



OFFICIATING PROGRAM

OFFICIATING SYSTEM GUIDELINES

Cross-Ice / Half-Ice Officiating

(Resource: USA Hockey Cross-Ice Officiating Guide)

The Cross-Ice or Half-Ice officiating system is designed for use at the lowest levels of play where recreational games are being played to develop individual skills. This non-competitive environment is ideal for introducing younger officials to the basics of positioning, finding sight-lines, dropping pucks, blowing the whistle, and working with coaches to acknowledge more serious rule infractions. An on-ice mentor can be added to this development system to provide feedback and support either during or following games.

Two-Official System

(Resources: USA Hockey Basic, Intermediate & Advanced Officiating Manuals)

The Two-Official System is recommended for lower-level games played on full ice. These would include games at the 12-&-Under developmental level and younger. The Two-Official System provides an excellent environment for a more experienced official to mentor a less experienced official and should be used primarily as a means to provide newer officials an opportunity to work games and gain valuable experience.

Three-Official System

(Resources: USA Hockey Basic, Intermediate & Advanced Officiating Manuals)

The Three-Official System (1 Referee & 2 Linespersons) is the preferred method of officiating USA Hockey sanctioned games and is strongly recommended for the 12-&-Under Competitive levels and above. This system provides the best on-ice coverage for these levels of play and is widely recognized as the best system for developing officials. Officials can graduate from the Two-Official system to working as a Linesman in this system while gaining confidence and experience working at a higher level. As they develop their skills and move up to higher levels as a Linesman, they can then start to Referee at the lower levels to gain the necessary experience to hone all of their officiating skills. The three-official system is predicated on teamwork and provides the greatest opportunity for development of officials.

Four-Official System

(Resource: USA Hockey Four-Official System Manual)

The Four-Official System (2 Referees & 2 Linespersons) is only approved for use in the 14-&-Under Youth and Girls age classifications and older and should be used in those instances where the pace and intensity of play dictates that two referees are necessary to best serve the game. In this system, the two referees must work together in a manner that compliments each others sightlines and provides for full ice coverage on goals and infractions. They will work just as hard as they would have to in other officiating systems – only having the advantage of skating 2/3's of the ice and having the flexibility to always maximize their field of vision at a slightly more comfortable pace. Backward skating skills and proper end zone positioning are at a premium for this system to be successful.

Note: USA Hockey's Officiating Program feels strongly that each local area should use the system that is best suited to create a positive environment for the game in their area. This positive environment includes an atmosphere that fosters development and opportunity where the officials are most likely to be successful.

It is also important to note that adding additional officials(s) on the ice does not require a proportionate increase in game fees or expense to the hockey teams. The teams are paying for an officiating service and as such, should expect the same level of service regardless as to how many officials are on the ice. A nominal increase in game fee may be necessary to help offset some of the expenses to the officials, but the primary mechanism is to simply divide the game fee up differently among the official.

For example, if the normal game fee for a 16-&-Under game is \$80 (\$40 per official) when two officials are used, the appropriate fee for three officials may be \$100 (\$40 Referee and \$30 each linesman). If the Four-Official System is then used, a \$130 game fee (\$35 for each referee and

\$30 for each linesman) may be practical. The bottom line is that each local group of officials has an obligation to work with the local youth hockey association in establishing fees that are fair and reasonable to all parties involved.