

Montana Amateur Hockey Association

Tier I and Tier II Rules

Important Dates:

January 1st - April 1st - Spring window for submitting applications for Tier Programs

August 1st - October 1st - Fall window for submitting applications for Tier Programs

October 1st - Deadline for Tier Organizations to declare or rescind a team's "National Bound" status without being penalized

October 15th - Deadline for HPC to select playoff details (date, location, etc)

October 15th - Deadline for Tier Teams to submit their roster to the HPC

All Tier Programs:

All Member Association Presidents or their designee, Coaches, Managers and Team Officials, shall have the sole responsibility to ensure that each Team meets all the requirements for its classification and meets all the eligibility criteria for State, District Playoffs, and National Playoffs. USA Hockey Registrars, Associate Registrars and Montana Amateur Hockey Association (MAHA) High Performance Committee (HPC) will review team rosters at the time of their registration to make this determination. All applicable rules for the above are located in this document, the MAHA website, and the current USA Hockey Annual Guide. Through its affiliate agreement with USA Hockey, MAHA is granted the authority to conduct certain affairs of USA Hockey, and to regulate the sport of amateur ice hockey within Montana. MAHA is the ultimate authority for amateur hockey affairs in Montana, subject to the limitations contained under USA Hockey Bylaws and federal and state law.

Authority: The MAHA HPC shall have responsibility for all matters pertaining to Tier (I and II) Member Associations, Tier Teams, and Tier Hockey, subject to the MAHA Board of Directors review, directions, change, and approval. This responsibility shall include, but is not limited to, recommending the following: granting or terminating authority to organize and/or operate a Tier organization, club or association and/or field a Tier Team.

Responsibility:

Each Tier Association that is permitted by MAHA to register a Tier team shall govern, control and be fully responsible for its association, actions, inactions and/or infractions of its teams, players, coaches, managers, parents, and personnel. This responsibility shall include debts incurred by or in the name of the association, or any of its Tier teams, players, coaches or representatives.

Application Process: Any program that intends to incorporate Summer training must have their application submitted to the HPC during the Spring window (January 1st to April 1st). Any program that will not incorporate Summer training can submit their application during the Fall window (August 1st - August 31st).

Applications will be reviewed and approved, denied, or requested to change within 14 business days of their submission. After approval, the Tiered program must communicate to the HPC by October 1st if they intend to be National Tournament Bound.

Tryouts: Each Tier Association shall institute procedures to select the best players available.

Guidelines for team selection process shall include, but not be limited to the following:

- A. Each Tier Association shall hold open tryouts. Tryouts may not be announced or advertised until the Association has received notification from the MAHA HPC of its approval as a Tier program for the ensuing season. Tryouts must be held after the Montana Player Development Camps.
- B. Any and all Tier tryouts must be announced publicly through general publication, association websites, and/or individual mailing to all players at each level, inviting any player who wishes to tryout.
- C. Each Tier Association shall provide a Fact Sheet (below) to every player and every player's parent before tryouts.

Fact Sheet: Tier associations shall furnish in writing, before any tryout and prior to signing a commitment letter, a Fact Sheet that provides full disclosure of their Tier program and season, including all applicable costs, estimated number of games and practices, amount of travel, and any rules or expectations of the Tier association. The Fact Sheet shall also outline the refund policy of the team should a player not play for the full season, regardless of reason. Each player selected to participate on a Tier team and his/her parent(s) shall acknowledge that they have been provided a "Fact Sheet" as outlined above by the Tier Association as part of signing the MAHA Player/Association Commitment letter.

Tier II:

General: The purpose of Tier II hockey in Montana is to compete at the District or National levels. A Tier II Organization may only apply for one (1) Tier II Team in each of the following ages: 19U (Girls), 18U, 16U (Youth and Girls), 14U (Youth and Girls).

Eligibility: All Tier II rosters and programs must be endorsed by a MAHA association that is in good standing. All Tier II teams will be composed of players who are on an active roster in the Treasure State League (TSL), who are members of one of MAHA's associations, and/or whose primary residence is in the state of Montana. If a player is age eligible, and attending a higher education institute within Montana, the player will be eligible to participate.

A maximum of 1 athlete that does not meet the above criteria are eligible to be rostered per team. They will be referred to as "out-of-state" players.

Roster and Game Requirements: Tier II programs must submit their approved T1 roster links to the HPC by October 15th. T1 rosters must include all team personnel, player's positions, and player's numbers.

Regular season game requirements:

- If there are two tiered teams in the same division, they are required to play a minimum of 3 games against each other prior to the playoff.
- If there are three or more tiered teams, each team is required to play a minimum of 2 games against each of the other teams.
- Tier II regular season games are allowed to be played during tournaments if both teams agree in writing (email is acceptable) prior to the games.

Playoffs: If there is only 1 team in a division, there will be no playoff. If a State Tournament Playoff is required, the National Tournament Guidebook team and player game requirements must be at least 50% completed for the team and players to participate in the playoffs. With prior permission from the HPC, the playoff games may be counted toward the player and team game count.

The playoff will be conducted as defined in the MAHA Tiered Playoff Guidebook. The date and location will be determined by October 15th of each season by the HPC.

Following the conclusion of the playoff, the Tier II team who will be representing Montana at the National Tournament must submit their team binder to the state registrar within 72 hours of the final playoff game or their last qualifying game. It is highly recommended that teams have their binders prepared prior to the playoff.

Any team who designates themselves as “National Tournament Bound” (NTB) is expected to participate in the National Tournament. If a team qualifies for the National Tournament and does not attend, they may be assessed a fine by the MAHA Executive Committee of no more than Five Thousand Dollars (\$5,000) and the association may be deemed in poor standing within MAHA.

Tier I:

The purpose of Tier I hockey in Montana is to provide an opportunity for the best youth and girls players in Montana to develop and compete at the highest level of hockey available in the United States. Tier I hockey in Montana shall be limited to those youth/girls players who have the desire and ability to play at the highest level available and to continue to develop by playing Tier I hockey.

General:

A Tier I Association shall exist within an established MAHA Member Association that is in good standing with MAHA and USA Hockey. The proposed Tier I Association must be duly organized and operated in accordance with the Bylaws, Rules, Regulations and Policies of MAHA and USA Hockey. Each Tier I team and association must be approved annually by the MAHA HPC, and then approved by the MAHA Board. Such authorization from MAHA expires annually on the last day of USA Hockey’s National Championship.

Guidelines For Determining The Number of Teams:

Guidelines for determining the number of Tier I Teams shall include, but not be limited to the following:

- A. The number of rostered players in an age division
- B. The number of rostered players in the age division who are capable of competing at a Tier I hockey level
- C. Not more than three (3) Tier I Organizations in the state of Montana
- D. A Tier I organization will field a minimum of three teams
- E. No Tier I Organization shall have more than one (1) team at an age level, the one team being Major Tier I.

Tier I Team Authorization Procedure:

Each authorized existing or new Tier I Organization shall comply with the minimum requirements set forth in this Article, MAHA and USA Hockey By-laws, Policies, Rules and Regulations, which include, but are not be limited to, the following:

- A. An Organization fielding Tier I teams must be affiliated via its By-Laws and/or registration with a MAHA member association.
- B. A Tier I Organization may only apply for one (1) Tier I Team in each of the following ages: 19U (Girls), 18U, 16U,15U,14U (Youth and Girls).
- C. Tier I teams registered through MAHA shall limit the number of Out-of-State Players (as defined in this Article) to the following:
 - (1) 5 skaters and 1 goalie at 19U (Girls) and 18U
 - (2) 3 skaters and 1 goalie at 16U and 15U
 - (3) 1 skater and 0 goalies at 14U

For purposes of this Article, an Out-of-State Player is any player who, at the time of roster submission, does not have an immediate family member who is domiciled in Montana. An immediate family member is defined as (1) a natural or adoptive Parent or Grandparent, (b) an older sibling 18 years of age or older, (c) a Guardian appointed due to the death or incapacity of a Parent. A player who meets the requirements of this subsection is an In-State Player, subject to the provisions of subsection (8) of this paragraph.

(5) A player who has reached the age of eighteen (18) years and who otherwise would be an Out-of-State Player under subsection (4) of this paragraph will be treated as an Out-of-State Player. (6) No player shall create a residence for hockey purposes.

(7) This does not prevent a player from moving to Montana for the purpose of hockey; said player will be considered an Out-of-State Player unless they have established residency as defined above. (8) The player, parent, and/or guardian shall have the burden of proving Montana residency. (9) In any case where a player's address, as submitted on a Tier I Roster, is different than that of the immediate family member domiciled in Montana through which the player claims to be an In-State Player, the MAHA HPC is authorized and directed to conduct such investigation as may be necessary to determine whether treating the player as an In-State Player is consistent with the purposes of this Article.

(10) The MAHA HPC shall have final decision authority in determining whether a player sought to be rostered on a Tier I Team is an Out-of-State Player.

- D. A list of Officers, Directors, and Registrar, the age divisions for its proposed Tier I Teams, the names of the Coaches for each Tier I Team, written proof that each Coach has completed the appropriate coaching certification and USA Hockey coaching module for that age division, and has complied with MAHA's background screening requirements.
- E. Historical financial information that demonstrates the organization proposing to field Tier I Teams has been financially stable the prior three (3) consecutive seasons and has the ability to finance the following season.
- F. Ice contract(s) that demonstrate the time slots and days of the week that the proposed Tier I teams shall practice or play games for the upcoming season. It is imperative that Organizations provide sufficient ice to support an appropriate number of home games and practices consistent with the size of its program, its season and this Article. In addition, Tier I Organizations must provide evidence of a supporting off-ice development program.

G. Written information regarding the structure, organization and responsibilities of the Tier I Organization and each Tier I Team, its coach, manager and any administrators.

H. Written By-Laws, Rules and Regulations.

I. Current compliance and a statement of future intent, ability, and procedures to comply with USA Hockey and MAHA By-Laws, Policies, Rules and Regulations as well as the Guidelines and Policies established by the HPC.

J. Internal Revenue Service 501(c)(3) tax exemption status under the Internal Revenue Code.

K. All Tier I games played in Montana must have officials scheduled by assignees authorized for Tier I hockey.

L. All Tier 1 games played in Montana must be played against another USA Hockey certified teams or in the case of foreign teams, certified by Hockey Canada or the IIHF (International Ice Hockey Federation).

M. Any other information determined to be necessary by the HPC or their Chairpersons.

Player Commitment: Any player who signs a MAHA Commitment Letter is committed to that Tier I Team for the ensuing playing season and cannot play for another Tier (Tier I or Tier II) team until he/she has been released from that Tier I Team. All such player releases shall be submitted to the HPC.

Roster: USA Hockey rosters (1T) for Tier I teams must be submitted to the appropriate USA Hockey Associate Registrar for Montana prior to any team participating in any game. Should a rostering violation occur knowingly or unknowingly on a Tier I team, the head coach shall appear before the MAHA Disciplinary Committee. The suspension for the violation shall be a minimum of 7 days to a maximum of one year. Any suspension includes all games, on ice practices and off ice practices. Any appeal will go to the full MAHA Board. Examples of rostering violations include but are not limited to an out of state player that is in excess of the ratio allowable for a Tier I team, a player that is not properly registered with USA Hockey, a player on the MAHA do not play list, etc. There can be others so it is recommended that any roster change is checked with the association registrar and/or state registrar.

In addition, each Tier I Association shall adhere to the following:

A. Each Tier I Association must register their Teams as Tier I Teams with the State and District Registrar prior to playing its first game of the current season.

B. Any association that advertises and/or conducts and selects players to participate on a Tier I team, then requests the team play at a lower level, regardless of when the request is made following the Tier I tryout but prior to registering the team with the state registrar, shall be ineligible to participate in the USA Hockey National Tournament at any level. The Tier I team must submit a written request, clearly stating the reason(s) and submit to the MAHA HPC accompanied by an acknowledgement statement signed by the President of the association, all team coaches and managers and all of the parents of the team members. Additionally, any player selected to a Tier I team, in which that team requests to play at a lower level shall have the right to be unconditionally released from his/her commitment letter and financial obligations to the association/team. Once a team receives approval to move to a lower level a player shall have no more than fourteen (14) days to request an unconditional release.

C. Any Tier I team that has registered itself with the State and District Registrar as a Tier I team and requests to play at a lower level, must submit a written request, clearly stating the reason(s) and submit to the MAHA HPC accompanied by an acknowledgement statement signed by the President of the association,

all team coaches and managers and all of the parents of the team members. Any request to do so must be done prior to October 31st of the playing season. Additionally, any player selected to a Tier I team that requests to play at a lower level shall have the right to be unconditionally released from his/her commitment letter and financial obligations to the association/team. Once a team receives approval to move to a lower level a player shall have no more than fourteen (14) days to request an unconditional release.

D. A Tier I team shall have no more than eighteen (18) skaters and two (2) goalies. E. A Tier I team shall not be permitted to have a “taxi” squad or players that are “practice players” or not actively rostered.

Commitment Date: No player shall be allowed to commit to play on a Tier I Team or sign a roster or pay monies prior to MAHA-approved tryout dates for the ensuing playing season.

Penalties: Penalties for Non-Compliance Any MAHA Member Association Tier I team found to be in violation of any of the MAHA Tier I policies shall be subject to any or all of the following sanctions: 1. Suspension of the Head Coach for the remainder of the current playing season in which the violation occurred AND for the following playing season.

2. Disqualification of the violating team from participation in any Northern Plains District Playoffs and the USA Hockey’s National Tournament.

3. A monetary fine of no more than Five Thousand Dollars (\$5,000.00) to be assessed to the Member Association that the violating team represents or is roster through. Amount to be determined by the MAHA Board of Directors.

*** Any rules or regulations not addressed in this document will be followed by the current USA Hockey National Tournament Guidebook.*