



Des Moines Youth Hockey Association

DMYHA Travel Program Guide

This guide provides a clear overview of the main expectations, procedures, and commitments for families participating in the Des Moines Youth Hockey Association travel program.

About the Travel Program

The DMYHA travel program gives players the opportunity to compete at a level that fits their development while continuing to build sportsmanship, teamwork, character, and responsibility. Travel teams may be offered at the 8U, 10U, 12U, and 14U levels depending on registration numbers, participation, and program needs. Lady Wild tryouts are run separately in a similar format under direction from the Girls director.

Travel hockey is a meaningful season-long commitment for both players and families. Accepting a roster spot means committing to that team for the full season, which affects planning, scheduling, team costs, and opportunities for other players.

What Families Can Expect

Coaches: Coaches are expected to be prepared for practices and games, communicate clearly and professionally, represent DMYHA well, and focus on player development in a competitive environment. Playing time should be as balanced as reasonably possible, while recognizing that special teams and late-game situations may affect decisions.

Players: Players are expected to attend tryouts, practices, and games regularly, communicate absences ahead of time, give strong effort, and follow team expectations. Repeated absences may affect playing time. If a player leaves the team after accepting a roster spot, the family may still be responsible for team costs unless DMYHA approves an exception.

Parents/Guardians: Parents and guardians are expected to support players positively from the stands, help players arrive on time and prepared, and communicate concerns respectfully and professionally using team communication guidelines.

General Conduct: Players, coaches, parents, guardians, and guests are expected to treat officials, opponents, volunteers, and other participants with respect at all DMYHA events.

Jr Bucs Program Leadership

The Jr Bucs travel program is overseen by DMYHA leadership, including the Travel Director, Coaching Director/Player Development, Director of Hockey Operations, Head Skills Instructor, the Coaching Selection Committee, and designated tryout evaluators, as needed.

Tryouts

Tryouts usually include 3-5 on-ice sessions for each age group. Players are evaluated by DMYHA staff and independent evaluators using pre-assigned jersey numbers. Players in 10U, 12U, and 14U must declare a primary position for tryouts. Skills assessed during tryouts will include skating, shooting, stickhandling and passing, awareness, competitiveness, team play, and hockey IQ. Goalies are also evaluated on agility, positioning, and overall goaltending ability in addition to the factors listed above.

Players are expected to attend all tryout sessions. If a player must miss a session, the absence should be reported in advance. Missing one or more sessions may make it harder for DMYHA to place a player appropriately and may affect eligibility for automatic qualification. Players without prior DMYHA history who miss tryouts may not be placed if roster space is limited.

During tryouts, spectators may observe tryouts only from designated viewing areas outside of the arena; however, to maintain a positive and productive tryout environment, DMYHA leadership may limit or discontinue spectator access at any time if circumstances warrant.

All participants must follow applicable USA Hockey equipment requirements, including required neck laceration protection during games, practices, and DMYHA on-ice activities.

Team Placement

DMYHA uses a structured process to help place players fairly and at the level that best fits their development. For 10U through 14U, the red team tryout takes place first, followed by a separate Blue/White tryout. This format is designed to improve evaluation accuracy and visibility. Returning Red players are not guaranteed a red roster spot the following season.

Team placement is based mainly on tryout rankings, with some coach discretion allowed under DMYHA rules. A pre-determined number of roster spots are determined automatically by ranking and roster size, while remaining spots are filled from the applicable ranking ranges. Goalies are placed based on their overall evaluations, and teams generally carry two goalies unless an exception is approved.

After teams are announced, families have 24 hours to accept the roster spot and submit the required deposit. Once a spot is accepted, the player is expected to remain with that team for the full season and meet the related financial responsibilities unless the board approves an exception in extraordinary circumstances.

Team Structure and Operations

DMYHA generally aims to field 2-3 teams per age group depending on registration numbers, player experience, and available coaches. Team level of play, scheduling, and budget are reviewed through DMYHA travel leadership. Tournament scheduling and team finances are managed through DMYHA procedures.

Typical team structure and game ranges are:

- 8U: 8 to 9 skaters, approximately 30 to 35 games
- 10U: 13 to 15 skaters, approximately 35 to 40 games
- 12U: 13 to 15 skaters, approximately 40 to 45 games
- 14U: 13 to 15 skaters, approximately 45 to 50 games

Important In-Season Rules

All teams must follow applicable USA Hockey and MWAHA rostering rules. Team finances must go through DMYHA, and team schedules require Travel Director approval. Players who accept a roster spot remain responsible for season financial obligations, including in the event of injury. Players who decline a travel roster may still participate in house league but are not eligible for All Stars during that season. Fill-in players may be used only with DMYHA approval through the appropriate process.

Move-Up Opportunities

Players at the 10U-14U levels who want to try out at an older age level must have played on the prior year's red team, be nominated by DMYHA staff, and receive DMYHA leadership approval. To move up, the player must rank among the top five skaters or top goaltenders and earn a spot on the older red team. Players must also try out at their age-appropriate level in case they do not qualify at the higher level. Second-year 8U players may be allowed to try out for 10U if they have at least one year of Travel or All Stars participation. Like above, these players may qualify for the 10u red team only if they rank in the top five. 8u players not selected for 10u Red will be required to play at their age-appropriate level.

Key Takeaways for Families

The DMYHA travel program is built around fair evaluations, appropriate player placement, strong communication, player development, and season-long commitment from coaches, players, and families. Families accepting a travel roster spot should be prepared for the time, financial, and team responsibilities that come with participation.