitized prior to each session, and his/her own hand sanitizer for use while on the ice.
- ensure equipment is dried, cleaned and/or sanitized following each session.
- arrange appropriate transportation to and from the session.
- refrain from cheering and yelling as it presents a high risk of spreading droplets.
- do not spit, blow nose freely or release any bodily fluid anywhere in any facility due to an extremely high risk of virus transfer.

SPECTATORS

The allowance of spectators is at the discretion of each facility and should they be allowed the following guidelines are in place:

- Spectators must follow all Alberta Health Services, municipal and facility guidelines.
- Spectators (excluding parents and guardians where necessary for player support) should be kept out of participant spaces (for example, fields of play, courts, ice surfaces).
- Physical distancing (minimum 2 metres) is required unless spectators are from the same core cohort.
- Up to a maximum of 100 spectators are allowed, according to current Government of Alberta guidelines.
- It is strongly recommended that all spectators wear masks, especially in an indoor setting.
- Cheering and yelling are strongly discouraged as they present a high risk of spreading droplets.

A detailed outline of responsibilities of Administrators, Coaches and Managers, Safety Person and Trainer, Players and Parents can be found in the Hockey Canada Safety Guidelines – Roles and Responsibilities (Appendix 5).

[Appendix 5-Roles and Responsibilities.pdf](#)

6.0 FACILITIES

Below is a copy of the PMM Facility Guidelines:

- Facility access will be limited to the main entrance of the arena located on the south end of the facility. The automatic doors will eliminate the need for physical handling of doors.
- Drop off is available in front of the main entrance. Dropping off participants is encouraged, rather than guardian accompaniment, wherever possible to minimize the number of people entering the arena at once.
- All participants and guardians (when required for younger players) will be asked to enter and exit the facility individually. Groups are only permitted if they are made up of individuals who live together.
- Participants and spectators are asked to arrive no earlier than 15 minutes prior to scheduled ice session and to vacate the building within 15 minutes of finishing on ice portion of development.
- Washrooms will be available in the lobby of the arena. Dressing room washrooms will be open for that session only for limited use and participants are encouraged to use the lobby washrooms ahead of time if possible. Showers will not be permitted in the facility.
- Water fountains throughout the facility will not be used during the camp.
- All participants and guardians are asked to use supplied hand sanitizer of a minimum 60% alcohol upon entering and exiting the facility.
- Maximum occupancy for spectators is 100. With a 20-participant maximum per on ice session, this would mean no more than 5 spectators per participant. However, it is strongly encouraged to limit spectators unless their presence is necessary. Spectators are to follow Alberta Health Services guidelines on social distancing while in both the lobby and the arena. Limited spectator seating will be made available. Use of seating is discouraged!
- Facility will be equipped with proper signage as per Alberta Health Services guidelines in regards to hand sanitizing, social distancing, and cover for coughs and sneezes.
- Any person who exhibits symptoms of COVID-19, has travelled internationally in the 14 day prior to use, or has been in close contact with a case of COVID-19 must stay home.

Arena Use:

- All participants, excluding goaltenders, will be asked to come completely dressed into the arena.
- Groups will be designated a suitable amount of dressing rooms and will be marked in 6' increments for proper physical distancing. This will allow participants to have a safe space to put on their helmet, gloves and skates prior to entering the ice surface. It is

asked that participants do not bring hockey bags or other bulky personal belongings with them.

- Designated dressing rooms will be available for goaltenders to dress completely, however there will be marked spots of no closer than 6' within the room ensure goalies are keeping a safe distance. These dressing rooms washrooms will be locked and unavailable for use.
- Ice access will be restricted to the referee hallway between the players benches. This will allow only single file access to the ice surface.
- Participants are only permitted in the dressing room hallway 10 minutes prior to their ice session, and must leave within 10 minutes of their ice session ending, to allow sufficient time for sanitizing benches before the next group of players arrives.
- Players bench use is not encouraged, as they are not spacious enough for proper physical distancing. If they must be used social distancing must be accomplished.
- Coaches will be asked to keep a safe distance from all participants.
- Participants are asked to bring pre filled water bottles with them. The ice surface will have marked areas on the dasher board for each player to leave their own water bottle and rehydrate with proper physical distancing.
- Ice time will be conducted in cohort groups of maximum 20 participants, and on/ off ice sessions will be conducted in a way, as much as possible, to ensure proper physical distancing is being maintained.
- On ice sessions will be held 30 minutes apart, allowing the dressing room hallway benches to be sanitized in the 10 minutes between players leaving and arriving.
- Each session will have a documented attendance of participants and coaches should it be required for health and safety purposes completed by the renter.
- There will be no mixing of participants of each cohort group between sessions.
- The Bison/Rustler dressing room be used for certain instructors only and social distancing must be met. All playing participants must enter through the PMM front door. Showering is not permitted in any room within the PMM.

Sanitizing:

- Lobby, spectating area and public washrooms will be sanitized periodically throughout each day, according to AHS guidelines the facility adheres to.
- Dressing room benches and player benches and other high touch surfaces will be sanitized and wiped between each group in the allotted time frame and the entire area will be sprayed down completely at the end of each night.

Please note: this document is subject to change as the provincial and federal health and safety requirements are updated going forward.

7.0 RETURN TO HOCKEY

Facilitating a safe return to Hockey that meets the guidelines of Alberta Health Services relaunch strategy for stage two is paramount. As we have mentioned previously, Hockey Alberta and WMHA will be utilizing two distinct procedures in delivering programming, either Physically Distanced or using Cohorts. Hockey is a contact sport and while we can operate skill development sessions using physical distancing, we understand that in order to meet all of the key objectives of our program, we will need to use 'Cohort Groups' for various phases of our Return to Play.

Hockey Alberta Return to Play Plan of August 21, 2020 states that in order for players to change 'Cohort Groups', they must self isolated for a 14-day period prior to joining a new 'Cohort Group'

Definition of Cohorts:

A COVID-19 cohort – also known as bubbles, circles, or safe squads – are small groups of the same people who can interact regularly without staying 2 metres apart.

A person in a cohort should have little to no close contact with people outside of the cohort. Keeping the same people together, rather than mixing and mingling, helps reduce the chance of getting sick, and makes it easier to track exposure if someone does get sick.

Under Stage 2, cohort types and sizes include:

- core cohorts (families and households) – up to 15 people
- childcare programs – up to 30 children and staff
- sports teams – up to 50 players and coaching staff
- performing groups – up to 50 cast members or performers

You should only belong to ONE CORE COHORT, which is your family or household cohort. It is safest to limit the number of other cohorts you belong to reducing the risk of getting sick or spreading COVID-19.

Sport Team Specifics:

With modifications, team sports are permitted under Stage 2, including contact sports

Sports teams can play in region-only cohort groups of up to 50 players or “mini leagues”.

If participating in or organizing a sports activity as part of a cohort group:

- avoid travel outside of regions
- tournaments and large events are prohibited
- clean shared equipment regularly
- maintain physical distancing when not in play (for example, players on the bench)
- decrease/eliminate use of shared locker rooms

Below is a copy of the Return to Hockey Components directly from Hockey Alberta's Aug 21, 2020 document.

RETURN TO HOCKEY COMPONENTS				
COMPONENT	START DATE	PARTICIPANT ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA	TRAVEL RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTIVITY
Off-Season Skill Development	June 1 – August 31	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Participants from the local community area; OR For a program with Physical Distancing in place, participants that reside within a 200 km radius of the host community; OR For a program using Cohorting, participants that reside within a 100 km radius of the host community. 	<p>Non-essential travel should be limited.</p> <p>Players should access programs in their immediate area where possible.</p> <p>Travel to participate in activity outside the Alberta Health Region where the participant resides is not recommended.</p>	<p>Programs may be delivered using Physical Distancing or Cohorting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Off-ice sessions Skills camps Development programs Hockey schools
Development Season	August 1 – TBD	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Participants from the established registration area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tiered Hockey - MHA Boundary Minor Female - Closest Female Program Hockey Canada Accredited Schools (HCAS) - No Restrictions AA Hockey - Recruitment Area AAA Hockey - Draw Zone Junior/ Senior - No Restrictions AAA programs can operate 'tryout' sessions for each specific level of hockey, using physical distancing, to identify a group of players to bring into a Cohort. Reminder: A Cohort is a maximum of 50 people. 	<p>Non-essential travel should be limited.</p> <p>Players should access programs in their immediate area where possible.</p> <p>Travel to participate in activity outside the Alberta Health Region where the participant resides is not recommended.</p>	<p>Programs may be delivered using Physical Distancing or Cohorting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skills Sessions On-Ice Practices Off-Ice Training Inter-Squad Game Play (3v3, 4v4 or 5v5) <p>Players can be grouped by age and/or skill level; programming can assist to determine skill levels of players.</p> <p>Tournaments not permitted.</p>
MODIFIED COMPETITION SEASON	TBD (No earlier than Nov. 1)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Using the Development Season criteria, participants should be registered and the evaluation/ sorting process underway for the specific level of hockey. Participants from the established registration area. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tiered Hockey - MHA Boundary Minor Female - Closest Female Program HCAS - No Restrictions AA Hockey - Recruitment Area AAA Hockey - Draw Zone Junior/ Senior - No Restrictions 	<p>Teams grouped into regional 'Pods' for competition purposes.</p> <p>A Pod includes 3-5 teams, depending on Government of Alberta guidelines.</p> <p>Teams play within their Pod for the duration of the Modified Competition Season.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skills Sessions On-Ice Practices Off-Ice Training Game Play within Pods <p>This component provides the opportunity to finalize any tryouts/ evaluations, register rosters and prepare for an eventual return to the Regular Season, when permitted.</p> <p>Tournaments: TBD</p>
Regular Season	TBD	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Using the Development Season criteria, participants should be registered and the evaluation/ sorting process underway for the specific level of hockey. Participants from the established registration area. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tiered Hockey - MHA boundary Minor Female - Closest Female Program HCAS - No Restrictions AA Hockey - Recruitment Area AAA Hockey - Draw Zone Junior/ Senior - No Restrictions 	<p>Restrictions on travel could still be in place.</p> <p>Scheduling play within regions/ conferences will be considered.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skills Sessions On-Ice Practices Off-Ice Training League Play <p>Tournaments: TBD</p>

OFF-SEASON SKILL DEVELOPMENT

The purpose of phase one, off season skill development and training is to provide the ability to hold skill and conditioning camps during the month of August 2020. This phase will be in place from August 1-31st inclusive and will be entirely Physically Distanced.

This will allow members and players to complete any off ice, on ice, skill development and hockey school training during the month of August prior to the start of the Skill Development and Evaluations phase.

SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATIONS

The purpose of the Skill Development and Evaluations phase is to group players of similar skill. This process will be similar to the evaluation and tiering processes that occur each year. One key difference this year is that to ensure the safety of the players and to help reduce the number of player-to-player contact situations, these sessions will be entirely Physically Distanced. Once we are able to place the players in Cohort Groups, players will be permitted to engage in drills where they will come into close contact with other players.

When participants have completed their initial skill sessions to determine skill rankings among their players, they will create 'Cohort Groups' of between 45-50 players (age category and registration dependent). We will communicate further on numbers of coaches and team officials who should join the 'Cohort Group' and those that should remain Physically Distanced. It is the expectation that all Coaches and Team Officials will remain Physically Distanced during the initial skills evaluation sessions.

MODIFIED COMPETITION SEASON

When Government of Alberta restrictions on travel and the number of people allowed in a gathering are lifted, Hockey Alberta and our sanctioned Leagues will have a plan in place for a safe and productive transition into a 'Modified Competition Season'.

This Modified Competition Season will not commence (for any level of hockey) before November 1, 2020. Depending on the Government of Alberta guidelines and recommendations, the start of this component could be delayed until later in the 2020-21 season.

- Teams will be grouped into regional 'Pods', by level of hockey, for competition purposes.
- A Pod will include 3-5 teams, depending on Government recommendations.
- Teams will only play within their Pod for the duration of this component.

REGULAR SEASON

WMHA will continue to follow the lead of AHS & HA in order to determine an appropriate time to transition from the 'Modified Competition Season' to a normal return to hockey 'Regular Season'. We remain optimistic that we will be able to transition to a traditional 'Regular Season' in accordance with past season guidelines but will only do so once it is safe for all of our participants and we have received approval from Alberta Health Services and Hockey Alberta.