

USA HOCKEY, INC.
SAFETY AND PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT COMMITTEE
(2020 – 2021 Season)
2021 WINTER MEETING REPORT

The Safety and Protective Equipment Committee last met at the Annual Congress in June 2020.

PRESENT MEMBERS OF SPEC

- Dr. Alan Ashare - SPEC Co-Chair, Director Emeritus, former Team Physician, HECC
- Dr. Michael Stuart - SPEC Co-Chair, Chief Med. Officer USA Hockey, Orthopedic Surgeon
- Joe Bertagna - NCAA Director to USA Hockey, Exec Director Hockey East
- Cheri Bonawitz - District Director from New England
- Dr. Charles Burke III – Orthopedic Surgeon, Mid-Am District Associate Coach-in-Chief
- Caitlin Cahow – Athlete Director
- Dr. David Crandell - Team Physician for Amputee Hockey, Physical Medicine
- Jay Finnigan - Atlantic District Director, USA Hockey Referee
- Jon Gustafson - Pacific District Director, VP of Sharks Ice and San Jose Barracuda
- Dan Jaroshewich - Associate Registrar from Michigan District
- Dr. Tom Lenz - Dentist, Southeastern District Director
- Taylor Lipsett - Athlete Director
- Mike Mullally - Central District Director, Past President AHAI
- Steve Oleheiser - Minnesota President
- Dr. Charles Popkin – Orthopedic Surgeon
- Dr. Michael Shindle – Orthopedic Surgeon
- Dr. Douglass Weiss - USA Hockey Team physician, Orthopedic Surgeon
- Kevin Margarucci - USA Hockey Staff Liaison to SPEC

- Peter Lindberg - Consultant to SPEC, former VP Legal Council, Director Emeritus

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF SPEC

The Safety and Protective Equipment Committee and its Chair serve as consultants to USA Hockey on all matters related to safety, injuries, and protective equipment. As stated in the USA Hockey Bylaws (USA Hockey Annual Guide 2016-2017 page 74), “It shall be the duty and responsibility of the Safety and Protective Equipment Committee to continually study the game at all age levels and levels of competition for the purpose of developing means and methods of keeping the sport of ice hockey as safe and injury-free as possible for its participants..... Furthermore, it shall be the responsibility of the Safety and Protective Equipment Committee to make recommendations for changes in the playing rules and regulation of USA Hockey that pertain to the safety to appropriate committee and/or the Board of Directors.”

COVID-19

In March of 2020 the novel coronavirus SARS-COV2 pandemic swept across our country impacting all aspects of our lives. Throughout the pandemic USA Hockey has provided best practices for risk mitigation to make the hockey environment as safe as possible. There are risks in all our everyday activities, including going to the rink and participating in ice hockey. We encourage all USA Hockey members and participants to follow risk mitigation strategies not only while participating but in all areas of their lives to help stop the spread of COVID-19. For the latest updates and information, you can find all materials at: <https://www.usahockey.com/playersafety>

In November of 2020 USA Hockey signed a consulting contract with Dr. Deverick Anderson, Infectious Diseases Physician and Epidemiologist. Dr. Anderson is the co-owner of Infection Control Education for Major Sports. He has worked closely with the NHL, other top ice hockey leagues and other major professional sports in their return to play process. Dr. Anderson has reviewed and endorsed our risk mitigation guidelines for our members to follow in accordance with their local and state orders. We will continue to utilize Dr. Anderson, as a resource in risk mitigation, in the future as the landscape of navigating the pandemic changes.

PLAYER SAFETY COORDINATOR

The District Player Safety Coordinator positions were approved at Annual Congress in June of 2019. All 12 districts that have named a Player Safety Coordinator:

Atlantic: Dr. Mike Shindle
Massachusetts: Nicole Siglin
Mid-American: Thomas Platt
New England: Kyle Peckham
Northern Plains: Randy Hite
Rocky Mountain: Doug Ritter

Central: Jerry Kennedy
Michigan: Jason Reynolds
Minnesota: Jessica Finnegan
New York: Chris Napoli
Pacific: Jaime Campbell
Southeastern: Jim Haverstrom

Kevin Margarucci has held monthly zoom meetings and multiple individual calls with the PSCs during this past season. COVID-19 has been a main topic of discussion since March. Initial intention for this season was focusing on education and awareness for USA Hockey's Concussion Management Program and the new requirement for a signed return to play form. In conjunction with this we have been evaluating the individual state statutes that pertain to concussion management and working to align those with the USA Hockey program. We have also discussed options for electronic reporting of de-identified concussion data to be discussed during Winter SPEC meeting.

For a complete list of duties and responsibilities please refer the USA Hockey Annual Guide, page 210.

CONCUSSIONS

Concussions continue to be front page news for contact-collision sports and a major concern for all USA Hockey players, coaches, and parents.

Concussion education modules are available through the USA Hockey Coaching Education Program, the National Federation of High Schools (www.nfhslearn.com), and the US Center for Disease Control (www.preventingconcussions.org).

In June 2014, at the Annual Congress, USA Hockey Board of Directors adopted a new policy (Policy F. Sports Concussion Management Program) Current location in the USA Hockey Annual Guide 2020-21, page 36. **"A sports concussion management program must be incorporated within each affiliate: USA Hockey's program is available at <usaahockey.com/safety-concussion>. This is the minimum concussion protocol to be followed by all USA Hockey Programs."**

The 2019 USA Hockey Concussion Management Program has been approved. Please share this information with your local associations. We will be working with our District Player Safety Coordinators to help them align this program with any state statutes that pertain to youth sports.

Here is the link to the new document and return to play form:

<https://www.usahockey.com/playersafety>

USA Hockey has partnered with the Concussion Legacy Foundation for a targeted Team Up Speak Up campaign which will run during World Juniors in December and January. Last year was our most engaging campaign to date and we are working on ways to improve for next year. We are happy that the campaign was successful, but this is a season long message that can be delivered at any time. To learn more please click on this link and share in your area: <https://concussionfoundation.org/programs/team-up-speak-up/USA-Hockey>

In all states, legislation requires coaches to have concussion education, usually annually. In some states, annual concussion education is also mandated for parents and players.

DECLARATION OF PLAYER SAFETY, FAIR PLAY AND RESPECT

The board ratified this declaration in June 2019 at Annual Congress. We believe it is the duty of this committee to help spread the word and educate the members in your local area about this initiative to help foster a competitive, fun and safe environment for all players, coaches, officials and spectators. This is a message that needs to be consistently relayed to change the culture of the game. The CEP has incorporated a section of their clinics to the declaration, so all coaches are aware.

<https://www.usahockey.com/page/show/5124373-declaration-of-safety-fair-play-and-respect>

HEADS UP DON'T DUCK PROGRAM TO DECREASE PARALYZING NECK INJURIES

A simple technique, HEADS UP, DON'T DUCK when going into the boards, can help to greatly decrease the incidence of a catastrophic, paralyzing neck injury. If a player skates with his/her head down and falls or is pushed into the boards or goal posts, there is a high risk that the player could sustain a cervical spine fracture with spinal cord involvement. The player does not have to be going fast (less than walking speed). The spinal cord injury (quadriplegia – paralysis of arms and legs) could be much more devastating than a concussion. The HUDD Program teaches players and coaches the importance of keeping the head up when going into the boards. SPEC and CEP supports the USA Hockey Heads Up Hockey Program.

SPEC has initiated a HUDD sticker program. This sticker showing player's head Mayo Clinic animation is designed to be placed on the glass next to the player entry doors to the ice surface to remind players to keep their heads up when going into the boards. The initial program, during the 2016-17 season included mailing of decals to all US Ice Rink Association member facilities; there were 345 USIRA member facilities at the time with a total of 554 ice sheets.

New decals were designed to add a QR code, which links directly to the HUDD webpage. In March of 2018 the decals were featured in the Player Safety newsletter. To date, we have received 105 order requests and more keep coming in. This has resulted in an additional 350 decals being mailed out.

There are still decals available to be sent out. Please direct any requests to Kevin Margarucci at USA Hockey.

The USA Hockey HUDD video starring SPEC members Jenny Potter and Dr. Mike Stuart is available on the USA Hockey website. It is recommended that all players and coaches watch this HUDD video at the beginning of each season, possibly as part of the preseason team meeting.

HUDD drills are now in place for the ADM program and will be incorporated into the new coaching modules for next season. All coaches are encouraged to use HUDD drills in every practice to help players learn this technique.

AEDs AND CPR TRAINING

SPEC recommends that every coach, player, parent, referee, and administrator to be trained in CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) / AED (automatic external defibrillation). USA Hockey and US Ice Rink Association have endorsed the "ONE BEAT: CPR + AED: Saving Lives, One Heart at a Time" program.

GotAED, which is a crowd funding site for organizations to raise funds to purchase an AED. They have been approved to be advertised in our Safety Newsletters. For more information go to their website: <https://www.gotaed.org/>

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS - NO BODY CHECKING BEFORE AGE 15

The American Academy of Pediatrics published an article in June 2014 recommending starting body checking in boys' ice hockey no earlier than age 15.

Reducing Injury Risk From Body Checking in Boys' Youth Ice Hockey *Pediatrics* 2014;133:1151

<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/133/6/1151.full.html>

<http://aapnews.aappublications.org/content/35/6/22.full.pdf+html>

This article comes from the AAP Council on Sports Medicine and Fitness with lead authors Allison Brooks, MD, MPH and Keith J. Loud, MDCM, MSc.

From the abstract: "Ice hockey is an increasingly popular sport that allows intentional collision in the form of body checking for males but not for females. There is a two- to threefold increased risk of all injury, severe injury, and concussion related to body checking at all levels of boys' youth ice hockey. The American Academy of Pediatrics reinforces the importance of stringent enforcement of rules to protect player safety as well as educational interventions to decrease unsafe tactics. To promote ice hockey as a lifelong recreational pursuit for boys, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends the expansion of non-checking programs and the restriction of body checking to elite levels of boys' youth ice hockey, starting no earlier than 15 years of age."

USA Hockey's Youth Council has been discussing the topic of body checking and when it should be incorporated. Currently, USA Hockey rules allow body checking in games at the 14U level and up. Coaches are encouraged to teach age appropriate body contact/checking skills from 8U to 12U level with an emphasis of practicing body checking on and off ice at the 12U level to prepare for the 14U level.

These conversations are evolving and have included the officiating, coaching and safety sections of USA Hockey with many options on the board at this time. We will continue to monitor these discussions to keep informed on where things stand as well as provide the latest medical research in this area to make an informed decision.

EXCELLENCE IN SAFETY AWARD

The USA Hockey Excellence in Safety Award is given annually to an individual who has made outstanding contributions through many years of service to make hockey a safer game for all participants. This includes contributions to decrease the risk for injury or promoting safety on the playing surface by working in the field of medicine, epidemiology, psychology, kinesiology, physiology, chemistry, physics, or engineering.

A subcommittee will be formed at winter meetings to accept and review all nominations. Nomination deadline is March 15th and should be supported by a summary of the nominee's work and CV. The

subcommittee will present their selection to the USA Hockey Executive Director by April 1st. The award winner will be notified by mid-April.

CATASTROPHIC INJURY REGISTRY

USA Hockey Catastrophic Injury Registry has been established at the Mayo Clinic under the leadership of Dr. Michael Stuart.

A **catastrophic injury** is defined as any ailment occurring during participation in the sport of ice hockey (youth, high school, junior, college, adult amateur, and professional) that results in death, cranial fracture, spine fracture or dislocation with spinal cord involvement, complex concussion with permanent cognitive deficit, an eye injury with permanent visual impairment or blindness, or a permanent disability resulting in a substantial reduction of physical ability.

A **potentially catastrophic injury** includes spine fractures/dislocations without spinal cord involvement, lacerations with involvement of arteries, veins or nerves, neck lacerations, internal organ rupture/laceration (spleen, liver, etc.), and eye injury with transient visual impairment. This determination shall be based on the circumstances of the injury and the assessment of the qualified medical professional in that instance.

The purpose of this USA Hockey registry is to collect information on the prevalence of catastrophic injuries in youth, high school, junior, college, adult amateur, and professional ice hockey in the United States. The goal is to design and maintain a comprehensive registry of injuries in ice hockey that will be a prominent source of catastrophic ice hockey injury data. This registry has been partially funded by the USA Hockey Foundation.

DECREASING THE RISK FOR INFECTIOUS DISEASE

Infectious disease epidemics have made us more aware of preventative measures.

The following recommendations will help to decrease the risk for spreading infections:

1. Provide individual water bottles. Do not share water bottles.
2. Regularly wash hands.
3. Clean workout gear for each practice/competition.
4. Keep gloves on during the traditional handshake with opponents.
5. Clean player equipment and locker rooms

Individuals with influenza may develop typical signs or symptoms of: fever (102°degree F or greater), cough, muscle aches, runny nose, headache, or sore throat with the potential for more serious complications, including pneumonia.

Four years ago, the influenza virus strain particularly targeted children and young adults.

Transmission of the influenza virus may occur from the day before the onset of symptoms and during the 5-7 days that these symptoms are present.

Infected individuals should stay home until signs and symptoms have resolved and they have not had a fever for at least 24 hours. The 24-hour no-fever timeline should be achieved naturally, without the aid of fever reducing medications.

DRUGS - CHEMICAL ADDICTION - PERFORMANCE ENHANCING DRUGS – PRESCRIPTION DRUGS - TOBACCO – ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

The IIHF has programs to discourage the use of enhancing drugs and chemicals, including the use of steroids. SPEC wants to include the use of tobacco (chewing and smoking), alcoholic beverages, and prescription drugs. The following websites offer more information: www.usada.org www.wada-

ama.org www.taylorhooton.org www.justthinktwice.com
www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/alcoholdrug/index.htm www.nicd.us/searchnicdsiteinternally.html

USA Hockey has updated zero tolerance policy for drugs and alcohol to include vaping and tobacco use. This can be found in the 2020-21 Annual Guide, page 31.

Dr. Tyler Barrett has presented on Opioid Use and Student Athletes to the Nashville Youth Hockey Association. His presentation materials were given to USA Hockey and there was an article on this in the USA Hockey Magazine in August of 2019. From this article Dr. Barret helped us create a fact check sheet on opioid use which is available on the website. Dr. Barrett and his colleagues have also helped create a fact sheet on vaping which has recently been added to the website as well.

HYDRATION AND THE USE OF ENERGY DRINKS

Hydration is very important before, during, and after games and practices. Water is usually adequate for practices and games that last an hour or so. If the practice or game is longer, you may need electrolyte replacement with drinks such as Gatorade and PowerAde. Coaches and players should be careful not to use energy drinks that contain stimulants such, as caffeine and ephedra. Additional information is available from the following websites:

www.edrinks.net;

www.mayoclinic.com/health/taurine/AN01856

www.acsm.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Past_Roundtables&Template=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=2729

www.nfhs.org

PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

Players, parents, and coaches have to know what protective equipment to wear, and, possibly more important, how to wear it. There are no concussion-proof helmets, but the helmet will function better if it stays on your head and does not move around on your head. The neck strap must be used in addition to the chin strap. SPEC recommends the use of neck laceration protector because this device may reduce the risk of a laceration to the neck region. We are looking into the effectiveness of hanging throat protectors for goalies.

We will continue to work with the leadership of HECC to make equipment information more readily available on our website for our members.

Mouth guards and neck laceration protectors have been brought up in some discussions and we should be prepared to have discussions on the proper use and effectiveness of these pieces of equipment.

INJURIES TO DISABLED ATHLETES

Injury risk and prevention for our disabled athletes requires more attention. Disabled athletes also sustain concussions, sprains, strain, contusions, and fractures, but are also at risk for other injuries specific to their disability.

We would like to appoint a SPEC subcommittee, with expertise in treating disabled athletes, to review and make recommendations for prevention and care of these injuries. This was discussed in June of 2018 at Annual Congress and need to move forward with this valuable information as a resource.

INJURIES TO WOMEN ATHLETES

Injury risk and prevention for our female athletes requires more attention. Female athletes appear to have a higher risk of concussions and some knee injuries compared to male athletes.

MEDICAL COVERAGE IN YOUTH SPORTS

Medical coverage in youth sports is nearly non-existent. We require medical coverage for USA Hockey district and national tournament sites per our National Championship guidebook. Some associations have on site medical coverage at their tournaments throughout the season, but we don't know the prevalence of this.

Go4Ellis is a national program based out of Philadelphia that provides athletic training coverage for high school and youth sporting events. They have over 5,000 Certified Athletic Trainers nationwide registered with their platform. Very simply, you can advertise your event for free then the ATCs in their system can accept the job. The organizer can review their credentials and resume and make a final determination of hiring for their event. It is like Uber for Athletic Training Coverage.

Kevin Margarucci has been in contact with Go4Ellis and this service is now available for our host sites for Nationals if they need help finding medical coverage. We are currently in discussions with Go4Ellis on a partnership which will make them the recommended resource for athletic training coverage for all USA Hockey member associations to use throughout the season for practice, game or tournament coverage. They are linked with Players Health and we would have actual access to medical professionals to input any injuries that occur into a database. This can be a potential solution to receiving quality injury data in youth hockey.

Submitted by: Dr. Alan B. Ashare; CoChair, SPEC; Emeritus Director, USA Hockey
Dr. Michael Stuart; CoChair, SPEC; USA Hockey Chief Medical and Safety Officer
Kevin Margarucci, Manager, Player Safety, Staff Liaison, USA Hockey

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