



## LAKES AREA HOCKEY ASSOCIATION

### Play-Up Policy 2025-2026 Season

The following provisions apply to participation in the travel hockey programming with Lakes Area Hockey Association ("LAHA"), which includes the Boji Mammoths youth and high school programs.

#### **Purpose:**

This policy is designed to outline the criteria and procedure for allowing a **second-year** youth hockey player to play up to an age group higher than their current level. This policy is intended to ensure player development, team cohesion, and safety, while also allowing players the opportunity to compete at the appropriate level based on their skill, maturity, and overall fit within the team structure.

#### **Eligibility Criteria:**

Only **second-year players** (players in their final year of the current age group) will be considered for the play-up policy. Specifically, **second-year Bantam players** who are in **9th grade** will be expected to play at the Bantam level, unless they meet the criteria set forth in this policy. If a player wishes to play up to High School hockey, they must follow the same **Play-Up** considerations as all other levels.

To be considered for playing up, a player should meet a minimum of **three (3) out of the following seven (7) criteria**. Meeting these criteria strongly encourages a recommendation to allow the player to play-up. However, the **Hockey Director will make the final recommendation** based on this policy, and the **Board of Directors will have the final say** in approving or denying the play-up request.

#### **Considerations for Play-Up Eligibility:**

The following criteria will be considered when determining eligibility for playing up:

##### **1. Skill Level of the Player's Age Group:**

- The player's skill level relative to others in their current age group. If the player is significantly more advanced compared to their peers, it may indicate readiness for the higher age group.

##### **2. Skill Level of the Players in the Age Group Above:**

- The player's skill level relative to the players in the higher age group they are seeking to join. If the player can compete successfully at that level, it may make them a good candidate for playing up.

##### **3. Skill Level of Opposing Teams (Leagues/Tournaments):**

- The player's ability to compete against the caliber of teams in the associated league or tournaments that the higher age group will be participating in. If the player can handle the competition, it may warrant consideration for a play-up.

##### **4. Family Considerations:**

- If the player has an older sibling already playing in the age group above, allowing the player to play up can provide logistical ease for the family, particularly with respect to travel and scheduling.

##### **5. Goaltender Availability:**

- If the current age group has two or more goalies, and the requested higher age group has insufficient number of goaltenders, the request should be considered. However, if the current age group has only one goalie, and the player is a goalie requesting to play up, the play-up request **will be denied**.
- There may be situations where a goalie is dual rostered on a higher team due to circumstances such as injuries. In these cases, the goalie's primary team will remain their age-appropriate team, and dual rostering will be permitted only to address temporary needs on the higher-level team.

## **6. Team Size and Structure:**

- If the size of the team the player is requesting to play up to is too large or small, a play-up may be considered to help balance the roster. If the team needs an additional player to reach the recommended minimum number of players or if a play-up would not push the team size beyond the maximum recommended, this may influence the decision.
- However, if approving the play-up would result in the player's current (age-appropriate) team becoming too small to remain viable or competitive, the request will be considered not in the best interest of the team or the association and will likely be denied.

## **7. Parental Coaching and Team Coaching Needs:**

- If the player has a parent who is a qualified coach, and the higher age group team does not have enough coaches to meet the minimum requirement, the presence of a qualified coach (the player's parent) may support the player's eligibility to play-up, helping meet the team's coaching needs.

### **Additional Considerations:**

- **Player Development:** The long-term development of the player must be the primary focus. A player should not be moved up to an older age group if it is deemed that they are not physically, mentally, or emotionally prepared for the increased competition.
- **Player Welfare:** Any play-up decision will prioritize the player's overall well-being. This includes avoiding situations where the player might face undue physical or emotional stress by competing at a higher level than they can handle.
- **Team Cohesion:** The team dynamics and cohesion of both the current age group and the age group above should be considered to avoid disrupting team culture, morale, or the development of other players.

### **Evaluation Process:**

#### **1. Initial Request:**

- The player's parents or guardians must submit a formal request to the Hockey Director, for the player to be considered for playing up, accompanied by supporting information for the criteria mentioned above.

#### **2. Assessment:**

- The Hockey Director, along with any relevant coaching staff, will evaluate the player's eligibility based on the criteria and provide a recommendation for whether the player should play up.

#### **3. Board Review:**

- The Board of Directors will review the Hockey Director's recommendation, and the criteria outlined in this policy. The Board's decision will be final.

#### **4. Decision Communication:**

- The final decision will be communicated to the player and their family within a reasonable time frame by the Hockey Director. If the decision is to approve the play-up, the player will be informed of the expectations and the logistics involved. If the decision is to deny the request, the reasoning will be clearly explained.

#### **5. Appeals Process:**

- If the player's family disagrees with the decision, they may appeal the decision in writing to the Board of Directors. The appeal will be reviewed, and a final determination will be made and communicated within 7 days of the appeal submission.

### **Final Considerations:**

- **Respecting the Policy:** While the policy strongly encourages play-up when the criteria are met, the primary focus remains on what is best for the player's development and well-being, as well as the balance of the team.
- **Review of Policy:** This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains relevant to player development, team needs, and organizational goals.