



Greater Haverhill Pentucket Youth Hockey

Guidelines

Last updated: 3/21/26

The following are the most current guidelines set forth by the Greater Haverhill Pentucket Youth Hockey (GHPYH) organization. They are intended to be a guide and may change from time to time, with or without notice.

Registration

All players will participate at the level specified by USA Hockey for their age (outlined below). If a player is found to be in violation by playing out of a registered age level without Board of Director approval (other than being allowed to play up a level for no more than six league games- see call-up rules below), the player and that player's coach will be removed from the program for 1 year. Registrations are held in the spring for the following season.

Age Groupings

All Age groupings are according to USA Hockey. Please refer to the USA Hockey website for the most up to date listing of the birth year assignments. USA Hockey follows this general rule:

- **Learn to Skate and Learn to Play Hockey** - any age, placement determined by ability.
- **8U** – formerly called “Mites” – Up to age 8. Must not turn 9 before 12/31
- **10U** – Formerly called “Squirts” – Ages 9 and 10. Must not turn 11 before 12/31
- **12U** – Formerly called “Peewee” - Ages 11 and 12. Must not turn 11 before 12/31
- **14U** – Formerly called “Bantam” - Ages 13 and 14. Must not turn 15 before 12/31
- **16U/18U** Formerly called “Midget” - Ages 15, 16, 17 and 18. Must not turn 19 before 12/31

Tryouts

1. **Overview** - The purpose of tryouts is to evaluate a player's skating ability, hockey skills and commitment to teamwork in order to place him or her within a team that will provide the best environment for improving their self-confidence and enjoyment of the sport of ice hockey. The Board of Directors is responsible for establishing the rules and formats associated with the tryout sessions.
2. **Committee** - A Board-approved committee of independent evaluators using a standardized scoring system will assess skating ability and hockey skills at each level during scheduled tryout sessions. Additional input to a player's respective hockey abilities and understanding of team concepts will be provided by the previous year's coach. That input will be solicited through standardized coaching evaluation forms that are provided to coaches prior to the completion of the season.
3. **Measurements** – The evaluators will base their ratings on items including but not limited to:
 - a. **Skating**
 - b. **Stick Handling**
 - c. **Shooting**
 - d. **Passing**
 - e. **Hockey Sense**
 - f. **Competitiveness**

4. **Timing** - Tryouts for all travel teams (8U-14U) will be held in the spring as close as possible to season's end. Tryout formats for each level may vary in relation to the age and experience of the player pool trying out for that level.
5. **Team Assignments** - All players wanting to be placed on a travel team for the upcoming season must register and attend tryouts.
 - a. **Missed Tryout day(s)** - A player's inability to attend the tryouts as a result of a family-related conflict and/or illness or injury requires timely notification to the President and registrar and will be evaluated by the Board on a case-by-case basis.
 - b. Team assignments will be determined using tryout scores (drills and scrimmage) and the prior year coach's evaluation. The top-rated players within a particular level will be placed on the "1" team, the next highest players on the "2" team and so on. Roster sizes and cut off points will be highly dependent on the size and composition of the overall player pool.
 - c. Team assignments will be made by a sub group of the Board of Directors limited to not more than 5 persons, one must be **GHPYH President**.
 - d. All GHPYH rosters are subject to the final approval of the Board of Directors.
 - e. Placement in prior season does not guarantee placement on the same level team in subsequent years. Teams are comprised of all players registered for that age level, during that season. Each year is considered a new evaluation process and the pool of players will dictate the placement of each child, not the prior years placement. (A player may play year 1 of that age group on a 2-level team and year 2 of that age group on a 3 level team. They also may stay at the same level within the age group in a subsequent year.)
6. **Players Joining GHPYH after Tryouts have been held** - It is the general policy of GHPYH to not refuse any child who wishes to play Hockey, therefore:
 - a. Any Player wishing to join a GHPYH Travel Team, after the completion of tryouts, will automatically be placed on the lowest level team of their age group.
 - b. In the case of that Player being egregiously misplaced, the Board of Directors, with the help of the Coaches of that Players age group, will evaluate that individual, and may at its discretion, move that Player to another team (provided there is room). Room is deemed that we have no more than 15 skaters and 2 goalies per any team.
 - c. This policy does not guarantee movement, it only states that it is an option for the Board of Directors.
 - d. This is done not for the benefit of that player, but to insure that all of the players on any given team are close to the same ability, for fairness within that team and League play (you cannot have a single "1" level player playing against "3" players).
 - e. Regardless of what level team a Player is coming from, they will initially be considered for the lowest level team, and will need to prove that they are clearly misplaced, again on the direction of the coach and Board of Directors.
7. **Notification** - Due to the time required to thoroughly review the tryout results, incorporate player evaluation forms and finalize coaching assignments, players are likely to be notified of their team placement no later than May 15.
8. **Placement Requests** - Specific team assignment requests must be submitted to the Board of Directors and will be considered only if the request is for participation on a less competitive team within the player's age bracket.

Waivers

From time to time, players may choose to move to another organization. USA Hockey requires that a waiver be provided prior to moving programs. All waivers shall be approved by the Board of Directors. Players seeking to obtain a waiver must have no financial obligation due to GHPYH.

Medical Waivers ("playing down")

In certain circumstances, a player may request to “play down” at a lower age level. These requests are only granted by USA Hockey. GHPYH has no say or involvement in this request or the subsequent approval process. The guidelines and process to apply for a medical waiver may be found on the USA Hockey website.

Playing Above Age Level

Greater Haverhill Pentucket Youth Hockey does not allow or encourage players to tryout above his/her age level. There may however be a situation where the program allows a player to tryout in a higher age bracket if that placement is determined to be beneficial to the program as a whole. All petitions for placement above a player's age level should be submitted directly to the President of the Association and any decisions will be subject to the approval of the Board of Directors. *PLEASE NOTE: USA Hockey does not allow 8U age kids (8 & under) to play up without an official Waiver granted through USA Hockey.*

Position Rotation

It is the philosophy of GHPYH that 8U and 10U level teams, should play all positions in order to develop good skating skills and a complete understanding of the game. Therefore the program does not endorse the concept of dedicated position players or goalkeepers at the 8U levels. GHPYH provides goaltending equipment to teams that do not have dedicated goalies. 10U level may begin to dedicate goaltenders. 12U and 14U Level Teams can place kids in the position the kids feel comfortable and coach is comfortable.

Number of Players per Team

Individual team rosters will have no more than fifteen skaters, exclusive of goaltenders. The number of teams at a particular age level will be determined by the number of players registered at that age level, allocating approximately equal numbers of players to each team. The equal ratio of players per team within an age group may be modified during the Fall Player call up process

Player Call-Ups – (Fall – New team assignment)

It is the policy of the GHPYH to, *when space and circumstances permit*, leave additional roster spots available on the higher-level teams during the initial team assignment process. This allows for additional player evaluations to occur in the fall when players return to the ice. This will allow for players to continue to work on their skills throughout the summer and prepare for the upcoming hockey season.

During the fall practice and game sessions, players will be evaluated and rated against their teammates based on: **Skating, Stick Handling, Shooting, Passing, Hockey Sense, Competitiveness and Game Play.**

Evaluation Process - The league will employ a two-tiered evaluation process:

- Practices - For two Tuesday sessions at the beginning of the league year, GHPYH coaching staff will conduct on ice skills sessions.
 - Begins with week 2 practices after Labor Day.
 - The skills session will be conducted by Assistant Coaches of that playing tier.
 - HC's should make every effort to observe skills from the bench/upstairs and forego instruction as much as possible.
 - The skills sessions will be conducted under the direction and preparation of the Head coaches, focusing on the various evaluation criteria.
 - The Head Coaches of each age group will observe their own skills sessions. Head coaches must focus efforts on what is best for all children involved.

- Game play – The Head Coach for each team with roster openings will call up players for single game assignments at the higher tier team.
 - The coach must make a best effort to have a variety of players participate in the higher tiers games.
 - If the child being called up has a conflict for his original team, the player should play for the higher team for the evaluation. The coach of the lower team will need to find a replacement if warranted.
 - If a player is unable to participate for any reason, this should not be considered as a negative in the recommendation process.
 - Coaches should make an effort to attend games of the other teams within the tier to properly evaluate as many players as possible.
 - “Evaluators” should make an effort to attend games of the age group he is assigned to evaluate.

Placement recommendation - During the first week of October, the Head Coaches, Evaluators, President, Vice President and Registrar shall meet to discuss recommendations.

- Each playing level will establish the recommended players to be called up including supplemental recommendations in the event parents/children decline the call up. The collective recommendations shall be communicated to the Board of Directors at the next scheduled Board meeting. The Board will vote on the recommended changes.

Communication - Once the recommendations are agreed upon by the BOD, parents of the players being moved shall be contacted and advised of the recommended change by either the President, Vice president or Head Coaches. Once all placements have been approved by the parents, the League website, USA Hockey roster and Valley Hockey League website will be updated

At no point during the process should a Coach, Evaluator or Board Member make any promises of movement to a parent, player or family member and communication regarding movement should only take place once the BOD approves the movement.

Call-ups must conform to the rules of the Valley League. They allow a player to play in six games (excluding the parity round) for the same higher-level team. If that player participates in a seventh game, they will be rostered on the higher-level team for the remainder of that season. A player is never allowed to play down a level.

From time to time players are called-up to play and/or practice with a higher-level team. This may be done for many reasons. The final decision of who is called-up resides with the higher-level team's coach. However, the higher-level coach must consult with the lower-level coach to call-up a lower-level player for both games and practices. A player's assigned team schedule shall always take precedence.

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Player Call-Ups (per event - Games & Practices)

From time to time players are called-up to play and/or practice with a higher-level team. This may be done for a number of reasons. The final decision of who is called-up resides with the higher-level team's coach. However, the higher-level coach must consult with the lower-level coach to call-up a lower-level player for both games and practices. A player's assigned team schedule shall always take precedence.

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Ice Time during Games

GHPYH policy is all skaters receive approximately equal ice time, to the best of the coaching staff's ability. This is the same policy set forth in the fair and equal playing time rule of USA Hockey. The only exception is the last three minutes of a game being at the coach's discretion.

On teams with more than one dedicated goaltender: Each goaltender should receive equal playing time during a game. Goaltenders should NOT rotate games unless agreed upon by parents and coaches. To the best of the coach's ability, goaltenders should be substituted at the halfway point of the second period. Goaltenders should rotate "starting" and "finishing" games as well.

USA Hockey Registration

All players, coaches, Board members and team managers are required to be registered with USA Hockey. You must provide an ANNUAL registration number to the organizations USA Hockey rep prior to the commencement of the season. If the player does not provide this registration info, they may be subject to removal from practice and gameplay.

Conduct

It is the Board's unwavering expectation that everyone associated with the GREATER HAVERHILL PENTUCKET Youth Hockey Program will conduct themselves in a dignified and respectful manner at all times. GHPYH follows the USA Hockey Zero Tolerance Policy. All players, coaches and parents will be asked to sign and acknowledge a GHPYH and USA Hockey code of conduct at the beginning of the season.

Locker Rooms

In addition to the development and enjoyment of our hockey players, the safety of our participants is paramount to the Greater Haverhill Pentucket Youth Hockey program. GHPYH adheres to the USA Hockey Safesport conduct program to help protect its members from bullying, physical and sexual abuse, threats, harassment and hazing. To help prevent this, GHPYH has these rules in place

1. Coaches must be in the locker rooms at all times with players
2. Players must treat other with respect
3. Players must not touch another players belongings

Practice and Game Policies

Players are expected to make a sincere effort to meet the bulk of their practice and game commitments. As such attendance will be considered in a player's overall evaluation when a player is considered for placement the following year. The Board supports the notion that players who consistently miss practices and/or games without a legitimate reason can be disruptive to the team as a whole and may be subject to some form of disciplinary action (typically less ice time during the next game commitment) as deemed appropriate by the coach. If the situation becomes too difficult for the coach to manage, the coach may refer the matter to the Board for further action.

Valley Hockey League stipulates that a game may begin up to 10 minutes prior to the scheduled start time. As such, players should be fully dressed and ready to skate at least 10 minutes before scheduled game and practice commitments. Players should plan to arrive 30 minutes prior to game commitments. Coaches may, at their discretion, request an earlier arrival time. During this time coaches will usually hold a pre-game meeting where plays and strategies for the game are reviewed. Most games will be followed by a 5-10 minute post-game meeting where the coaches can evaluate the team's performance. Post-game meetings are closed to everyone except players and coaches subject to the discretion of the coaching staff.

Benches

Parents and siblings are never allowed on the ice or in the bench area during games or practices. Only USA Hockey certified coaches are allowed on benches during practices or game play.

Scheduling

1. **Practices** – GHPYH will make every attempt to schedule practice with enough advanced notice so parents and players can appropriately schedule. It is the policy of the GHPYH to create equitable ice time at every level of the organization. There is no preferred ice time (quantity) given to “1” teams over a lower level or aged team. At times, practice schedules will be delayed as a result of a pending Valley Hockey League schedule release
2. **Games** - Parents should be aware that although game schedules can be somewhat inconvenient, it is beyond the control of the GREATER HAVERHILL PENTUCKET YOUTH HOCKEY ASSOCIATION. Games are scheduled by the Valley League. Once GHPYH receives the league schedules, game and practice times are immediately distributed. The program makes every effort to distribute schedules in a timely manner.

Coaches

Our head and assistant coaches at each level are dedicated volunteers and without them the program would not exist. It is the requirement of the program that all coaches be certified by USA Hockey through their "patching clinics". All Coaches and on ice helpers are required to have and maintain:

- USA Hockey approved and valid CEP certification
- Safesport training
- USA Hockey approved and valid Age-specific modules
- CORI background check

The patch requirements for GHPYH coaches and their bench help is discussed in detail by clicking to the Coaching Certification Page. For more information on patching clinics contact the program's USA Hockey Rep. Each head coach is approved by the Board of Directors following the tryouts. When choosing head coaches the Board considers:

- The candidate's knowledge of the sport and ability to work with the age group
- Previous experience and level of commitment
- Survey results and
- The benefits of exposing the players to a variety of coaching philosophies

Head coaches select their own assistant coaches.

Team Manager

Each team may have a volunteer Team Manager to work as a liaison between the parents and the coach. This role is extremely important to the team, second only to the coaches. The Team Manager typically handles many of the administrative details including but not limited to: phone calls to the team members, handling changes in practice or game times and the preparation of schedules. If you are interested in becoming the Team Manager, please contact your coach directly. Team Managers need to have USA Hockey Number as a volunteer.

First Aid

All coaches are provided a first aid kit. Coaches should bring the first aid kit to all games and practices.

Jersey/Uniform Policy

Every player is provided a practice jersey as well as game socks that is included in your tuition. All Players will be responsible for purchasing 2 Thunder game Jerseys (home\away). Prior season jerseys that were purchased, can be used from year to year.

Fundraising - All GHPYH families who register for our 8U-14U Travel and Instructional Teams, must participate in our annually calendar fundraiser that takes place in February. Each registered participant\player is responsible for selling at least ten (10) fundraising calendars valued at \$100 total. For those who do not participate, GHPYH will charge the \$100 minimum from the registration account, when the fundraiser ends in March.

League

Most teams play in the Valley Hockey League (VHL). The VHL has many additional rules on game play, conduct, parity, etc. Any VHL rule in conflict with a GHPYH rule will supersede the organizations rule for game play and rostering rules.

In addition, GHPYH adheres to the rules of the Valley League and USA Hockey, which are posted on their respective websites.