

MASSACHUSETTS HOCKEY ABUSE OF OFFICIALS
(Zero Tolerance)
(November 2, 2020)

As a result of recent repeated events involving abuse of officials by coaches, players, parents/spectators, Massachusetts Hockey is issuing this directive restating and reaffirming its Zero Tolerance Policy regarding officiating abuse.

Massachusetts Hockey, an affiliate of USA Hockey has a Zero Tolerance Policy for any unsportsmanlike behavior by spectators, coaches, players or team administrators. Any individual who does not conduct themselves in sportsmanlike and professional manner while attending or participating in games or events sanctioned USA Hockey, its Affiliates, Leagues and Clubs will be addressed in a swift and meaningful manner.

The officiating population is shrinking and one of the significant reasons cited is abuse by spectators, coaches and players. Officiating abuse has a direct impact on the recruitment of new officials and the retention of the existing officiating community. This diminishing referee population has the potential to jeopardize the ability to provide adequate coverage for the increasing number of games in our region.

The following behaviors/actions are not be tolerated and will subject any individual to discipline or penalties under this Zero Tolerance Policy, in addition to any other penalties assessed by the game official(s):

- Verbal abuse of official(s);
 - Harassing comments, behavior, taunting or threats directed or inferred towards on-ice and off-ice official(s);
- Physical abuse of official(s); or any issue concerning crowd control which results in the summoning of the police.

VIOLATIONS OF OFFICIATING ABUSE – ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY WILL BE MANAGED AS FOLLOWS:

A. MASSACHUSETTS HOCKEY OFFICIATING ABUSE SANCTIONS FOR NON-PARTICIPANTS

(Parents and/or Spectators and all those not on an approved USA Hockey Roster)

If the non-participant(s) is removed from a sanctioned youth hockey event by an on-ice or off-ice Official (i.e. Official(s), League or Affiliate Administrator or Arena personnel), or is otherwise reported for abusive behavior by any person(s) in attendance at the sanctioned event, the programs and teams involved will be contacted to provide information on the individuals involved, and if not identified, then the team personnel and or programs will be subject to discipline for any offenses involving parents or spectators of said teams or programs as investigated and adjudicated by the Massachusetts Hockey's Disciplinary Committee.

Hockey leagues comprised in whole or in part of Massachusetts Hockey Programs shall have the authority to enforce a League approved Officiating Abuse Zero Tolerance policy, which shall include reasonably similar guidelines, enforcement and consequences. The Massachusetts Hockey will work closely with its sanctioned Leagues to support Officiating Abuse Zero-Tolerance.

B. MASSACHUSETTS HOCKEY OFFICIATING ABUSE SANCTIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS

(Club Administrators, Players & Coaches)

USA Hockey Playing Rule 601, governs “Abuse of Officials and Other Misconduct.” Coaches, in conjunction with their organization, prior to the start of their season, shall conduct a meeting with their players and parents to set appropriate expectations, guidelines and penalties to eliminate officiating abuse.

Coaches and players who receive a game misconduct penalty under the Playing Rule 601 during the course of a game are subject to suspension for the remainder of the game and their next scheduled game as provided under USA Hockey rules. In addition, Massachusetts Hockey will impose an additional game suspension as a result of any game misconduct penalty, for a total of two games. Furthermore, if a coach or player receives a second game misconduct penalty under the Playing Rule 601 during the course of the same season, the coach or player will receive an additional two game suspension. Any suspensions imposed pursuant to this policy shall be for the next regularly scheduled game(s) for the team the coach/player was coaching/playing with when penalized.

Any other suspensions related to other USA Hockey playing rules are in addition to the previous mentioned suspensions. It is understood that nothing herein shall restrict or limit the Massachusetts Hockey’s Disciplinary Committee from holding a hearing and imposing any further discipline as may be determined by a hearing panel in addition the aforementioned suspensions.

If any team personnel (coaches and players) collectively receiving three or more penalties under the Playing Rule 601(a-e) during the course of the season, as a result of physical or verbal abuse of a game official, the team personnel, including the coaching staff, shall be subject to Massachusetts Hockey Disciplinary Review including a hearing, as provided in Rule 410 Supplementary Discipline and such discipline may include suspension or expulsion.

In cases of Match Penalties under Playing Rule 601(f)(1) (Deliberately inflicting physical harm, or attempting to do so, to any game official, including off-ice officials) or 601(f)(2) (Deliberately injuring, or attempting to do so, any opposing player or team official), there shall be a mandatory discipline hearing by the Massachusetts Hockey Disciplinary Committee. If, after a discipline hearing the penalty is confirmed by a preponderance of the evidence, the offending party shall be suspended for not less than one calendar year from the date of the penalty, with an additional one year of probation to follow the suspension per Article XIV §H (Deliberately Inflicting Physical Harm) of the Massachusetts Hockey Bylaws effective June 29, 2020.

ABUSE ENFORCEMENT

(Officials)

USA Hockey provides its registered Officials specific playing rules to discourage Officiating Abuse. All Officials within the Massachusetts Hockey are compelled to enforce such rules with very little latitude. All Massachusetts Hockey on-ice Officials shall use this policy as defined below:

In accordance with Rule 601, physical and/or verbal abuse by a participant must be called if it is evident. While we understand that an Official may sometimes believe that providing some latitude is appropriate

“game management,” that approach has, in part, created the necessity where “Zero Tolerance” must actually mean “ZERO TOLERANCE.” Official(s) refusing to enforce Rule 601 violations shall be disciplined according to the current Massachusetts Hockey and USA Hockey requirements.

At the first sign of any inappropriate, hateful or abusive remarks by non-participants, the on-ice Official(s) shall first report the conduct to the head coach of both participating teams and issue a warning. The Official(s) shall also advise that the head coach should direct an assistant coach to address their attending non-participants. Should both head coaches refute knowledge of the individual, the coach of the “home” team will have responsibility to address the spectator(s) or may be sanctioned with a two game suspension.

Should hateful or abusive remarks continue after the warning, the on-ice Official(s) shall advise the head coach of the home team to immediately contact arena management to clear the spectator(s) from the arena.

All warnings and subsequent issues shall be documented on the scoresheet and by the on-ice Official(s) through the USA Hockey Online Game Incident Report.

The official will utilize the USA Hockey Online Game Incident Report to document and communicate the removal of any person(s) attending a USA Hockey sanctioned game. These Incident Reports are automatically electronically distributed to the Massachusetts Hockey Executive Director, Chairperson of the Discipline Committee and the Referee in Chief. The official(s) will also report such behaviors to the game assignor. A representative from Massachusetts Hockey will reach out to the league and team to address the issue.

Hockey leagues comprised in whole or in part of Massachusetts Hockey Programs may impose additional duties of their game Officials related to the enforcement of Zero Tolerance, which may be subject to Massachusetts Hockey Referee-in-Chief or their designee’s approval.