



Michigan Amateur Hockey Association

MAHA Pilot Program

Pilot Program Name: Youth 9U AAA
Effective Date: 4/1/2026 – 3/31/2029
Approval Date: 2/19/2026

Pilot Program:

The Michigan Amateur Hockey Association (MAHA) Board of Directors hereby establishes a temporary pilot allowing Tier I member organizations to form and operate Youth 9U AAA teams during the 2026–27, 2027–28, and 2028–29 Regular Seasons. This pilot is authorized pursuant to the MAHA's rule-making authority and its ability to approve temporary pilot programs for evaluation prior to potential permanent adoption.

This program applies only to organizations officially designated as Tier I by the MAHA Board of Directors.

A. Rules Modified or Superseded During the Pilot

1. Residency / Out-of-State Player Restrictions

No non-Michigan players are permitted to participate as defined under the MAHA Residency Policy

2. Player Eligibility / Age Composition

The MAHA Tier I Age-Classification rules are modified to permit the following composition:

- i) All players must be birth-year 9U (typical age 9).
- ii) A player is eligible only if they appeared on a sanctioned USA Hockey certified roster at the 8U classification during the prior Regular Season.

3. Coaching Requirements

Standard Tier I coaching assignment policies are modified for the 9U division as follows:

- i) The head coach of a 9U Tier I team must “age up” with the same organization and coach at the 10U Tier I level the following Regular Season. Specifically, the 9U head coach must be the 10U head coach the following regular season.
- ii.) A 9U head coach who does not voluntarily return to that organization for 10U Tier I may not coach (either head or assistant) for any MAHA Tier I (AAA) 10U team during that same Regular Season.
- iii.) If a 9U head coach voluntarily elects not to return to the 10U level the following Regular Season, the club must petition the MAHA Vice-President of Youth for eligibility to continue in the pilot and have approval of the MAHA Youth Committee.
- iv.) If a club elects to not retain the 9U head coach for 10U, it must petition the MAHA Vice-President for Youth for relief on 3. i. and receive approval from the Youth



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Committee for continued participation in the pilot. The 9U head coach so removed will be eligible to coach at another Tier I organization as an assistant the following 10U Regular season.

4. Tryouts

No team may recruit or solicit players, offer contracts, hold tryouts, conditioning skate, or any activity that could be construed as a tryout/solicitation or recruitment or player evaluation until the specific date outlined below:

- i) All teams for the current season (not Post Season), shall not begin Post Season (Spring) tryouts until after 4 pm on the Monday following the conclusion of the final State Tournament games of all age brackets and categories.
- ii) All teams may begin tryouts on the 3rd Monday in May for all Regular Season (Fall/Winter) teams.

5. All other MAHA and USA Hockey rules apply unless expressly superseded above subject to interpretation by the MAHA Vice-President of Youth.

B. Pilot Program Operational Guidelines

Tier I organizations approved by the MAHA Board may field 9U AAA teams under the following conditions:

1. Teams must follow the roster-composition and eligibility rules outlined in this pilot.
2. Teams must comply with the MAHA Residency Policy without exception.
3. All coaching personnel must meet USA Hockey and MAHA coaching certification requirements applicable to the age level.
4. Organizations must cooperate fully with the MAHA's data collection and reporting requirements during the pilot.

C. Purpose and Rationale

The MAHA recognizes that the Michigan competitive landscape has evolved since 9U Tier I hockey last operated within the state. The intent of this pilot is to gather a minimum of two full seasons of longitudinal data to evaluate:

1. Player development trends from 8U to 9U to 10U to 11U.
2. Organizational retention and development of young athletes.
3. Outcomes tied to coaching continuity from 9U in to 10U.
4. The effect of Michigan only rosters on competitive balance and talent development.
5. The impact on the Tier I and Tier II structures statewide.

The findings will allow the MAHA to determine whether a permanent Tier I 9U classification should be implemented, modified, or discontinued.



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D. Evaluation and Sunset Clause

This pilot program will automatically expire on March 31, 2029, unless extended or modified by action of the MAHA Board of Directors.

A formal evaluation will be conducted during the 2028–29 Regular Season, including:

1. Player participation and movement data.
2. Retention and development metrics.
3. Organizational compliance with pilot requirements.
4. Coaching continuity tracking.
5. Input from District Directors and the Tier I Committee.
6. Evaluations will be conducted by the MAHA Youth Committee.
7. At the conclusion of the pilot, the MAHA Board of Directors will vote to:
 - i) Adopt the program as a permanent MAHA rule,
 - ii) Amend and extend the pilot, or
 - iii) Terminate the pilot entirely.

E. Documentation and Reporting Requirements

Tier I organizations participating in the pilot must:

1. Submit USA Hockey certified rosters annually on 9/1 and 2/1, to the MAHA
2. Provide 8U USAH certified rosters for all players rostered on the 9U AAA team annually:
 - for 2026-27 teams formed, the 8U rosters for players from 2025-26.
 - for 2027-28 teams formed, the 8U rosters for players from 2026-27.
 - for 2028-29 teams formed, the 8U rosters for players from 2027-28.
3. Supply any additional information as may be requested by the MAHA..
4. Report any violations immediately to their District Director.
5. Cooperate with all evaluations as part of pilot review.