

Tier I Proposal Draft Tryout Task Force
(approved by USA Hockey Congress on January 28, 2024)

The following language will be inserted in Section III.B of the Rules & Regulations on page 166 of the 2023-24 Annual Guide. The existing language in that section will remain as subparts (2) and (3) at the end (as amended):

These changes are effective as of August 1, 2024

B. Tryouts/Player Selection

1. Tryouts for all Tier I 130 – 18U Youth and 14U – 19U Girls Teams

This Tier I Player Rostering Policy (this "Policy") applies throughout USA Hockey to all Youth and Girls Tier I players/teams only. All teams classified within their Affiliate as "Tier I" must comply with this Policy or risk loss of their Tier I designation and other potential sanctions. As this is a national policy adopted by USA Hockey, all Affiliates are directed to remove any Tier I rules that are contrary to or in conflict with this Policy.

Under this Policy, the following definitions shall apply:

"Affiliate Presidents Review Subcommittee" shall refer to a subcommittee of the USA Hockey Affiliate President's Committee and in each case shall involve three (3) Affiliate Presidents who are not involved in the matter being reviewed and have no other conflicts of interest related to the parties in the dispute.

"Off-Season" shall mean the period beginning with the end of the prior Playing Season until September 1 (or earlier if player is signed with a team and plays in a game before September 1).

"Parents" or "parents" shall mean and refer to the player's parents or legal guardians, if applicable.

"Player Agreements" shall mean and refer to those agreements entered into between a player/parent and a team/program for the purpose of binding the player to a particular team for a particular Playing Season, and according to the requirements in Section I below.

"Playing Season" shall mean the period beginning September 1 of each year (or the first game of the team's regular season, if earlier) through forty-eight (48) hours after the conclusion of the Tier I National Championships.

"Signing Team" shall mean the Tier I team that has signed a player to a Player Agreement binding the Player to the Signing Team for a Playing Season.

"Team Fact Sheet" shall be as described in Section I.d. below.

"Tryout" means any process on or off-ice that evaluates a player or group of players for the purpose of choosing players for a program or team. A Tryout also includes any team practices, off ice training sessions, open skates, skills sessions, or identification skates which include a player that is not on a regular season USA Hockey Roster with that association's

teams or program. USA Hockey programs, coaches and administrators are not permitted to operate a program outside of USA Hockey as a means of avoiding the prohibitions on tryouts or recruiting. While USA Hockey does not restrict a coach's private business, if a coach runs a private camp, meeting, event, skate or skills clinic outside of USA Hockey for one or more players, then the coach and/or team/program should be investigated as Code of Conduct/tampering and the player should face disciplinary action as set forth below.

I. Agreements between Player/Parent and the Team/Program; Rosters

USA Hockey and its Affiliates and Member Programs will recognize Player Agreements at the Tier I level according to and as set forth herein.

- a. Upon execution by the Signing Team, player and parents, a Player Agreement will commit and bind the player to the Signing Team for the entirety of the applicable Playing Season, and the player will not be permitted to be rostered or to participate in any way with another USA Hockey Tier I team during the Playing Season except as set forth herein.
- b. The Player Agreement will also bind the Signing Team to that player and secures a roster spot for that player on the Signing Team for the entire applicable Playing Season. The Signing Team cannot cut, release or dismiss a player from the team except as set forth herein.
- c. Notwithstanding the restrictions set forth herein, it shall not be a violation of this Section I if a player and program allow the player to participate on another Tier I team within that program pursuant to and in compliance with the Vertical Roster Integration Program set forth in the USA Hockey Rules & Regulations Section III.C. The Player Agreement will indicate that the player may not participate in any Tryout for another Tier I team/program during the term of the Player Agreement; a violation of this provision will subject the player to not less than a five-game suspension. In the event a player who has signed a Player Agreement has been found to have participated in any Tryout for another Tier I team/program, then the player will be ineligible to sign a Player Agreement or participate with that program for a period of 18 months from the last date of the Tryout. The Player Agreement will not restrict a player from moving to or participating with another team in the following circumstances:
 - i. the Player Agreement would not restrict a player from leaving a Signing Team and playing on or participating with a USA Hockey Tier II (youth or girls), High School, Junior hockey or college hockey team;
 - ii. the Player Agreement would not restrict a player from playing with any other team, including a Tier I team, if the Signing Team and player mutually agree for the player to be released by the Signing Team;
 - iii. If the player were released by the Signing Team for violation of the Player Agreement requirements or other violation by the player of the Signing Team's or its program's written Code of Conduct, and is released following any required hearing and appeal process required under USA Hockey or Affiliate bylaws or rules, then the Player Agreement would not restrict the player from joining another team that season;
 - iv. the Player Agreement would not restrict a player from playing with another team, including a Tier I team, if the player files a grievance with any applicable Affiliate

- (the Signing Team's Affiliate and, if different, the Affiliate where the player would like to sign) and a hearing is held or overseen by the Affiliate Presidents Review Subcommittee (and not the Signing Team or Local Program) where it is determined that the Signing Team, its coach(es) or other participants have violated USA Hockey Safe Sport Policies or other USA Hockey, Affiliate or Signing Team policies and which violation(s) justify the player's release from the Player Agreement and eligibility to sign with another Tier I team (but still subject to any other rostering rules and timelines). The Affiliate Presidents Review Subcommittee shall endeavor to hold hearings on such grievances on an expedited basis when appropriate. The Affiliate Presidents Review Subcommittee's determination shall be final and is not subject to appeal, except that any suspension imposed by the Affiliate Presidents Review Subcommittee shall be appealable to the National Appeal Committee.
- d. Prior to offering a Player Agreement to a player, or signing the Player Agreement, an authorized program or team representative from the Signing Team must present and review a Team Fact Sheet with the player and their parent, which must include all the information, provisions and requirements the player and family will be committing to by signing the Player Agreement and becoming a member of the Signing Team. The Team Fact Sheet must be referenced in the signed Player Agreement, must be signed by the team and parents, and must be provided to the player's parents. The required elements of the Team Fact Sheet must include at least the following information:
 - i. The specific team upon which player will be rostered;
 - ii. The Signing Team's anticipated budget and fees for the season, which includes team fees to participate on the Signing Team for the season, uniform or equipment fees, and anticipated travel fees (to the extent known or planned) for the player and any required travel for parents, and any other anticipated fees that are required to be paid as a condition of participation on the team;
 - iii. The required payment schedule or payment options for the fees in (ii) above;
 - iv. The anticipated or planned number and average per week of practices, games, off-ice sessions, etc.
 - v. Any player code of conduct and/or parent code of conduct required for participation on the Signing Team; and
 - vi. Players and families and the Signing Team acknowledge and agree to be bound by the terms of the Team Fact Sheet and Player Agreement.
 - e. Teams are only allowed to offer and sign the number of players to Player Agreements equal to the maximum number of roster spots permitted on a USA Hockey Roster at any one time for the Signing Team's rostered age level. For example, a team that is permitted to have 20 players on a USA Hockey roster may not sign more than 20 players to Player Agreements and then move players on and off the roster. A team may only sign additional players to Player Agreements if another player on the roster has been released from their Player Agreement pursuant to Section 1.c. above.
 - f. The Player Agreement will be immediately binding on the Signing Team upon the signature of the team, player and parents. The player will also be immediately bound to the Player Agreement upon signature by the Signing Team, player and parents.
 - g. During any time a Player Agreement is in effect as set forth above, any Player Agreement signed with a different team shall not be enforceable.

- h. The binding nature of the Player Agreement addresses only the player's commitment to the Signing Team, the Signing team's commitment to the player, and the enforceability of the rules and requirements set forth in this Policy. USA Hockey and the applicable Affiliate(s) are not responsible for enforcing the contractual terms of the Team Fact Sheet.

II. Signing Players

Subject to the provisions below, teams may sign players to a Player Agreement either (a) during the Off-Season, or (b) during the current Playing Season prior to December 31. Player Agreements signed during the Off-Season are valid for the following Playing Season only. Player Agreements signed during the current Playing Season are valid for that Playing Season only. No Tier I team/program may sign a player to a Player Agreement if that player has already been bound to a Signing Team through a signed Player Agreement. No Tier I team may have more signed Player Agreements than permitted roster spots on its team.

- a. Off-Season Player Agreements: A Tier I team cannot offer or sign players to Player Agreements until the beginning of the Off-Season, which begins 48 hours after the conclusion of the National Tournament. Beginning with the Off-Season, a Tier I team may sign players that are not already bound to a different Tier I team (by a Player Agreement signed with such team) to fill up to the maximum allowed roster spots.
- b. Player Agreements During Playing Season: A Tier I team may offer or sign players that are not already signed to a Player Agreement with another Tier I team at any time prior to December 31 of that Playing Season, provided that at no time may the Tier I team have more signed Player Agreements than roster spots on its team.

Notwithstanding any of the above, a player that signs a Player Agreement that is already rostered on a USA Hockey Tier II, High School, Junior or College hockey team must first secure a release from the player's current rostered team before being added to the Signing Team's roster.

III. Recruiting, Tampering and Tryouts

The USA Hockey Coaching Ethics Code provides:

"Coaches will not recruit a participant who is already a member of another USA Hockey team. Direct contact by a coach or his/her staff or indirect contact through an agent or parent during the playing season with a participant who is a member of another USA Hockey team is considered tampering and is prohibited."

Coaches (or "persons affiliated with the team" as defined below) who make contact with a player (or the player's agent, advisor or parents/family members) who is bound to another Signing Team through a Player Agreement, for the purpose of inviting, enticing, or convincing them to play for a specific team/program other than the Signing Team during the current Playing Season, shall be considered Tampering and shall subject the responsible Party(ies) to sanctions according to this Policy and applicable USA Hockey or Affiliate rules or bylaws. For the purposes of this paragraph, "persons affiliated with the team" shall include any member of the team or program and includes without limitation general managers, player development personnel, coaches, current or past team players, or their parents.

Coaches and persons affiliated with a team are permitted to recruit at any time during the current Playing Season for the immediately following Playing Season so long as it does not include an on-ice skate of any kind. Players are prohibited from having any type of on-ice skate or Tryout with a recruiting program/school during the Playing Season.

IV. Coach Awareness

Coaches/programs will be made aware by their Affiliates that attempting to recruit a player in any way during the Playing Season for that current Playing Season will be a violation of the Code of Conduct/tampering. Reported Code of Conduct/tampering violations will be referred by the Affiliates involved to the Affiliate Presidents Review Subcommittee, which shall investigate and resolve any such allegations, including the issuance of sanctions if it is determined a violation occurred.

V. Enforcement

- a. Enforcement against Players. Players violating the Tryout rule shall be subject to disciplinary action by their Signing Team or applicable Affiliate according to the provisions of paragraph 1.c. above. If a player leaves their Signing Team and attempts to play for another Tier I team during that Playing Season (other than as permitted above), the player will not be permitted to be rostered on the new team for the remainder of current Playing Season and the following Playing Season. Affiliate registrars will be instructed by the Affiliate to not roster the player on the new team's roster for the remainder for such period.
- b. Enforcement against Coaches: Incidents in which coaches or others involved in a program are alleged to have tampered with players who have signed a Player Agreement in violation of Tampering as defined above, will be referred to the Affiliate Presidents Review Subcommittee for investigation and disciplinary action. Any coach determined by the Affiliate Presidents Review Subcommittee or USA Hockey to have tampered with another player will face a minimum suspension of one year and minimum probationary period of two years for the first offense.
- c. Enforcement against Programs. A Tier I program that is involved in tampering with a player who is signed to a Player Agreement with another Tier I team, in violation of Tampering as defined above, will be referred to the Affiliate Presidents Review Subcommittee for investigation and disciplinary action. A Tier I program shall be deemed to be involved if a member of the program is involved in a tampering violation. Tier I programs assume responsibility for all actions of all personal involved in their program; if there is a finding of tampering, the organization is also held accountable for the violation. An organization who has been deemed as involved in a tampering violation are subject to sanctions that could include, monetary fines, exclusion from participating in Affiliate, District or National Tournament play and/or loss of ability to field USA Hockey sanctioned teams at a/all playing level(s). Any sanction shall be enforced by the USA Hockey Affiliate in whose jurisdiction the organization resides and shall be recognized by all Affiliates of USA Hockey. Tier I teams/programs must ensure compliance of all the requirements of this policy. Failure to do so can result in a hearing by the Affiliate Presidents Review Subcommittee and the removal of the team's and/or program's Tier I status.

- d. Appeals of Suspensions. Any suspension imposed by the Affiliate Presidents Review Subcommittee shall be appealable to the National Appeal Committee.

VI. Roster Change Date

The deadline for changing hockey rosters will remain December 31.

Amendments to existing language from Section III.B of the Rules & Regulations are below in their approved form:

2. Tryouts for all Tier II 14U-18U Youth and 14U-19U Girls Teams

No youth or girls Tier II team may recruit or solicit players or offer hockey contracts to players for the following season, or hold development camps, tryouts, player selections or any activity that could be construed as a tryout/solicitation or recruitment for the following season, until 48 hours after the last game of Youth National Championships (both Tier I and Tier II Nationals must be completed). For example, if the National Tournament ends at 4 pm on Monday, tryouts can begin after 4 pm on Wednesday. Any violation of this prohibition may subject the coach, team, program and/or responsible administrators to appropriate discipline, or ineligibility of the team or coach, as determined by the Affiliate.

3. Tryouts for Non-Tier I or II Teams.

Except for spring or summer season hockey, Affiliates are strongly encouraged to have rules for house, recreational and other youth and girls hockey teams that are not registered as Tier I or Tier II teams, prohibiting tryouts or player selection until after a certain date that is appropriate for such Affiliate.