



Northern Lakes Youth Hockey Association Handbook

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History

The Northern Lakes Youth Hockey Association was formed by the combination of the Crosby-Ironton Aitkin Hockey Association and the Pequot Lakes Youth Hockey Association in April 2012.

Mission Statement

The Northern Lakes Youth Hockey Association works to promote a fun, fair, and safe environment that maximizes participation and improves players' skills while developing sportsmanship, teamwork, and self-confidence. These actions will result in a tradition of excellence at the highest level possible, including the high school level as players' transition from the NLYHA to the next level of play.

Core Values

Respect: Treat others better than you expect to be treated.

Sportsmanship: Foster a sense of fair play, humility in victory and graciousness in defeat, as well as friendship with teammates and opponents alike.

Integrity: Demonstrate honest and fair play, beyond simple strict adherence to the rules and regulations of the game.

Academics: Demonstrate the ability to perform at the highest level possible in order to prepare yourself for off-ice success.

Excellence: Pursue the highest level of personal achievement as a player, and collective achievement as a team and organization.

Teamwork: Learn the value of working together. Hockey is a team sport. Success on the ice, as in many aspects of life, is best achieved working as a team, towards a shared goal.

Loyalty: Develop a loyalty to the ideals of the sport and the fellow members of the hockey community.
Enjoyment: Have fun and have satisfying and rewarding experiences that benefit all participants.

Operating Philosophy

The primary purpose of the NLYHA is to educate our student athletes of the fundamental skills and strategy needed to excel at the game of hockey. In order to foster a tradition of excellence, sportsmanship and athletic development will be the cornerstones of our operating philosophy. We will provide a disciplined and competitive environment that will encourage each athlete to perform to the best of their ability, while having fun learning the game. Additionally, we will promote the development of on-and off-ice accountability while fostering confidence within those individuals who understand success and reward comes from commitment, effort, and enthusiasm. Ultimately, we will prepare our athletes with the skills, values, and discipline needed to smoothly transition into the high school program. With a strong commitment from the athlete, parent, and association leadership, competing at the highest level within the MSHSL system will be possible.

Organization

A member shall be defined as either: 1) the parent/custodial guardian of a minor player that has paid their annual membership fee, as set by the Board; or 2) an adult that has volunteered within the Association during the current membership period for a minimum of 40 hours (i.e. coaching, registration, refereeing, fundraising, etc.). The membership period shall run from September 1st through August 31st. Membership is automatic at registration for a parent/custodial guardian of a first-year player that may or may not be paying a Membership Fee.

A non-member in good standing with the association may be considered eligible for a board position if voted in by association at the annual meeting. Said non-member must follow the standard application process when applying for non-member board status.

As it pertains to the annual election of new board members, there will be only one vote per player. In the event of divorced/separated/unmarried parents, the parent/custodial guardian that paid the annual membership fee (or the majority of the fee) will be entitled to receive the one vote per player. Any members not in good financial standing as determined by the board will be ineligible to vote. Voting will be diligently administered by NLYHA leadership at each annual meeting.

The NLYHA operates at two rink facilities – the Breezy Point Hockey Center in Breezy Point, MN and the Spalj Arena located in the Hallett Community Center in Crosby, MN. NLYHA is a member of District 15 of Minnesota Hockey and USA Hockey, and it adheres to District 15, Minnesota Hockey and USA Hockey rules on rink features, teams, equipment, penalties, officials and playing rules.

The number of Directors on the Board shall be eleven (11) or more and governs the Association. The number of eleven (11) does include the four (4) Officers (President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer). The term of office is three years. Officers are elected from the members of the Board. The three-year term is staggered for Board members. Board positions include President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, Gambling Chair, Gambling Director (Non-Voting Member), Fundraising Director, Communications Director, Safe Sport Director, and Equipment Director. The remaining are voting positions only. For more information on Board positions, please refer to the Appendix.

The monthly Board meeting (at least 12 per year) either in person and/or virtual- date, time and location is made available on the website. Board member attendance is required, and membership is welcome to attend. Notice to the Secretary is requested and required for time on the agenda. The meeting place locations may vary. Sub-committee and task forces of the Board, as well as the Executive Committee (President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary) of the Board, meet as required to conduct business in a timely manner between Board meetings. A majority of Board voting members shall be necessary to constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. The property, affairs, and business of the NLYHA shall be managed by the Board of Directors. The fiscal year of the NLYHA is April 1 through March 31.

The Board members and their contact information, meeting agendas, meeting minutes and other Board related information can be found on the NLYHA website at www.northernlakeslightning.com.

NLYHA uses Level Coordinators and a Hockey Committee to lead and implement coaching, player development and other on and off ice activities related to hockey specific operations. Level

Coordinators are typically parents with players at the level they represent and are responsible for representing their level at Hockey Committee meetings, ensuring each team at that level is implementing the agreed upon coaching and player development model, is an escalation point for coaches, players, and parents. The level coordinators are selected by the Hockey Committee Chair/Vice President of the Board and approved by the Board of Directors. The Hockey Committee is represented by coaches, level coordinators, and the Vice President as Chair. The Hockey Committee will make recommendations for approval to the Board or Directors, which includes but is not limited to declaration of teams each season, coaches each season, player development models and other on and off ice related topics.

Level coordinators representing each level of the NLYHA:

- East Mite
- West Mite
- Girls
- Squirt
- Pee wee
- Bantam

Registration

The Northern Lakes Youth Hockey Association actively recruits new membership through Come Try Hockey events sponsored through USA Hockey and Minnesota Hockey. These events typically take place in the autumn and spring and are advertised throughout the community through local schools, print advertising and word of mouth.

The NLYHA annual registration is July 1 through August 31. The goal of the NLYHA is to provide the best program at the most reasonable cost to its participants. NLYHA is a non-profit organization and all monies received come from the members and donors through registration, team fees, sponsorships, gambling, tournaments, and fundraisers. Information will be provided to the membership when the NLYHA registration process is open. Late registrations are subject to a \$50 late fee.

NLYHA uses the sale of raffle tickets to augment or replace the registration fees for each player. Below are the levels and number of raffle tickets associated to each level. Registration fees are based on the level of actual play, not birth date. For example, if a player is 8 and plays at the 10-year level, the registration fees will be those at the 10-year level.

Raffle tickets are typically provided to families at the end of the season by team managers or at the end of season banquet to allow families to have several months to sell their allotted raffle tickets prior to next season.

Level/Fee

Mini Mites/6U \$400 (20 tickets)

Mites/8U \$400 (20 tickets)
Squirts/Girls 10U \$600 (30 tickets)
Peewee/Girls 12U \$800 (40 tickets)
Bantams/Girls 14U \$900 (45 tickets)

Families not in good financial standing at the end of one hockey season as it relates to unpaid registration fees or unpaid wreath/garland buy-out, will not be eligible for registration and/or try-outs for the following season. Families may bring their account up to date by paying the outstanding fees or establishing a payment plan. Families will be notified if they have outstanding balances. The Northern Lakes Youth Hockey Association recognizes there may be times when families are experiencing financial hardships and are supportive of working through those times with families. Should families have a hardship need, please contact the Secretary to be placed on a Board meeting agenda. Families will be asked to outline the hardship reasons and request in the closed session portion of the meeting.

Players transferring from another association or new skaters to the association that did not come through the Come Try Hockey process that may not have had an opportunity to sell raffle tickets, are expected to pay the fees outlined above. If payment plans need to be arranged, coordination with the Treasurer is expected.

For more information regarding registration and the detailed process, visit our website at <http://www.northernlakeslightning.com/page/show/57663-nlyha-registration>.

If you have registration questions, our registrar can be reached at nlyha.registrar@gmail.com.

Volunteering and Fundraising

NLYHA is a volunteer driven organization and many volunteer opportunities exist within the Northern Lakes Youth Hockey Association. Members are expected to assist with fundraisers, coaching, team managers, Come Try Hockey events, raffle ticket return, wreath distribution, and various other jobs or events. Members will have the opportunity to sign up for events during the registration process and throughout the year as needed via email. Please contact the Fundraising Director if you are interested in volunteering to help the association. See the Volunteer tab on the website for more information.

In addition to the raffle tickets, the NLYHA also organizes a wreath and garland sale. Each family is required to sell 15 items or can buy-out at \$225. Those members who are not in good financial standing as it relates to the mandatory fundraiser will not be allowed to register for the following season with an unpaid wreath/garland fundraiser balance.

As it relates to the wreath fundraiser, the only exceptions will be a) first year mites and B) players, regardless of age, who attend a Come Try Hockey event and subsequently register to join hockey.

As other fundraising opportunities become available, those will be communicated to the membership. Other "mandatory" fundraisers will follow the same exception criteria as noted above related to the wreath fundraiser.

Tryouts and Team Selection

NLYHA conducts closed tryouts. Closed tryouts mean that only the players and evaluators are permitted in the rink area. The objective of the tryout process is to ensure that each player is given a fair evaluation and that all players are placed at the most appropriate level for their abilities.

Players choosing not to participate in the tryout process will be automatically placed into the lowest competitive level of players for their age classification.

These tryout group sessions are led by the NLYHA coaches or pre-selected non-parent evaluators, level coordinators and are assisted and organized by the Hockey Committee. The tryout session will consist of a combination of drills and scrimmages depending on the level and preferences of the Hockey Committee. Tryout drills are designed to test both individual skills and team play. Desire, hard work, and self-control are also determining factors in evaluation and selection. The objective of the scrimmage is to have the players skate on various player combinations of lines and positions throughout the tryout process and to evaluate each player's abilities in game-like situations.

Evaluators will be assessing, using an evaluation sheet provided at the tryout of the following:

- The player's skating skills.
- The player's individual hockey skills (puck handling, passing, receiving, shooting, body positioning).
- The player's team skills, both offensive and defensive.
- The player's position play, teamwork, game skills, awareness.

At the conclusion of the tryout sessions, the Evaluation Panel starting at the A level, select the teams based on the tryout scores and their judgment, with the oversight of the preselected non-parent evaluators, level coordinators, and/or Hockey Committee. Other teams (B1, B2 and C levels) are selected based on the judgment of the head coaches, preselected non-parent evaluators, level coordinators and/or Hockey Committee. Rosters are open at the start of each team tryout and filled based on performance scores in tryouts.

In determining the final team rosters, the Evaluation Panel are given the following guidelines:

- Coaches/Evaluators have the right to select a team compatible with the NLYHA mission statement, with team selection based on a ranking system and coach's picks.
- Selection to a team as a first-year player will not entitle the player to a roster spot on a team at the same level in the player's second year. All things being equal, a second-year player should be given preference over a first-year player.
- Any player unable to participate in tryouts due to injury, illness or a pre-approved extenuating circumstance will be evaluated based on their prior year performance and coaches' recommendations to determine team placement. If a player cannot attend tryouts due to injury, the player will have until December 15 to contact the NLYHA in order to be on a roster for the season.

- Any player transferring to or registering with NLYHA after tryouts have occurred will be referred to the Hockey Committee for placement on a team and approved by the board.

Tryout Pressure

Let's not kid ourselves; the players feel the pressure of tryouts. If they don't think about the tryout process, they will more than likely be reminded by their friends, classmates and parents. During the tryout process, it is important for parents to provide support and be upbeat. The best advice we can give you is to tell your son or daughter how proud you are of them, to go out and do the best they can. Advise them to have fun and that, whatever happens, you love them, and they are going to have a great season.

There will be disappointments. It is inevitable that a player will not make a level that he or she thought they would make in the tryout process. As a parent, you need to make sure that you step back and understand that the words you choose and feelings you reflect on your child will have an impact on them going forward. Positively reinforcing your child's play rather than critiquing the tryout process or criticizing other players can only assist the player's development. As we all know, once the new teams are formed and the first practices begin, the optimism of having a successful season becomes the focal point.

Commitment and Expectations

Teams are selected for A, B, B2 and/or C levels in an attempt to provide players with an opportunity to play at an appropriate skill level.

Players and parents should expect that commitment to all teams will require a significant amount of time. Coaches at all levels will expect that players will attend practices and games. Communicating with the coaches when a player can't be at a game or practice is essential for the coaches to prepare for either the game or practice. Remember, most ice time, skill development, instruction, and individual improvement occur by the results of practice.

Each coach will have their own rules and discipline regarding absences, after discussing the process prior to season start, with the Hockey Committee. Please respect their need to establish these parameters for the team. NLYHA can't stress enough that regardless of the level your child will play the commitment he/she is making is significant. Be sure both the player and parent understand this at the time of registration.

Move-Up Policy

The Northern Lakes Youth Hockey Association enforces a policy of placing all participating skaters in the level of play associated with their age/birth date. However, a skater may request NLYHA Board approval to move up to a level of play that is a level higher than the level dictated by their date of birth. Permission to move up is granted solely at the discretion of the Board of Directors via a recommendation by the Hockey Committee and may be where such movement allows the skater to play with their peer group/grade in school. This policy affects skaters who are young relative to their grade in school, as follows:

Player Not Eligible Per Birth Date For:	But entering
Mites/8U (Mites 1 – 4 + Future Stars)	N/A
Squirts/10U Girls	4 th Grade
PeeWees/12U Girls	6 th Grade
Bantams/14U Girls	8 th Grade

The NLYHA Board of Directors believes that players should play on teams by age group as defined by Minnesota Hockey and supported by the American Development Model. Exceptions may be made based on hockey ability, physical size, maturity, social readiness, and/or team roster needs.

The term “moving up” refers to a player playing up from his/her Minnesota Hockey age group.

For example, third grade Mite-level players may petition to seek approval to try-out for the Squirt level due to the reasons outlined above. Parents of Mite-level third graders must contact the appropriate Mite Level Coordinator in writing stating the reason for petition and approval. Once the Mite Level Coordinator has provided approval, the try-out committee will be notified. Outside evaluators will make the determination at try-outs if the player is Squirt level appropriate. If the player is not deemed Squirt level appropriate, they will play at the Mite level. Registration fees will be consistent with the level the player plays.

Factors to be considered by the Level Coordinator:

- Players moving up should be “elite” or advanced.
- The best interests of the program.
 - How does it affect numbers in each age group?
 - This factor could allow a player to move up and play for the “B” team, if there is a shortage of numbers at that level.
- The decision is in the best interests of the player.
 - Is the player not being challenged at current level?
 - Is the player mature enough physically and mentally to fraternize with older players?

Behavior Expectations

Coaches and parents should set a positive example of sportsmanship and good conduct and, in general, be a credit to the NLYHA and our community.

The head coach is the person recognized as having responsibility for the team. The coach is not required to bend to parental pressure but shall be available to discuss any situation with the players and/or parents, keeping in mind their responsibility is to coach the whole team and not any one individual. A coach shall have the flexibility to reduce a player’s ice time to solve a disciplinary problem if it is in the best interest of the team.

In order to have a uniform expectation of all participants in the NLYHA, each player, parent, and coach will be

required to sign a specific **Code of Conduct** document at the beginning of each season. All forms must be submitted to the NLYHA's registrar before their team will be registered with Minnesota Hockey. The Code of Conduct forms are printed on the pages that follow in this handbook.

Player Guidelines

- Play for FUN.
- Work hard to improve your skills.
- Be a team player – get along with your teammates.
- Learn teamwork, sportsmanship, and discipline.
- Be on time for practices and games.
- Learn the rules and play by them. Always be a good sport.
- Respect your coach, your teammates, your parents, opponents, and officials.
- Never argue with an official or a coach's decision.
- No use of cellphones in locker rooms for players.

Following these guidelines, all players are required to sign the Player Code of Conduct at the beginning of each new season the player is part of. The Code of Conduct Form can be found in the Appendix of this document.

Parent Responsibilities and Rights

Responsibilities

- Do not force your children to participate in sports but support their desires to play their chosen sport. Children are involved in organized sports for their enjoyment, make it fun.
- Encourage your child to play by the rules. Remember, children learn best by example, so applaud the good plays of both teams.
- Do not embarrass your child by yelling at players, coaches, or officials. By showing a positive attitude toward the game and all of its participants, your child will benefit.
- Emphasize skill development and practices and how they benefit your young athlete. De-emphasize games and competition in the lower age groups.
- Know and study the rules of the game and support the officials on and off the ice. This approach will help in the development and support of the game. Any criticism of the officials only hurts the game.
- Applaud a good effort in both victory and defeat, and enforce the positive points of the game. Never yell or physically abuse your child after a game or practice – it is destructive. Work toward removing physical and verbal abuse in youth sports.
- Recognize the importance of volunteer coaches. They are important to the development of your child and the sport. Communicate with them and support them.
- If you enjoy the game, learn all you can about hockey – and volunteer.
- Don't compare your child with other players. Be honest with yourself when it comes to your child's capabilities.
- Take care of your financial responsibilities.

Rights

- Have the player treated fairly and with respect.
- Have the player playing and practicing in a safe and healthy environment.
- Have the player coached by an effective and qualified adult leader.
- Have the player engaged in playing and practicing activity that increases his/her skill and enjoyment of the sport.

- Know what is expected of your player from the coach.

Parent/Spectator/Family Behavior

In an effort to make ice hockey a more desirable and rewarding experience for all participants, USA Hockey has instituted a program of **Zero Tolerance** for parental and fan behavior that has been adopted by District 15 and NLYHA Referees, at their discretion, may have parents/spectators removed from the arena. The NLYHA supports this program and requests that all parents be supportive of the team, the players, AND the OFFICIALS.

Players and officials all strive to perform at the highest possible level and deserve our support. On-ice officials will stop the game when the parents/spectators displaying inappropriate and disruptive behavior interfere with other spectators or the game. The on-ice officials will identify violators to the coaches for the purpose of removing parents/spectators from the spectator's viewing and game area. Once removed, play will resume. Lost time will not be replaced, and violators may be subject to further disciplinary action by the NLYHA.

This inappropriate and disruptive behavior shall include:

- Use of obscene or vulgar language in a boisterous manner to anyone at any time.
- Taunting of players, coaches, officials, or other spectators by means of baiting, ridiculing, threat of physical violence or act.
- Throwing of any object in the spectator's viewing area, player's bench, penalty box or on ice surface, directed in any manner as to create a safety hazard.

Following the guidelines set out in the Parent's Responsibilities and Rights, as well as in the Parent/Spectator/Family Behavior Section of this handbook, parents are required to sign a Family Code of Conduct at the beginning of each new season. A separate Code of Conduct must be completed for each child playing in the Northern Lakes Youth Hockey Association. The Code of Conduct Forms can be found in the Appendix of this document.

Coach's Responsibilities and Rights

The Coach's code of conduct shall be consistent with NLYHA's mission statement. Personal growth and development of the hockey player should be the focus. Improving one's skills and having competitive teams should also be the goal.

Responsibilities

- Complete all necessary background checks and applicable training as set forth by USA hockey prior to the start of the season.
- Demonstrate a positive attitude to players, coaches and officials. Being a role model, the coach needs to uphold the authority of the officials.
- Be prepared and plan ahead for all practices.
- Be present at all practices and games. Make arrangements for assistant coaches to run practices when impossible to attend.
- Treat players fairly and be a positive reinforcement.
- The coach will strive to provide each player with positive and constructive feedback.
- To select a team manager and provide any team specific goals, expectations and rules to the players and parents.

Rights

- Be treated with respect by players, parents, and the NLYHA.
- Access to necessary safety and practice equipment.

- Access to all resource material available through NLYHA, Minnesota Hockey or USA Hockey.

The coaches are approved and accountable by and to the Hockey Committee and the NLYHA Board. All NLYHA coaches are required to sign the Code of Conduct Form found in the Appendix of this document. For information related to non-parent coaches, please see the Appendix.

Team Manager Responsibilities and Rights

The Team Manager's code of conduct shall be consistent with NLYHA's mission statement. The Team Manager's focus is to help support the team's coaches by helping handle the administrative and organizational functions for the team. There is a Team Manager website page that explains this role under the Volunteer section of the website.

Responsibilities

- Complete all necessary background checks and applicable training as set forth by USA hockey (Attend Team Manager meeting at the beginning of the season).
- Demonstrate a positive attitude to players, coaches, and families.
- Make sure that the team roster is current and up to date.
- Keep the team website/calendar on NGIN updated.
- Make hotel reservations for out-of-town tournaments, as needed.
- Communicate team schedule changes to all players/families.

Rights

- Be treated with respect by players, parents, and the NLYHA
- Access to all resource material available through NLYHA, Minnesota Hockey or USA Hockey.

Policies

Grievance Policy

NLYHA provides an orderly procedure for the discussion and resolution of all problems, concerns, and formal grievances. The objective is to resolve issues at the most immediate level. The key criteria and any resolution of an issue is what is best for the respective player, his or her team and what is in the best interests of NLYHA.

- Problems or concerns that have to do with the coaching of the team, such as playing time, positions, practices, etc. should be taken to the coach or team manager of the respective team.
- If the problem has not been resolved at this level, the parent should contact the Level Coordinator found on the Hockey Committee tab.
- Problems or concerns that have to do with any other team issue that cannot be resolved by the coach or team manager, or Level Coordinator, should be directed to the SafeSport Coordinator.
- Specific violations of NLYHA Code of Conduct expectations are to be handled in the manner outlined in the next section.

It is suggested that before any grievance is presented to a coach, team manager, Level Coordinator, or the SafeSport Coordinator, a one-day cooling off period should be observed.

SafeSport Policy

The safety of its participants is of paramount importance to USA Hockey. USA Hockey SafeSport is the organization's program related to off-ice safety.

USA Hockey has long had systems in place to protect its participants from physical abuse, sexual abuse and other types of abuse and misconduct that can be harmful to youth hockey players and other participants. These include without limitation Physical Abuse, Sexual Abuse, Screening, Locker Room Supervision and Hazing Policies, in addition to Codes of Conduct applicable to administrators, coaches, officials, parents, players and spectators. The USA Hockey SafeSport Handbook is intended to update and collect USA Hockey's various policies to protect its participants from all types of misconduct and abuse.

To learn more about SafeSport, visit our website at <http://www.northernlakeslightning.com/page/show/1089226-safesport>.

Player Code of Conduct Consequences Policy

Failure to comply with the player code of conduct is detrimental to the team and will not be tolerated. Parents are encouraged to work with the coach and/or team manager first with regard to a violation(s) by a player. If needed, after discussion with their coach and/or team manager, a parent may request a meeting with the Level Coordinator and subsequent meeting with the SafeSport Coordinator to bring forth a violation of the player code of conduct. (The coach will be notified of any of these meetings taking place.)

After this meeting, the Level Coordinator or SafeSport Coordinator, or a combination of may determine that the situation be handled by the player's coach or may make a recommendation to the NLYHA Board to set forth a penalty ranging from a one game suspension to player removal from the team. Continual abuse of conduct may result in permanent removal from the Northern Lakes Youth Hockey Association.

Please refer to specific penalties for the use of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs in the next section of the NLYHA Handbook.

Parent Code of Conduct Consequences Policy

Violation of the Parent Code of Conduct is detrimental to the team and may be brought forward to the Level Coordinator by either the team's coach, manager, or a parent on the same team. A meeting with the SafeSport Coordinator of the NLYHA will occur as soon as possible, if needed after meeting with the Level Coordinator.

The Level Coordinator or SafeSport Coordinator, or a combination of may recommend to the NLYHA Board to set forth a penalty ranging from a verbal warning up to suspending a parent from all team functions for one week to the duration of the season. Continual abuse of conduct may result in permanent removal from the Northern Lakes Youth Hockey Association. During the sanction, the parent will not be allowed in any facility during a youth hockey event, regardless of whether that parent has another child on a different team.

Coaches/Managers/Volunteers Code of Conduct Consequences Policy

Complaints of violation of Coaches Code of Conduct may be brought to the team manager, then the Level Coordinator if needed, to be dealt with on an individual basis as determined by the Hockey Committee or SafeSport Coordinator or a combination of. A meeting with the Level Coordinator of the NLYHA will occur as soon as possible, if needed, following the meeting with the SafeSport Coordinator.

The Level Coordinator or SafeSport Coordinator or a combination of may recommend to the NLYHA Board to set forth a penalty ranging from a verbal warning up to suspending a coach from all team functions for one week to the duration of the season. Continual abuse of conduct may result in permanent removal from the Northern Lakes Youth Hockey Association. During the sanction, the coach will not be allowed in any facility during a youth hockey event, regardless of whether that coach has another child on a different team.

Playing Time Policy

Purpose

Northern Lakes Youth Hockey Association is committed to creating a positive and development-focused experience for every player. Our goal is for all players to receive meaningful playing time throughout the season so they can build skills, confidence, and a love for the game.

At the same time, we recognize that coaches must make real-time decisions during games that support both individual development and overall team success. This policy explains our general approach to playing time and when adjustments may occur.

General Guideline

Across all age levels, the head coach—working with the level coordinator when appropriate—will aim to provide **approximately equal playing time over the course of the season** for players who are in good standing. Being in good standing means meeting team expectations for attendance, conduct, and readiness to play. Playing time is evaluated over the season as a whole, not necessarily in every individual game.

Age Level Overview

- **Mite / 6U / 8U:** Equal playing time is the standard.
- **Squirt / 10U:** Equal playing time remains the standard. Any deviations should be rare and limited to brief situations.
- **Peewee / 12U:** Equal playing time is still the expectation, though coaches may make more frequent adjustments for strategic or situational reasons.
- **Bantam / 15U and above (if applicable):** Coaches have full discretion over playing time, with a greater emphasis on team performance, roster balance, and game situations.

Coach Discretion & Exceptions

Attendance, Discipline, and Conduct

Playing time may be reduced if a player does not meet attendance expectations, violates team or Association Codes of Conduct, or fails to follow established team standards. These situations are addressed on a case-by-case basis.

Game Situations and Strategy

At the Peewee/12U level and above, coaches may adjust playing time in response to factors such as special teams or end-of-game situations.

For younger levels (Squirt/10U and below), these adjustments should be uncommon, clearly justified, and not used as standard practice.

Player Readiness and Safety

Player safety always comes first. If a player is not yet ready to safely or effectively compete at their level—due to skill development, physical readiness, or other concerns, game time may be reduced. In these cases, the focus may shift toward practices or development opportunities, in consultation with the Director of Hockey Operations. The intent is to support the player's growth and overall well-being.

Review & Updates

This policy may be reviewed and updated by the Board of Directors as needed to reflect evolving best practices,

Association priorities, or age-level philosophies.

Alcohol, Drug and Substance Abuse Policy (aka “Chemical Eligibility”) The NLYHA Policy is consistent with the Minnesota State High School League’s policy -under section BYLAW 205.00 titled Chemical Eligibility. In the event our handbook and the MSHSL handbook are not consistent, the MSHSL handbook will always supersede ours.

Click on the link to access the Minnesota State High School League’s Handbook.

<https://www.mshsl.org/mshsl/publications.asp>

Click Handbook across the top and then select the 200.00 BYLAWS for Student Eligibility.

Below is the general information related to Student Eligibility.

At any time during the calendar year, a student shall not, regardless of the quantity:

- A. use or consume, have in possession a beverage containing alcohol;
- B. use or consume, have in possession tobacco; or,
- C. use or consume, have in possession, buy, sell, or give away any other controlled substance or drug paraphernalia.
- D. use or consume, have in possession, buy, sell, or give away products containing or products used to deliver nicotine, tobacco products, and other chemicals. “Tobacco products” means: any product containing, made, or derived from tobacco that is intended for human consumption, whether chewed, smoked, absorbed, dissolved, inhaled, snorted, sniffed, or ingested by any other means, or any component, part, or accessory of a tobacco product.
- E. use or consume, have in possession, buy, sell, or give away any substance or product where the intent of such use of the substance or product is to induce intoxication, excitement, or stupefaction of the central nervous system, except under the direction and supervision of a medical doctor. Such substances or products shall include, but are not limited to, synthetic drugs, gasoline, glue, aerosol devices, bath salts, and any substances addressed by Minnesota or Federal Law.

Penalties

- **First Violation:** After confirmation of the first violation, the player shall lose eligibility for the next two (2) consecutive games or 14 calendar days of a season, whichever is greater.
- **Second Violation:** After confirmation of the second violation, the player shall lose eligibility for the next six (6) consecutive games or 21 calendar days of a season, whichever is greater.
- **Third Violation:** After confirmation of the third or subsequent violations, the player shall lose eligibility for the next twelve (12) consecutive games 28 calendar days of the season, whichever is greater.

Interpretation

“Game” in this policy means regular league or playoff contest. Practice games or scrimmages cannot be counted in determining length of suspension. Associations or individual teams may adopt a more prohibitive rule and/or more severe penalties for violation of this policy.

Denial Disqualification

Players could be disqualified from all NLYHA activity for up to nine (9) additional weeks beyond the players

original period of ineligibility when the player denies violation of the rule, is allowed to participate, and is then subsequently found guilty of the violation as determined by NLYHA board.

Parental Responsibility

In accordance with our policies regarding alcohol and tobacco use by NLYHA players, we strongly recommend that coaches, managers, and parents refrain from consuming or having tobacco or alcohol in the presence of NLYHA players. In all cases, no alcohol or tobacco should be consumed or be present at games, practices, team meetings or in transportation vehicles to and from games, tournaments, or practices.

Physical Abuse – As Adopted by USA Hockey

It is the policy of the NLYHA that there shall be no physical abuse of any participant involved in any of its sanctioned programs. Physical abuse means physical contact with a participant that intentionally causes the participant to sustain bodily harm or personal injury. Physical abuse also includes physical contact with a participant that intentionally creates a threat of immediate bodily harm or personal injury.

Physical abuse does not include physical contact that is reasonably designed to coach, teach or demonstrate a hockey skill. Permitted physical conduct may include, but is not necessarily limited to, shooting pucks at a goaltender, demonstrating checking and other hockey skills, and communicating with or directing participants during the course of a game or practice, by touching them in a non-threatening, non-sexual manner.

Sexual Abuse – As Adopted by USA Hockey

It is the policy of the NLYHA that there shall be no sexual abuse of any minor participant involved in any of its sanctioned programs. Sexual abuse of a minor participant occurs when a volunteer touches a minor participant for the purpose of causing the sexual arousal or gratification of either the minor participant or the volunteer. Sexual abuse of a minor participant also occurs when a minor player touches a volunteer for the sexual arousal or sexual gratification of either the minor participant or the volunteer if the touching occurs at the request or with the consent of the volunteer.

Neither consent of the player to the sexual contact, mistake as to the participant's age, nor the fact that the sexual contact did not take place at a hockey function are defenses to a complaint of sexual abuse.

Upon proof of violation of this policy, the violator will be permanently banned or suspended from USA Hockey sanctioned programs and/or programs of its Affiliate Associations.

Locker Room Policy – As Adopted by USA Hockey

USA Hockey requires all local programs to adhere to the Locker Room Monitoring Policy. At no time shall one adult be alone in the room with one player. NLYHA coaches typically fulfill this role. If that is not possible, a Lock Room Monitor will be put in place.

Travel Policy – As Adopted by USA Hockey

USA Hockey requires all local programs to have a travel policy applicable to youth teams that is published and provided to all players, parents, coaches, and other adults traveling with the team. The policy should apply to both local travel as well as out-of-town events and should have different policies for each.

These travel policies shall include:

Local

- Make parents responsible for local travel arrangements.
- Non-parent drivers shall not drive alone with an unrelated minor.
- Non-parent drivers shall not be alone at any time with an unrelated minor. Drop offs and pickups should be coordinated in groups.

Out of town

- Regardless of gender, a coach shall not share a room with a single player unless the coach is a parent or guardian.
- Anyone providing team travel assistance must be screened and possess valid driver's licenses and insurance.
- Adequate adult chaperone supervision should be provided at all times (recommend one adult for five to eight players).
- Room monitoring and curfew checks should be made by at least two screened adults.
- Pay-per-view channels should be blocked in players' rooms.
- No individual meetings shall take place in players' rooms.
- Players shall be allowed to make "check in" calls to their parents.
- Travel itineraries including a list of all adult personnel and contact information shall be provided to parents.
- Parents will be contacted first, prior to any disciplinary action being taken against a player.
- No coach or chaperone shall be under the influence of drugs or alcohol while performing their chaperone/coaching duties.
- In all cases, parents have the right to transport their child and stay with them in their hotel room.

Cold Weather Policy

Any school district associated with the NLYHA that cancels or closes school by noon on any day will automatically put the Cold Weather Policy into effect. Any scheduled practices will be held at the discretion of the executive committee of the board of directors.

Equipment Policy

All players on NLYHA teams are required to wear protective equipment during all games and practices. Each player's equipment shall be as prescribed by District 15 of Minnesota Hockey for their position, including, but not limited to the following:

- proper fitting ice skates
- stick
- breezers
- safety certified helmet with attached faceguard
- attached mouth guard
- a supporter and cup or pelvic protector
- shin pads
- shoulder pads
- hockey gloves
- elbow Pads

Squirt/10U and above levels require players to have black helmets, black breezers, and black/red gloves.

Goalie Equipment

- Athletic cup/pelvic protector
- Breezers
- Goalie skates
- Leg Pads
- Chest protector/arm protector
- Helmet, mouth guard and neck protector
- Glove and blocker
- Goalie stick

Uniforms

Uniforms will be distributed at the beginning of the season at the discretion of the Equipment Manager. No teams in the NLYHA will have uniforms that differ from the NLYHA approved uniform. Any deviation will be approved by the NLYHA board.

Association Provided Equipment for Non-Goalies

To aid in the recruitment and retention of players into the Association, NLYHA has elected to provide the following equipment to players and families. Any financial hardship, regardless of level, can request equipment assistance per board approval. In addition to the Uniforms mentioned above for all players in Mini-Mites, Mites, Squirts, and 8U/10U, NLYHA shall provide the following equipment as part of their registration fee.

NLYHA Provided Equipment:

- breezers
- skates
- helmet
- shoulder pads
- elbow pads
- knee pads
- hockey gloves
- hockey bag

The only equipment that will not be provided by NLYHA in this age category is:

- hockey stick
- athletic cup/pelvic protector
- mouthguard

Association Provided Equipment for Goalies

Recognizing the need to ensure that there are plenty of goalies in the Association, NLYHA has decided to invest even further in providing additional equipment for goalies at all levels. In addition to the Uniforms outlined above, for all goalies (Mites through Bantams) NLYHA shall provide:

- socks
- breezers
- goalie skates
- leg pads
- chest protector/arm protector
- helmet and neck protector
- glove and blocker

The only equipment that will not be provided for goalies by NLYHA is:

- goalie stick
- athletic cup/pelvic protector
- mouthguard

Please note that the equipment and uniforms provided by NLYHA are still the property of NLYHA. Any equipment that is lost or stolen while assigned to the player will be the player's financial responsibility.

Most of the equipment and uniforms that will be provided to players may be used, depending on availability. If a player (or parent) finds a piece of equipment to be defective or not fit for its intended use, they should raise an issue with the Equipment Director (or be assisted by their coach in this process). The Equipment Director will repair or replace the equipment if they deem appropriate. If in the Equipment Director's sole discretion, they find no issue with the equipment, the parent or player may purchase equipment on their own for their child's use.

Off-Season Training

This program will be determined, as ice and facility needs are assessed. As in most sports or activities there are innumerable opportunities to participate in off-season camps, clinics, and leagues, many of which will involve fellow NLYHA families. These activities can often be enjoyable and rewarding but can also be the source of much confusion and disillusionment.

The NLYHA does not sanction, recommend or control any off-season training and development activities outside of spring and fall skills. If you are interested in the various off-season options, you will have to be proactive in seeking information. Some sources include hockey related literature such as *Let's Play Hockey*, postings at the arenas, and networking with those who are organizing.

NLYHA does organize the Snipers Club. That is a summer program from June 1 – August 31. Details can be found on the website under Training & Development.

Unfortunately, registration and team selection activity for spring leagues are usually in the middle of the NLYHA hockey season. This timing can be quite disruptive and cause hurt feelings among players and parents as teams are formed.

Participation in these activities has no influence on which team your child will play for in the upcoming season, other than to the extent that the additional ice time is a contributing factor to a player's personal development. Generally, it is felt that clinics and camps will do more for a player's development than leagues that only play games and have limited practice time. It will be the individual's responsibility to determine their personal level of participation, if at all.

Clinics/Spring and Fall Leagues

The NLYHA Board may communicate Spring or Fall programming available for members of the Association. This may also include specific clinics or training sponsored by the association, but paid for by families, some of which may be partially paid for by the Association.

Skills Scholarship Program

This program is designed to provide supplemental funds to be awarded to help ease the financial obligations associated with NLYHA players attending hockey skills development opportunities. Refer to the webpage under Training & Development for more information.

Frequently Asked Questions

This section is designed to answer the most frequent questions families may have about the Northern Lakes Youth Hockey Association.

Rink Information

The NYLHA utilizes two rinks. Location and contact information is below.

Breezy Point Hockey Center
7370 County Road 11
Breezy Point, MN 56472
218.562.5678
<http://www.breezypointsports.com/>

Spalj Arena at the Hallett Community Center
470 8th Street NE
Crosby, MN 56441
218.546.2616
<http://www.hallettcenter.com/>

Key Dates Calendar

This calendar can be found on the NLYHA website under Scheduling and displays the key dates of association events ranging from training, try-outs, tournaments, fundraising events, reminders, blackout periods and more.

Annual Meeting

The NLYHA hosts an end of season banquet, typically in April, to celebrate the conclusion of the season, to elect new board members and to provide a state of the union to the membership. Refer to the Annual Banquet page under About NLYHA.

Ice Schedule

The ice schedule can be found on the main page of the NLYHA website and will be dated in order for members to find the most current document. Ice time, games and tournaments are scheduled by the Ice and Game Scheduler and are intended to maximize the amount of available ice for all teams according to recommended ice time by USA Hockey. The Ice and Game Scheduler contact information is available on the website.

Lightning Apparel

NLYHA partners with several approved vendors for Lightning apparel. There will be several waves of orders for the membership throughout the season, or anytime by following online instructions. Instructions will be posted online when available. Refer to the Lightning Apparel page under About NLYHA.

Logo Policy

Northern Lakes Lightning Hockey Association reserves the right to limit the use of our logo for any purposes.

Teams and Levels

Mite/8U

This is our youngest group of players with an emphasis on developing skating skills and an introduction to shooting and stickhandling. The Mites may participate in games and Jamboree events focused on having fun and encouraging skill and sportsmanship development.

Players at this level typically range in age from four years old to eight years old and will play at this level through the third grade. This level comprises five layers – 1-4 + Future Stars – with Future Stars being the youngest and newest players that have not yet learned the most basic skating skills, many of these kids could be 4 or 5 years old and are simply there to get acclimated to being on the ice. The Future Stars will be taught basic skating with the goal of getting them to be skating proficient as soon as possible. For the kids that show an aptitude and interest in being more challenged and competitive, they will be advanced to the Mite 4 level as quickly as possible. Mite 4 Level being the least skilled level of mites and Mite 1 being the more experienced and older mite players.

NLYHA follows the USA Hockey guidelines for ice sessions as it relates to player development.

Mini-Mites (Mites 3 & 4) games should be played cross/half ice.

The rule will now appear in the Minnesota Hockey Handbook as follows: <https://www.minnesotahockey.org/handbook>

Squirt/10U

This level is typically made up of 4th and 5th graders. NLYHA follows the USA Hockey guidelines for ice sessions as it relates to player development.

Peewee/12U

This level is typically made up of 6th and 7th graders. NLYHA follows the USA Hockey guidelines for ice sessions as it relates to player development.

Bantam/14U

This level is typically made up of 8th and 9th graders. NLYHA follows the USA Hockey guidelines for ice sessions as it relates to player development.

Fee Reimbursement

Due to the raffle ticket process, any reimbursement requests will be verified as being paid out of pocket prior to reimbursement (Only tickets purchased by Association Member will be reimbursed per NLYHA Board Approval-Burden of proof lies with the Association Member filing a grievance).

Appendix

The Appendix section includes the necessary Code of Conduct and other forms that are required for participation in the Northern Lakes Youth Hockey Association.

Player Code of Conduct Form

I understand that it is a privilege to play hockey in the Northern Lakes Youth Hockey Association and as a member of the _____ team for the _____(year) season, I, _____ agree to the following Code of Conduct:

- I will not swear or use abusive language on the bench, in the locker room, in the arena, and/or at any team function.
- I will not throw equipment.
- I will encourage good sportsmanship by demonstrating positive support for all players, coaches, fans, volunteers, and referees at every game.
- I will treat teammates, coaches, opponents, facilities, fans, and referees with respect.
- I will not drink alcohol, smoke, vape, chew tobacco, or use any other illegal substance at the rink or any team function.
- I will respect and adhere to all rules and Code of Conduct of the NLYHA, District 15, Minnesota Hockey, and USA Hockey.
- I will express any concern through proper channels in a respectful manner.
- I understand that any player who cannot abide by these rules or violates them will be subject to disciplinary action as outlined in the NLYHA handbook.

Signed by Player: _____ Date: _____

Parent's Signature: _____ Date: _____

This form is electronically signed through the online registration process. Noncompliance may result in ineligibility for the player.

Parent/Family Code of Conduct Form

As a parent of a Northern Lakes Youth Hockey player, _____, (Player's name),

I understand that:

- It is a privilege, not a right, for my child to play youth hockey.
- Sportsmanship and fair play are essential to the sport of hockey and are important skills that our children learn from youth hockey.
- Our children learn from our example, and we as parents need to exemplify the highest level of sportsmanship by supporting all players, coaches, team managers, referees, and parents.

Therefore, I agree to the following Parent/Guardian Code of Conduct:

- I will never use abusive behavior towards anyone involved in youth hockey.
- I will encourage good sportsmanship by demonstrating positive support for all players, coaches, fans, volunteers, and referees at every game.
- I will not create a public display of anger toward coaches, players, and/or spectators in any arena or via e-mail, letter, and/or phone calls to the team.
- I agree to the 24-hour rule which states "no parent in a fit of frustration or anger over their player's playing time, position or coaching will contact the coach in any manner until 24 hours has passed."
- I will respect and adhere to all rules and Code of Conduct of the NLYHA, District 15, Minnesota Hockey, and USA Hockey.
- I will express any concern through proper channels in a respectful manner.
- I understand that any parent who cannot abide by these rules or violates them will be subject to disciplinary action as outlined in the NLYHA handbook.

Signed/Date: _____ (Parent/Guardian #1)

Signed/Date: _____ (Parent/Guardian #2)

This form is electronically signed through the online registration process. Noncompliance may result in ineligibility for the player.

Coach's Code of Conduct Form

The Northern Lakes Youth Hockey Association takes pride in our coaches. As the highest representative of the NLYHA at any game and/or team function, it is important that our coaches set an example for the team and the community. Therefore:

- I will encourage good sportsmanship by demonstrating positive support for all players, coaches, fans, volunteers, and referees at any youth hockey event.
- I will treat players, fellow coaches, opponents, facilities, fans, and referees with respect.
- I will refrain from the use of any inappropriate language within the presence of players.
- I will respect and adhere to all rules and Code of Conduct of the NLYHA, District 15, Minnesota Hockey, and USA Hockey.
- I understand that if I cannot abide by these rules or violate them, I will be subject to disciplinary action as outlined in the NLYHA handbook.

Coaches Signature: _____ Date: _____

Coaches Name (Printed): _____ Team: _____

Season: _____

This form is electronically signed through the online registration process. Noncompliance may result in ineligibility for the coach.

NLYHA Board Positions and Definitions

The NLYHA Board of Directors is responsible for managing the property, affairs, and business of the Association. We are governed by Bylaws, which can be found on our website. The number of Directors will be eleven (11) or more and that number includes the Officer positions of President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer.

The term of office is three years, and these are volunteer positions. Board elections are held annually at the end of season banquet. Officers are elected from the Directors of the Board. Below are the current Board positions for NLYHA:

- President
 - To be eligible for this position, the member must have served as a Director or Officer for at least one (1) year immediately prior to taking the position. The President has responsibility for the Association in the role as chief executive officer ensuring all orders and resolutions are carried into effect, presides over all Board and general membership meetings and is *ex officio* a member of all standing committees.
- Vice President
 - In the event of the absence or availability of the President, the Vice President will assume those responsibilities. The Vice President provides oversight and has responsibility for the Hockey Committee.
- Secretary
 - The Secretary is the clerk of all Board and general membership meetings and will record the meeting discussions.
- Treasurer
 - The Treasurer is responsible for managing the operating bank account, managing cash flows, reconciling bank statements, preparing monthly reports of the financials for the Board, and assisting an outside accounting firm with the annual audit.
- Communications
 - Keeping the membership and public informed of Association or hockey related events is the responsibility of Communications. This communication is done via email to the Association along with social media posts, press releases, and managing the website.
- Equipment
 - In this role, the Equipment Director is responsible for maintaining the equipment rooms at both arenas. This includes purchasing gear and maintaining inventory from skates to jerseys along with other training items.
- Fundraising
 - Fundraising will manage the annual fundraisers to ensure orders are submitted and delivered and buy-outs are collected, along with providing new ideas for additional fundraising opportunities.
- Gambling
 - This is a Committee, typically made up of three Directors, which provide oversight to the Gambling operations of the Association.

- Recruitment and Retention
 - New members and keeping our members are the charter for this role. Managing the Come Try Hockey event(s) and providing feedback and opportunities for current members are key responsibilities.
- Registrar
 - The Registrar is responsible for managing the registration of members, volunteers, and coaches. This includes ensuring all certifications and requirements are being met for each registrant (USA Hockey membership, SafeSport training, etc.).
- SafeSport
 - As mandated by USA Hockey, this position is responsible for ensuring safety for all involved in the game both on and off the ice and to enforce the zero-tolerance policy for misconduct or abuse.

There are many areas outlined above that will require volunteers from the membership. Each Director is responsible for finding volunteers in order to accomplish their responsibilities. Volunteer information can be derived from the annual registration list.

Non-Parent Head Coach Pay Information

There may be times the Association employs a non-parent Head Coach for a team. Below outlines the information related to each level and the expectations for coaching and pay.

	Mites	10U	Squirts	12U	Peewees	Bantams
Expected Certification	SafeSport Concussion Age Module Level Cert Background Check					
Practice Time Expected	2x/week	2-3x/week	2-3x/week	2-3x/week	2-3x/week	3-4x/week
Games Expected	Lightning League 10 Games	35 Games and Below**	35 Games and Below**	35-40 Games	40-45 Games	45-50 Games
Head Coach Expected Pay*	None	\$3000	\$3000	\$4500	\$4500	\$5000

ASSISTANT COACHES: Up to 2 non-parent assistant coaches at each level (approved by the Hockey Committee) will be compensated at ½ the head coach rate.

*Half will be paid before November 30 and the remaining half by February 28. Checks will be mailed to the address provided on registration.

In addition to their pay, non-parent coaches may also be reimbursed for mileage to games and hotel expenses for tournaments.

**Eligible for 35 games plus Districts.