

## 17.0 PLAY UP POLICY (AGE 14 AND UNDER)

- 17.1** The Carolina Amateur Hockey Association (CAHA) Board of Directors recognizes that in rare and specific cases it can be appropriate and even beneficial to a player's development for them to play up in the next age classification. A fine balance needs to be struck, however, to avoid placing the desire of a player above the legitimate opportunity for that participant to be successful in an older age classification. In some cases, based on the skill, size and maturity of a player, it may be desirable to utilize this option; in other cases, it may be best for the player to remain in their appropriate age classification. Playing up or moving up to an older age classification team shall encompass all team activities with the older team, including but not limited to tryouts, practices, and games.
- 17.2** All players, male and female, requesting to play up during the USA Hockey season in an association must have played for that association during the previous Fall/Winter season. For example, a male or female player requesting to play up during the 2017-2018 USA Hockey season must have played for that association during the 2016-2017 Fall/Winter season. "Played," for all Travel, Tier II, and Tier I category teams, shall be defined as being approved on a team roster for that association in the previous Fall/Winter season. Male and female players that register in a new association are restricted to playing in their appropriate age classification during their first season with that association. The Fall/Winter season shall be defined the same as the USA Hockey rostering season.

Exception – 16.2 shall be waived for female players aged 9 and older moving from an association that forms youth teams only into an association that forms girl's teams. This limited exception is intended to provide a female player that has participated in a youth association only the experience of playing on a girls' team. A play up in this situation must receive prior approval from CAHA, shall not exceed one age classification and will not be allowed if the association forms an age-appropriate girls' team. A completed Play-Up Request & Acknowledgement of Risk and Liability Form shall be required for all female players in this play up situation prior to roster approval.

- 17.3** Players and parents should acknowledge that approval to play up in a specific season does not necessitate the need to continue in a play up situation or guarantee approval to play up in future seasons. The player or goaltender requesting a play up must meet the criteria for each year of eligibility. At some point it may be necessary to play for three years in one age classification if the player's past youth participation did not align with USA Hockey age classifications.
- 17.4** There is an increased risk of injury for players playing outside of their designated age classification. However, CAHA allows movement in certain situations if specific conditions are met. You should carefully consider the increased risks involved and follow the criteria below when making a request to move a player into an older age classification.

Players may request to play up in an older age classification under the following criteria:

- (a) Age 8 or younger - A male or female player aged 8 or younger is permitted to move up to a 10U or Girls 10U team in an internal house program only and must meet all criteria described within this policy to be eligible to move up. No player aged 8 or younger be approved on a 10U or Girls 10U team roster in any registration category, including but not limited to: Tier II,

Travel, House/Rec, and Invitational Tournament.

- (b) Players aged 13 and under are permitted to move up an age classification in internal no-check house programs only and must meet all criteria described within this policy to be eligible to move up. Players aged 13 and under shall not be allowed to move up an age classification on teams that require an approved team roster except as provided in 19.6, 19.7 and 19.8.
- (c) 12U - Allowing players to move from a non-body checking age classification into a body checking age classification represents the greatest risk and shall not be allowed.
- (d) Players aged 14 are permitted to up to an age classification and must meet all criteria described within this policy to be eligible to move up.
- (e) A player will not be permitted to move up more than one year in age. This requirement applies to all movements allowed under a., b., and d. For example, a first year 10U cannot be moved to the 12U age classification, however, a second year 10U may advance to 12U if the remaining criteria is met. This shall apply to 8U, 10U and 14U age classifications. A second year 14U can be moved into the 16U if all other criteria are met, however, a first year 14U must remain in the 14U age classification.
- (f) Male and female players in a play up situation may not participate in games above the next age classification. For example, a 14-year-old rostered on a 16U Youth or Girls 16U team may play games against other 16U Youth or Girls 16U teams only. A 14-year-old playing on a 16U Youth or Girls 16U team may not participate in games played against 18U Youth or 19U Girls teams.
- (g) An impartial evaluation of the player's skills, the ability to contribute to the older team as well as the player's maturity level compared to players in the older age classification must be made by a panel of neutral coaches before a decision is approved to grant the play up request.
- (h) The move up player or goaltender should be projected to be among the top 25% of all players or goaltenders on the next age classification team.
- (i) A completed Play-Up Request & Acknowledgement of Risk and Liability Form for all players in a play up situation must be submitted with the team roster to receive roster approval from the Associate Registrar.

**17.5** Consideration should be given as to how the play up will impact the two teams involved. The number of players within each age classification should be considered. The request should be denied if the play up will displace an age-appropriate player that would otherwise have played as determined by the team selection process.

**17.6** Based on USA Hockey recommendations, each team should include two goaltenders. Unfortunately, there is often a shortage or surplus of goaltenders at a particular age classification. The possibility exists that an age classification may not have enough goaltenders to field a team. CAHA will allow goaltender movement to address these situations. If after exhausting all possibilities to obtain a goaltender from within the age classification, a goaltender from a lower age classification may be moved up provided the age-appropriate team is not left without an experienced goaltender. All goaltenders will be required to fill out a Play-Up Request & Acknowledgement of Risk and Liability Form. This will be done solely to acknowledge the risk of playing with older players and the criteria for players to be "projected to be among the top players" will be excluded, however, 19.2 shall apply. Any association that moves up goaltenders to address shortages must submit to CAHA their planned growth initiatives to avoid goaltender

shortages in the future. Goaltender movement excludes 8U/10U and 12U/14U teams.

- 17.7** In small market youth (male or co-ed) associations where the number of registered players within the geography of the association at an age classification do not equal one team, it may be necessary to consolidate age classifications to create teams. When that occurs, upon notification to the CAHA Board of Directors, the team will carry the name of the oldest age classification and those players that are part of the younger age group will be required to fill out a Play-Up Request & Acknowledgement of Risk and Liability Form. This will be done solely to acknowledge the risk of playing with older players and the criteria for players to be “projected to be among the top players” will be excluded, however 19.2 shall apply. The notification to CAHA must include the registration statistics for the consolidated age classifications, full information on the selection process, and the association’s planned growth initiatives to avoid consolidation in the future. Consolidation of teams excludes 8U/10U and 12U/14U consolidated teams.
- 17.8** In frequent circumstances due to numbers, it may be necessary to consolidate Girl’s age classifications in an Association to create teams. When that occurs, upon notification to the CAHA Board of Directors, the team will carry the name of the oldest Girls age classification and those players that are part of the younger age group will be required to fill out a Play-Up Request & Acknowledgement of Risk and Liability Form. This will be done solely to acknowledge the risk of playing with older players and the criteria for players to be “projected to be among the top players” will be excluded, however 19.2 shall apply. The notification to CAHA must include the registration statistics for the consolidated age classifications, full information on the selection process, and the association’s planned growth initiatives to avoid consolidation in the future. Consolidation of teams excludes 8U/10U consolidated teams.
- 17.9** The Member Association must specifically reserve the right to reverse any decision allowing a player to play up at any time. If a player that has moved up is experiencing difficulty, as determined by the association and/or the player’s coach, the association may reverse the decision by allowing the participant to play up. In this case every attempt should be made to place the player on a similar team within the player’s proper age classification. Parents and players should carefully consider this outcome prior to making a request to play up.
- 17.10** Nothing in USA Hockey’s or CAHA rules require an Association to allow any player(s) to play up.
- 17.11** Middle School students are not eligible to play up on a High School team under any circumstances.
- 17.12** CAHA will not accept or consider requests for waivers or exceptions to this Play Up Policy.
- 17.13 Pilot Program:** CAHA recognizes that in some extremely rare cases, there may be a player in the affiliate whose skill level significantly surpasses the top 3% of the players in the association. In such cases the following will be allowed: To address this, a pilot program has been established for the 2024-25 and 2025-26 playing seasons.
- Each association may move up to 1 player if the youth association's USA Hockey registered and claimed travel, tier I or Tier II (not house rec) roster count from the previous year is < 300, and, up to 2 if the association is > 300 per the pilot program described below.

- The player is in the same association for a second season (no player may play up on their first season with an organization) and is in the final year of their current age division.
- Player(s) may only move up from the 8u and 10u age divisions.
- A play-up request must be filled out and returned to CAHA with adequate information upon approval, such as the previous year's statistics, a detailed reason behind why the player deserves to play up, and a letter of approval from the parents of the player accepting the risk of playing up an age division.
- This request will be reviewed and will require ~~parent~~ approval by the affiliate prior to a roster spot being offered.
- CAHA reserves the right to intervene and send the player back to the appropriate age level at any point in the season if CAHA deems necessary.