



## **Treasure State League Rule Updates & Clarifications: 2025-2026**

### **TSL Rule Update 1: Local Association Participation Requirement**

#### **1. Definition – Local Association**

A player's Local Association is defined as the USA Hockey-recognized MAHA member association that governs the geographic area in which the player primarily resides. Residency is determined by the player's physical home address, not by school attendance, mailing address, or other non-residential factors.

- For players whose residence lies between two association boundaries or in an unassigned area, the player shall have the option to choose which association they will first register with. Once that designation has been made, that shall be the player's home association going forward.
- In the case of split custody or shared residency, the primary residence listed on the player's USA Hockey registration will be used.

#### **2. Home Association Requirement**

All players registered in the Treasure State League (TSL) must play for their designated Local Association, as defined above.

#### **3. Transfers and Exceptions**

A player seeking to participate with an association other than their designated Local Association must submit a TSL Player Waiver Request Form prior to being rostered on a team sanctioned by a non-resident Association. Approval will be considered only under exceptional circumstances and must be accompanied by:

- Written approval from both:
  - The President or Hockey Director of the player's Local (outgoing) Association, and
  - The President or Hockey Director of the requested (incoming) Association.
- A justification statement outlining the reason for the request.
- Additional supporting documentation if requested by MAHA or the TSL.

#### **4. Review and Oversight**

All transfer requests will be subject to final review and approval by the MAHA Executive Committee or designee, in consultation with the TSL Commissioner. MAHA reserves the right to deny any request that is inconsistent with the goals of fair play, balanced competition, and community-based hockey development.

#### **5. Violations**

Any violation of this policy shall result in:

- Ineligibility for league play
- Forfeiture of games



- Disciplinary action as determined by the TSL Commissioner and/or MAHA Discipline Committee

## TSL Rule Update 2: Age-Level Participation and Play-Up Guidelines for Youth & Girls

### 1. Standard Age-Level Participation

All players registered in the Treasure State League (TSL) are expected to participate at their USA Hockey-designated age level, based on their birth year and the current season's age classification chart.

### 2. Permissible Play-Up Eligibility

Players may be allowed to participate one age level above their designated division with the approval of their association's Hockey Director or President. This is permitted under the following conditions:

- Youth & Girls Divisions:

- 8U players may play at 10U
- 10U players may play at 12U
- 12U players may play at 14U
- 14U players may play up to BSHS or MTHS only if they are currently enrolled in high school.

- Girls Divisions:

- 10U girls are not eligible to play 14U
- 12U girls may play at 14U
- 14U girls are not eligible to play 19U unless they are currently enrolled in high school
- 16U eligible girls may play at 19U

### 3. Prohibited Two-Level Play-Ups

Under no circumstances may a player participate two age levels above their designated division. For example:

- An 8U player may not play at 12U or higher
- A 10U player may not play at 14U or higher
- A 12U player may not play at 19U in girls' divisions

### 4. Prohibited Playing Down

Playing down- defined as a player participating in a division below their designated USA Hockey age classification- is strictly prohibited in the Treasure State League.

- No player may participate at a lower age division regardless of skill, size, team needs, or personal preference.
- This applies to both co-ed and girls divisions.
- Exceptions will not be granted under any circumstances for competitive reasons.



## 5. Waiver Process for Exceptions

In rare or exceptional cases, a Play-Up Request must be submitted to MAHA. The request must include:

- A written statement from the association's Hockey Director or President outlining the rationale
- Supporting documentation of team roster needs, safety considerations, or other rationale.
- The waiver request will be considered if a younger player is needed for an association to have the minimum number required to field a team.
- Play-up requests based on skill level of the player will not be approved.

## 6. Waivers will be reviewed by the TSL Commissioner and/or the MAHA Executive Director, whose decision is final.

## 7. Review and Oversight

MAHA and the TSL reserve the right to audit play-up requests, deny waivers that do not meet the intent of this rule, and revoke previous approvals if deemed necessary to maintain safety, fairness, or competitive balance.

## 8. Violations

Any team found to be playing an ineligible player in violation of this policy shall face disciplinary actions including:

- Player suspension from league games
- Team forfeitures
- Sanctions against coaches or associations as determined by the MAHA Discipline Committee

## TSL Rule Update 3: Montana First Primary League Participation Requirement

### 1. Primary League Requirement

All teams rostered under the Montana Amateur Hockey Association (MAHA) and participating in the Treasure State League (TSL) must prioritize participation in the TSL as their primary league of competition.

### 2. Outside League Participation

A team may only participate in a second league outside the state of Montana—including, but not limited to, leagues based in other states or countries—if they are fully participating in good standing in the TSL. Teams that do not fulfill their TSL obligations will not be granted permission to join an external league outside of Montana.

### 3. Definition of Good Standing

A team is considered to be in good standing if it:

- Fulfills all TSL game scheduling, travel, and game count requirements
- Maintains eligibility compliance for players and coaches



- Abides by league rules, payment of league dues, and deadlines
- Actively communicates with the TSL Commissioner and MAHA staff as needed

#### 4. Waiver Requests

In exceptional cases where a team seeks exemption from this rule, a written request must be submitted to the MAHA President and the TSL Commissioner. The request must:

- Explain the reasoning for the alternate league participation
- Include a seasonal plan showing TSL participation is not compromised
- Receive formal approval from the MAHA President and TSL Commissioner

#### 5. Enforcement

Teams found to be violating this policy may face:

- Being placed in bad standing with MAHA
- Removal from MAHA or TSL recognition
- Loss of eligibility for postseason events and state tournaments
- Disciplinary action against team officials or association leadership including, but not limited to, team roster suspensions and monetary fines

### TSL Rule Update 4: State Tournament Referee Assignment Standards

#### 1. Referee Assignment and Approval

All officials assigned to officiate MAHA State Tournaments must receive prior approval from the Montana State Referee-in-Chief (RIC). This approval process ensures that all officials meet the required standards of qualification, experience, and performance for their assigned level of play.

#### 2. Elimination of Mandatory Written Evaluations

Written referee evaluations are no longer required as a prerequisite for officiating in a state tournament. The State RIC holds sole responsibility for the selection and approval of tournament officials and may rely on:

- Informal performance reviews
- Supervisor or assignor feedback
- Historical data and prior evaluations
- Direct observation or mentorship experience

This approach allows greater flexibility while maintaining the integrity of state-level officiating assignments.

#### 3. Local Assignment Collaboration

While the State RIC retains final authority over all tournament referee assignments, local referee schedulers and assignors are encouraged to:



- Recommend qualified officials from their region
- Provide context on availability, travel, and experience
- Communicate in advance of the tournament weekend

Final approval and assignment decisions rest solely with the State RIC, and all assignments must be confirmed prior to the start of the tournament.

#### 4. Accountability

Officials who are not approved by the State RIC may not officiate in MAHA State Tournaments under any circumstances.

Tournament Directors are responsible for:

- Ensuring that all scheduled referees are on the approved list provided by the State RIC
- Coordinating with local assignors to avoid last-minute substitutions without RIC approval

#### 5. Review and Updates

This policy may be reviewed annually in collaboration with:

- The MAHA Officiating Program
- TSL Leadership
- Local referee assignors

Revisions will be made as necessary to support consistent, fair, and high-quality officiating across all levels of MAHA State Tournament play.

### TSL Rule Update 5: Multiple Team Rostering and Competitive Tiering

#### 1. Tiering Requirement for Multiple Teams

Any MAHA member association that fields two or more teams in the same age division (8U, 10U, 12U, 14U) within the Treasure State League (TSL) must designate those teams as "A" and "B" level teams based on competitive ability.

#### 2. Intent and Purpose

This rule is designed to:

- Promote competitive balance across the league
- Support appropriate player development
- Avoid "stacking" teams or entering multiple similarly skilled teams in the same competitive division without league oversight



3. Default Structure

By default, associations with multiple teams at the same age level must field one "A" team (higher-skilled) and one "B" team (developmental). If more than two teams are entered, the standard model is one A team and multiple B teams, unless otherwise approved through the waiver process.

4. Waiver Process to Field Multiple "A" or Multiple "B" Teams

Associations may apply for a waiver to:

- Field more than one "A" team in the same age division
- Field more than one "B" team in the same age division

5. The waiver request must be submitted to the MAHA Executive Director and TSL Commissioner and must include:

- Projected rosters and player count by team
- Evaluation criteria used to determine team placement
- Rationale for why multiple teams of the same tier are appropriate
- Commitment to maintain competitive integrity across all teams

6. Waiver approvals will be based on factors such as player numbers, developmental needs, and fairness to other league members. All decisions are final.

7. Oversight and Enforcement

The TSL Commissioner and/or MAHA Executive Director and reserve the right to:

- Reclassify teams into different competitive tiers
- Monitor teams for lopsided competition or misrepresentation of team strength
- Deny postseason eligibility for teams found in violation of this policy
- Impose sanctions or corrective action on associations misusing this structure

\*\*These rule updates and rule clarifications were voted on and adopted by the MAHA board for the 2025-2026 TSL season and beyond\*\*