

PHONE CALL PROGRAM MANUAL

Step-by-Step Guide to Retaining Players.



What will youth hockey bring out of your kid?

Pride. focus. Exhilaration. Hockey helps boys and girls make big strides.

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Overview

Many local associations deal with the same question season after season. How to get more players to return? If you're asking yourself this, the answer is simple: Just Ask Them.

Many associations make the common mistake of underestimating the power of asking. They also assume that everyone will return. The truth of the matter is the majority of 4 to 6 year olds do not return. The power of asking is crucial. The personal interaction between the association and the families increases the comfort level with the unknown. This also allows for the organization to answer questions and address any misconceptions.



One effective and inexpensive way is to extend a personal invitation through a phone call retention program. This is an important tool for the association to utilize because it notifies parents of the time to register as well as what to expect. A retention phone call also gains direct knowledge of any barriers to entry. The type of program helps identify potential pitfalls in the organization.

In order to run a properly executed retention call program, it is suggested to use the following as a guideline:

- Make the calls at an optimal time
- Set up a call center
- Use a script with talking points
- Turn problems into solutions
- Don't give up!

Why is a retention call program effective? First, a retention phone call doesn't cost you anything. It is widely known that acquiring new players costs more than to retain current players. Call programs also greatly improve the organization. Plain and simple, it keeps kids in the sport. They are also relatively pain-free for the organization.

RETENTION PHONE CALL PROGRAM

A Step-By-Step Model For Retaining Players

INTRODUCTION

Every hockey association has turnover from one year to the next. Many families forget to sign up before the start of the season and do not return to hockey primarily because they figure that it is too late to play.

Each season over 40,000 kids stop playing youth hockey. Much of this loss can be reduced through a little extra follow up; there is no better follow up than a personal phone call.

1. BUILD THE FOUNDATION

Email

- Focus the retention email purely on registering uncommitted players
- Feature benefits of youth hockey
- Layout their options
 - Provide all playing options, not just what they did last year

Timing

- It is recommended to send the email at the beginning of August
- Time email for window when people start thinking about the fall

2. FOLLOW-UP PHONE CALL

Optimal Time

- Make follow-up phone calls no later than 10 to 14 days after email
- For best response, call Sundays through Thursday between 5:30 pm—8:00 pm

Call Center

- Gather your volunteers at one location
- Make it a social opportunity—have a pizza party
- Split up the calls so that they get done efficiently
- Use impartial parents
 - Coaches give impression of being recruited to certain teams
 - Sell the organization and not a single team



3. **SCRIPT**

- Have a basic script with talking points
 - Cover the positive aspects of upcoming season
 - Stay away from internal politics and team placement
- Here is a basic script to model after:

SAMPLE PHONE SCRIPT:

This is (*YOUR NAME*) with the (*ASSOCIATION NAME*). We are getting ready for another great season of youth hockey and noticed that we didn't have (*THEIR CHILD*) signed up for the coming session.

Last season you may have noticed youth hockey help your child make many big strides on and off the ice. We really enjoyed seeing (*THEIR CHILD*) at the rink and want to see (*HIM/HER*) back on the ice this fall. We have a great season planned, filled with lots of fun and skill development.

If you would like I can help you get (*THEIR CHILD*) signed up right now.

4. **TURN PROBLEMS INTO SOLUTIONS**

- Some parents have participation issues beyond forgetting to sign up.
 - Board member available to answer organizational questions
 - Show you care
 - List of common structural questions and answers
 - Track issues and use to examine current structure and programs

5. **DON'T GIVE UP**

- Even if player doesn't return, don't stop communicating
 - Send newsletters
 - Upcoming program registration
- Keep trying to get child involved all season long
 - House League
 - Initiation Program
 - Shortened winter season
 - Spring League

**For more information, contact Program Services at
(719) 576-8724 or growthegame@usahockey.org**



Laying the Foundation: Retention Email

Focus the retention email purely on registering uncommitted players, featuring the benefits of youth hockey. It's important to layout their options - not just what they did last year.

It is recommended to send the email one month prior to the start of your season.

Sample Email

Dear Parent:

The youth hockey season is about to begin and we notice that your young hockey player is not yet registered with the Colorado Springs Amateur Hockey Association (CSAHA). CSAHA's 8 & Under program is back on the ice during the September 19/20 weekend and we hope your child will join us for a great season of youth hockey.

To register for the upcoming season, just click on the link below and follow the instructions:
www.csaha.com/reginstructions.asp.

We look forward to seeing you at the rink and having your child back on the ice. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions.

Jim Haverstrom
Hockey Director
hockey_director@csaha.com



Phone Call



- Gather your volunteers at one location
- Make it a social opportunity - have a pizza party
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Phone Call Script

This is (YOUR NAME) with the Colorado Springs Amateur Hockey Association. The 8 & under program starts on September 19th and we noticed that we didn't have (THEIR CHILD) signed up for the coming season.

We really enjoyed seeing (THEIR CHILD) at the rink and want to see (HIM/HER) back on the ice this fall. Are you planning on having (THEIR CHILD) play this year?

If YES

- Direct to them to the website to register (www.csaha.com)
- Let them know that there is a parents meeting
 - Monday, September 14 at 6:30 pm
 - Cheyenne Mtn. Library Branch
 - 1785 South 8th Street, Suite 100
 - Colorado Springs, CO 80905
- Ask if they have any other questions
 - If you can't answer the question, let them know you will find out the answer and get back to them.
- Let them know you will send a follow-up email that contains this information.

If NO

- Try to sell them on what a great program we have and how much fun hockey is
- Find out why not - take notes to be passed along
 - If it's financial, let them know that the association can work with them
 - If they have scheduling issues, let them know that the 8 & under program is split in to 2 seasons so they could play the 2nd season which starts in December

Follow-Up Email

Make sure to follow up your phone call with an email to re-emphasize the information you shared over the phone. Here is a sample email for someone who is going to play this season:



Colorado Springs Amateur Hockey Association



Dear Parent,

Thanks for your time on the phone tonight. I'm glad that (THEIR CHILD) will be back on the ice with us this season. As I mentioned, here is some important information for you:

To register, please visit the link: <http://www.csaha.com/reginstructions.asp>

For an overview of this year's 8 & Under program, please visit:
<http://www.csaha.com/pdf/CSAHA8U0919.pdf>

Please don't forget the parents meeting: Monday, September 14th at 6:30 p.m.
Cheyenne Mtn. Library Branch
1785 South 8th Street, Suite 100
Colorado Springs, CO 80905

The current schedule for the 8 & Under program can be found at www.CSAHA.com - just follow the link for 8 & Under (ADM).

Good luck this season and please let me know if you have any other questions!

Here is a sample email for a parent that does not plan to return this season. If they were really upset on the phone, re-think sending them an email.

Dear Parent:

On behalf of your friends at Colorado Springs Amateur Hockey, I wanted to say that we are sorry to hear that (Kid's Name) will not be returning this season. We are constantly striving to offer the best youth sports experience in our community. We are proud of the many things youth hockey can do for a child; for instance, it can develop leadership, self-confidence and focus just to name a few.

If your family changes their mind, we do offer many flexible programs throughout the year that can match your needs. Also, if your child does take the entire season off, it is not too late for him/her to come back next year. Talented hockey players start playing at many different ages, with many of them have taking a season off and coming back with even more passion for the sport.

Thank you for being a part of our program. We hope to see you back at the rink soon!

Sincerely,
(Name)

Results

Here's an example of results from one volunteer making 9 phone calls:

- 3 signed up to play
 - Did not know the season was beginning
- 2 disconnected lines
 - Military families that moved away
- 2 going to associations closer to home
- 1 not coming back due to commute
- 1 disgruntled parent + 3 players
 - The father was only going to let one of his sons continue to play because of a bad experience with a coach. The association was going to lose two of the three players until the phone call retention program. This phone call gave us the opportunity to address the issue and keep all three in youth hockey.



Overall for this program:

62 calls were made among 5 contacts

- 23 registered
- 10 received second phone calls because we left a voicemail or they didn't call us back
 - 0 joined from this group
- 5 moved or we had bad contact information
- 5 said NO to hockey
 - 1 said too far to drive
 - 2 had skiing conflicts
 - 1 moved away
- 2 moved to an association on the other end of town, closer to where they lived
- 12 said they would be interested in starting in December
 - 7 of those ultimately joined
- 5 said they would like to do the Try Hockey for Free program in November

Nearly 50% of those that had not signed up prior to the phone call registered after receiving a phone call.