



RETURN **to** HOCKEY

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Regulatory Review

Revised June 26, 2020



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Message from Hockey Canada

Since early March 2020, earlier in many countries, the world as we knew it has changed dramatically. Many facets of our day-to-day routine have been altered by COVID-19. Hockey has not been immune; the pandemic has impacted each and every province and territory in Canada.

As the timing and manner in which hockey returns may differ from one region to another, Hockey Canada has compiled this Return to Hockey document so all participants have access to the information they require to ensure our leagues and teams are prepared to return to the ice as quickly and efficiently as possible, and with a level playing field, when it is safe to do so.

This document will outline recommendations that have been approved by the Hockey Canada Board of Directors, including some changes to Hockey Canada regulations that reflect our current environment, and that will allow leagues and teams, particularly at the Major Junior, Junior A and U18 levels, to begin planning the 2020-21 season. These recommendations speak to regulations that impact player registration, transfers, out-of-jurisdiction travel and national championships, among others.

Hockey Canada would like to thank our task team for its commitment to formulating these recommendations. We have worked with our Members, Hockey Canada staff, the Canadian Hockey League and Canadian Junior Hockey League to ensure our game is in the best possible place upon our return.

Michael Brind'Amour

Chair, Board of Directors

Tom Renney

Chief Executive Officer

Scott Smith

President & COO



Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION TO THE AMENDMENTS

The Return to Hockey Regulatory Review Task Team was formed to conduct a detailed review of existing Hockey Canada regulations and their impact on how and when we return to the ice.

From that review, the Task Team has made a number of recommendations with regards to transition regulations that may be required to meet the challenges of a return to hockey in the COVID-19 environment, in whatever format that may be.

NATIONAL & REGIONAL STANDARDS

Hockey Canada regulations establish a national standard, ensuring a level playing field for teams participating in divisions/categories that are eligible for regional and national championships, most notably Major Junior, Junior A and U18 AAA (open and female).

The expectation is that Members will establish appropriate standards, as required, for regional championships that don't lead to national championships.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- There is a reasonable possibility that hockey will not be starting on September 1.
- Hockey may not start at the same time across the country.
- There may be challenges with cross-border movement of players and teams both inter-provincially and internationally, with a need for ongoing monitoring of the state of the COVID-19 pandemic to minimize impact.
- Junior leagues need to begin planning for the 2020-21 season by registering players, but there is no guarantee that a league will operate, particularly if restrictions on public gatherings remain in effect.
- Even if junior leagues operate this season, certain junior teams may not.
- Teams may need greater roster flexibility due to COVID-19-related issues.
- Hockey Canada regulations already provide Members with considerable discretion to implement their own standards for teams that aren't eligible for regional/national championships, including:

A.12 Final registration date – Members can add players after February 10 if competition does not lead to a regional or national championship

F.15(b) Members may establish the number of games a player may play as an affiliate player at non-junior levels of hockey that don't compete for a regional or national championship

D.12 Rosters as small as six (6) players

SUMMARY OF AMENDMENTS

Amendments to the Hockey Canada Regulations and Non-Sanctioned Leagues Policy following the recommendations of the Return to Hockey Regulatory Review Task Team

In response to the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic is anticipated to have on hockey this season, the Hockey Canada Board of Directors has accepted all recommendations from the Return to Hockey Regulatory Review Task Team, some of which will have a direct impact on Hockey Canada regulations and policies for the 2020-21 season. The complete list of recommendations is set out beginning on page 8. For ease of reference, the recommendations that will have a direct impact on Hockey Canada regulations and policies for the 2020-21 season include:

- (i) In order to meet the definition of a 'League' in Regulation **A.23**, junior teams in that league must play a minimum of six (6) home games and six (6) away games in a regular season schedule.
- (ii) The August 15 and October 1 dates described in Regulation **D.17** shall not apply this season. Decisions regarding whether a team intends to operate in the upcoming season shall be made by the applicable league, in consultation with its Member, at the appropriate time prior to the start of the season.
- (iii) In junior hockey, there shall be only one roster cutdown date (the "cutdown date"), rather than two (affected Regulations include **E.4** and **E.5**).
- (iv) On the cutdown date, junior teams must reduce to not more than 25, (i) the total number of players on their roster; and (ii) allotted but unused player registrations.
- (v) The cutdown date, release date and final registration date for any player to whom those dates apply, shall be determined on a sliding scale based on variable league starting dates (see page 10).
- (vi) Regulation **F.15(d)** shall be modified to include an allowance if a team needs to call up a player due to a rostered player being scratched from a team's game-day roster because they:
 - (a) have tested positive for COVID-19, or have symptoms consistent with COVID-19;
 - (b) are living with a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, or has symptoms consistent with COVID-19; or
 - (c) have been in contact with a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 or has symptoms consistent with COVID-19.

The league and the Member shall have the ability to address any suspected abuse of the COVID-19-related illness exception.

- (vii) The requirement that a player may transfer without a release if their team from the 2019-20 season does not operate in the 2020-21 season but the league continues to operate, or the team in the 2020-21 season disbands on or before the cutdown date (see Regulations **G.9(h)** and **(j)**, and Regulation **H.11**) shall be modified as follows:
- (a) The league within which that team is operating may conduct a dispersal draft to transfer the playing rights of a player from that roster to another team within that league. The player shall be free, however, to:
- i. join a team in a different division or category without compensation; or
 - ii. join another league in the same division and category with compensation to the team holding their rights after the dispersal draft.
- If the league does not conduct a dispersal draft, the provisions of **G.9(h)** and **G.9(j)** shall apply.
- (viii) The deadline for designating affiliate players under Regulation **L.6** shall be amended from January 15 to seven (7) days after the cutdown date if the league's season starts after November 30.
- (ix) The verbal commitment to compete in a national championship referenced in Regulation **L.11** shall be deferred from the Spring Congress to the Summer Congress, and the written commitment shall be deferred to January 1.
- (x) The fines described in Regulation **L.12** shall not apply if a Member withdraws from a national championship due to COVID-19-related circumstances beyond the control of the team/league/Member.
- (xi) Regulations **L.13** and **L.14** shall not apply this season. The Board retains the right under Regulation **L.12** to apply appropriate additional sanctions for non-participation in a regional/national championship.
- (xii) The cut-off date defined in the Non-Sanctioned Leagues Policy shall be the later of: (i) September 30; or (ii) the date of the first game of the sanctioned league's regular season.

The changes described above will be subject to review throughout the 2020-21 season, as the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on amateur hockey in Canada continue to evolve.

Return to Hockey Regulatory Review Recommendations

Definition of “League” (Regulation A)

Current:

A “League” must consist of at least three (3) teams and, in junior hockey, must play a minimum of twelve (12) home and twelve (12) away games during the regular season. (A.23)

The definition has significance for regional/national championship eligibility (L.4), including the ability to affiliate. (L.7)

Recommendations

A Member can apply to the Hockey Canada Board of Directors for relief from the “three (3) team” portion of the definition.

A junior league must play at least six (6) home and six (6) away games during the regular season.

Definition of “Season” (Regulation A)

Current:

The definition of “Season” (A.37) refers to the year beginning June 1 and ending the following May 31.

Recommendation

The definition should be flagged and adjusted if it becomes obvious that the season will continue beyond May 31 (this may also have implications on the June 1 start of the next season).

Out-of-Jurisdiction Teams (Regulation B)

Issue:

Border restrictions could impact a team’s ability to travel beyond its borders at any given time during the season.

Recommendations

Junior leagues should give strong consideration to directing their out-of-province Canadian teams (e.g. Flin Flon, Lloydminster) to move their entire operations, including billeting arrangements, to within the geographic boundaries of the province in which they intend to play for the upcoming season.

- This would not apply to multi-provincial leagues (e.g. WHL, QMJHL, Maritime Hockey League, CSHL), or U.S. teams playing in a Canadian league.

U.S.-based teams that apply to play in a Canadian league (and Canadian teams seeking to play in U.S. leagues) must acknowledge that their admission is conditional on approval from the appropriate government and health authorities and could be revoked or suspended at any time.

Teams may be accepted conditionally by the Hockey Canada Board of Directors in late May, but the Member, in consultation with its chief medical officer and the league, will have to determine whether an out-of-jurisdiction team can join a league at the start of the season, and whether the team can continue to play in the league at any given time during the season.

Registration Dates (Regulation E)

Current:

Regulations include three key dates:

December 1
E.4

Junior teams must reduce to not more than 25, the total number of:

- Players on their roster; and
- Allotted but unused player registrations

Players not rostered by December 1 are automatically released (E.9)

January 10
E.5

Junior teams must reduce to not more than 23, the total number of:

- Players on their roster; and
- Allotted but unused player registrations

February 10
E.15

Final registration date

Recommendations

Given the uncertainty over the timing of the start of the season, the December and January cutdown dates should be reduced to a single cutdown date for the 2020-21 season (affects Regulations E.4, E.5, E.8, E.9, E.12 and E.13).

To provide roster flexibility, junior rosters should remain at 25 players throughout the season (affects Regulations E.4 and E.5).

Key dates should be based on a sliding scale, to accommodate late season starts and variable start dates across the country.

Current:

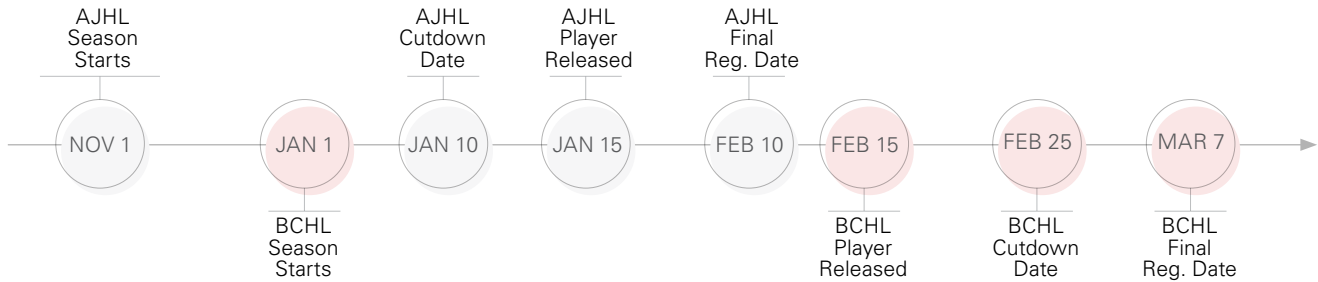
Regular Season Start Date	Release Date if NOT Rostered E.9	Cutdown Date E.4, E.5	Final Registration Date A.12, D.3, E.13
September 1 – 30	DECEMBER 1	JANUARY 10	FEBRUARY 10

Recommendation

Sliding scale based on variable league start dates.

Regular Season Start Date	Release Date if NOT Rostered E.9	Cutdown Date (E.4, E.5, E.7-E10, E.12-E.18, E.20, E.21, E.23, F.4(a), G.9 (h))	Final Registration Date A.12, D.3, E.13, H.15 (b)
September 1 – October 31	DECEMBER 1	JANUARY 10	FEBRUARY 10
November 1 – 30	DECEMBER 15	JANUARY 10	FEBRUARY 10
After November 30	Earlier of 50% Regular Season or:	Earlier of 75% Regular Season or:	Earlier of 90% Regular Season or:
December 1 – 31	JANUARY 10	FEBRUARY 10	FEBRUARY 24
After December 31	JANUARY 31	FEBRUARY 25	MARCH 7

Varying season start dates will result in varying cutdown dates in different leagues.



- AJHL player is released after the cutdown date (January 10)
 - They cannot register with another team this season (E.16)
- BCHL player is released prior to the cutdown date (February 25)
 - They can register with:
 - (i) any other BCHL team before March 7 (E.15); or
 - (ii) any other league before its final registration date (E.15)

Affiliation (Regulation F)

Current:

Hockey Canada regulations permit junior hockey and regional and national championship-eligible teams to affiliate a player for a maximum of ten (10) games (F.15(a)).

- There are currently exceptions built into the regulations giving teams the ability to affiliate players at times when their rosters might be depleted by players attending national and international events. Games played by those affiliate players (APs) during those periods do not count against the limit of games they can play as an AP during the season (F.15(d)).

Recommendation

The Task Team recommends an allowance be added to Regulation F.15(d) if a team needs to call up a player due to a “COVID-19-related illness.”

- “COVID-19-related illness” would include, by way of example, a rostered player who has gone into isolation because they:
 - have tested positive for COVID-19, or have symptoms consistent with COVID-19; or
 - are living with a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, or has symptoms consistent with COVID-19; or
 - have been in contact with a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 or has symptoms consistent with COVID-19.
- The league and the Member shall have the ability to address any suspected abuse of the COVID-19-related illness exception.

Current:

Regulation L.6 requires teams to designate their APs on the HCR by January 15.

Recommendation

The deadline for designating affiliate players should be seven (7) days after the cutdown date if the season starts after November 30.

Rationale: With unusual season start dates, the January 15 date may not be appropriate in all cases.

Current:

Regulation F.8 prohibits affiliation between teams from different divisions and/or categories, competing within the same league.

Recommendation

As there may be more cases of teams from different divisions/categories who need to play in the same league this season, a Member will be permitted to submit a request to the Hockey Canada Board of Directors seeking relief from F.8 in appropriate circumstances.

Releases (Regulation G)

Current:

Players on a team that disbands on or before January 10 may play with other teams within the Member at the Member's discretion. (G.9(h))

Recommendations

Players on a team that disbands on or before the cutdown date (see page 10), may play with other teams within the Member at the Member's discretion.

If a junior team ceases to operate before the season begins, or disbands during the season, the league within which that team is operating may conduct a dispersal draft to transfer the playing rights of a player from that roster to another team within that league. The player shall be free, however, to:

- join a team in a different division or category without compensation; or
- join another league in the same division and category with compensation to the team holding their rights after the dispersal draft.

If the league does not conduct a dispersal draft, the provisions of G.9(h) and G.9(j) shall apply.

If a junior league does not operate in the 2020-21 season, any player registered on a team in that league shall be entitled to transfer to any other league or federation without compensation to his last registered team.

In the 2021-22 season, a player described above shall have the option to:

- Remain with the team they were registered with at the end of the 2020-21 season; or
- If the team they played on at the end of the 2020-21 season played in a Canadian league, the player may return to the team that they left at the beginning of the 2020-21 season, provided the league within which that team is registered has resumed operations. No compensation shall be payable to the team they were registered with at the end of the 2020-21 season.

Current:

After August 15 for junior teams and October 1 for senior teams, the Member shall have the right to release players from a team which, in the opinion of the Member, has no intention of operating this season. (D.17)

Recommendation

The August 15 date described in Regulation D.17 shall not apply this season. Decisions regarding whether a team intends to operate in the upcoming season shall be made by the applicable league, in consultation with its Member, at the appropriate time prior to the start of the season.

Transfers (Regulation H)

Issues:

- There is a high level of uncertainty regarding when hockey will return across the country.
- Junior teams need to begin planning for next season despite the uncertainty.
- It is highly unlikely that all North American leagues will begin play at the same time.
- If players are only allowed to transfer to a league when its reopening date is confirmed, some Canadian junior leagues and teams may be at a competitive disadvantage if other leagues (U.S. or in other provinces) start earlier.
- It would be unfair to leagues that are ready to play if player transfers are only allowed when the last league in the country is ready to return to hockey.

Recommendations

Player transfers should be permitted effective June 1, as is the current practice (D.1).

- All leagues should have the ability to build their rosters beginning on a common date.
- In the absence of clear evidence that there is a “better” date to begin allowing player transfers to occur, and taking into account all of the variables and uncertainty, there is no obviously preferable alternative to the existing transfer date at this time.

Player movement should follow the status quo.

- The Member will be responsible for intra-Member player movement.
- Inter-Member transfers of minor-aged players will continue to require an appeal.
- Minor-aged players shall be permitted to transfer to other countries without an appeal.
- Players 18 years of age and older shall be permitted to transfer in the usual manner and under the usual conditions (e.g. release may be required, depending on the circumstance).
- Player trades shall be permitted.

Decisions regarding an incoming player's ability to participate in team activities should be made in accordance with the government and health regulations in effect at the time.

- There may be a significant time gap between the approval of the player's transfer and their arrival in the province to participate in team activities.
- League and team officials should consult with medical experts (league/Member chief medical officer, team doctor, public health authority) in reasonable proximity prior to the player's first team activity to ensure the player poses no health risks to other team members.

Leagues must advise their teams that a transfer approval is an administrative procedure and is not a guarantee that the player will be eligible to play for the team when the season starts. Government and health regulations in effect at that time could result in a player being denied entry to the province.

- Teams will be required to pay any fees associated with a player's transfer in accordance with the usual timing for such payments (before the first game of the regular season under the USAH/HC agreement).
- If the player never plays for the incoming team because that team does not operate this season, the player should be released, without compensation to their incoming team, on the date that the team determines it will not be operating.

If the incoming team has not started to operate by a certain date, the player shall be entitled to ask for their release, which must be granted by the incoming team.

- The Task Team reserves the right to establish a "soft" date, when the player can ask for a release if play has not begun, which the team must grant in exchange for no more than the amount they paid to obtain playing rights, and a "hard" date, when the player must be released without compensation.
- A team that releases a player as described above, without receiving compensation, shall not be deemed to have used a card on the released player.

A transferred player who is unable to join their incoming team for its first regular season game, due to COVID-19-related government or health regulations, may be released by that team, and the team will be entitled to card relief if the release occurs within 15 days after the start of the league's regular season.

A transferred player who is unable to join their incoming team for its first regular season game, due to COVID-19-related government or health regulations, may request an immediate release from that team, and the team will be entitled to card relief if the release occurs within 15 days after the start of the league's regular season.

Transfers (Section C of Article III of Regulation H.2)

Recommendation

There should be consultation with USA Hockey regarding whether the January 10 cutdown date and February 10 final registration date described in the HC/USAH/CHL agreement should be adjusted.

- If the dates are not adjusted, “locking in” roster spots for import players who are not released by the January 10 cutdown date should be considered.

Under the USAH/HC/CHL agreement, try-outs can begin effective April 1.

Note: Until the Canada/U.S. border re-opens for non-essential travel (restrictions are currently in effect until July 21), any discussion regarding try-outs is premature.

Tournaments and Tours (Regulations J and K)

Issues:

- Concerns may be raised regarding whether it is safe to allow teams from out of province to travel to a tournament, or for a team to travel out of province to attend a tournament.
- Additional COVID-19 waves could arise at any time, causing governments to close borders or limit travel to and from identified COVID-19 “hotspots” on short notice.

Recommendations

- As a general practice, tournament organizers are encouraged to accept entries only from teams operating within the Member (or in the case of Ontario, from within the province).
- Any decision to accept teams from outside the Member/province should be made in consultation with the Member’s chief medical officer.
- All participating teams, including teams from within the Member, should be advised that acceptance of their entry is conditional and may be revoked at any time, including after the tournament/tour begins, due to COVID-19-related concerns.
- Appropriate waivers should be included in the documents submitted by participating teams regarding assumption of financial and personal risk.
- Teams seeking to travel outside the Member/province for a tournament/tour must have their application approved by their Member in consultation with the chief medical officer.
- Appropriate waivers should be included in the documents submitted by participating teams regarding assumption of financial and personal risk.

Regional and National Championships (Regulation L)

Current:

Members must verbally commit to play in a national championship at the Spring Congress and confirm that participation in writing by November 1 [August 15 for senior] (L.11).

Recommendation

Defer the verbal commitment to the Summer Congress, and the written commitment to January 1.

Current:

Members withdrawing from a national championship after making the written commitment are subject to financial penalties (L.12).

Recommendation

Fines described in L.12 should not apply if the withdrawal is due to COVID-19 circumstances beyond the control of the team/league/Member.

Current:

Hockey Canada regulations indicate that participation in regional/national championships is mandatory (L.13), and that failure to participate will result in a league losing its status and the rights to all its players (L.14).

Recommendation

L.13 and L.14 should not apply this season. The Board of Directors retains the right under Regulation L.12 to apply appropriate additional sanctions for non-participation.

Operation of Pay-to-Play Leagues

Recommendations

If a player is registered in a junior league that uses a “pay-to-play” model, the Member or the league must establish protocols to address possible reimbursement to the player in the following scenarios:

- the team does not operate next season;
- the team disbands during the season; or
- the league plays a substantially reduced schedule.

The Member or the league must consider whether:

- its teams should collect fees prior to determining whether the team/league will operate this season;
- such fees should be held in trust until the season begins; and
- the league should act as guarantor of any collected fees.

Non-Sanctioned Hockey Policy

Current:

Individuals participating in non-sanctioned hockey after September 30 are ineligible to participate in Hockey Canada programming leading to a regional/national championship for the remainder of the season.

Recommendation

The cut-off date should be the later of: (i) September 30; or (ii) the date of the first game of the sanctioned league's regular season.

General Items

Global Recommendations

These recommendations have been made on tight timelines in ever-evolving conditions, to provide some guidance to teams as they begin preparing for next season and the opening of the HCR on June 1.

- It is highly recommended that the Task Team, or a similar group, be tasked with reviewing these recommendations later in the summer, when the start of the season is nearer, to determine whether they need to be adjusted in any way to meet the conditions that exist at that time.
- Each Member should consider adding a chief medical officer (CMO) position, whose role would include providing ongoing advice to the Member regarding issues arising out of the COVID-19 pandemic, including transfers, tournaments, tours and participation in leagues by out-of-jurisdiction teams.

Conclusion

Special thanks to the Task Team members for their contributions and commitment.

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