



DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

# BEST PRACTICES

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USA Hockey is committed to fostering a welcoming environment through a diverse, equitable and inclusive game.

We celebrate every race, gender and background to unite as one community.

We believe meaningful action can positively affect important change in our sport and carry over into our everyday lives.

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## DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

### WHY A FOCUS ON DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION IS IMPORTANT

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*The goal for each program, affiliate, team or league should be to become an organization where diversity, equity and inclusion are a fundamental part of their values and culture.*

**Diversity** brings together various life experiences and perspectives. This adds significant value to a community by presenting the opportunity to learn new skills, provide new ways of thinking and gain new knowledge.

**Equity** is the quality of being fair and impartial. When this exists, it ensures everyone understands what to expect in terms of consequences and rewards, they each have equal access to opportunities and they are each given what they specifically need in order to be successful.

**Inclusion** means all are welcomed regardless of a person's attributes or characteristics. This type of positive environment allows for each individual to feel a sense of belonging and it supports a more collaborative community.



By prioritizing and fostering diversity, equity and inclusion within your organization, you will reap the rewards of a variety in thought, improved creativity and increased productivity. To add, diversity, equity and inclusion will lead to a better global understanding and you will gain more dynamic insights.

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## DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

### THE TEN BEST PRACTICES FOR DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

*These ten best practices were compiled to assist USA Hockey affiliates and associations with ways to incorporate diversity, equity and inclusion within our hockey community as a whole. Each topic includes a description as well as broad strategies for execution. This ready-to-use information will help advance programs and associations working to grow their diversity, equity and inclusion practices.*

1. Communicate and encourage the importance of inclusion within your organization and your teams.
2. Establish an inclusive team environment and practice behaviors that supports this culture.
3. Form strategic partnerships with organizations that feature diverse populations.
4. Annually review and reassess local diversity data to assist in setting goals.
5. Implement a volunteer or staff diversity protocol that outlines the process for securing diverse leadership in your organization.
6. Mentor and build a pipeline for support and advancement.
7. Examine your assumptions as an organization.
8. Dedicate funds specifically for outreach initiatives to alleviate barriers to enter the sport.
9. Reevaluate and refresh your outreach efforts.
10. Continually and consistently reevaluate your diversity, equity and inclusion plan.



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## DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

### 1. COMMUNICATE AND ENCOURAGE THE IMPORTANCE OF INCLUSION WITHIN YOUR ORGANIZATION AND YOUR TEAMS.

An organization's mission statement establishes its values, culture and identity. Continuous dialogue on strategically implementing diversity, equity and inclusion priorities helps communicate internally your organization's way forward within this landscape. Conducting a culture assessment of your organization, using interviews, surveys or a focus group will help determine what adjustments could be made to maximize cultural awareness and open communication. Here are some examples of how to help communicate your organization's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion both for internal and external priorities:

- Embrace and include a diversity, equity and inclusion philosophy within your organization's mission statement. Make sure to publicize and communicate your mission statement so all staff, parents and players are aware.
- Educate and execute the **Zero Tolerance & Abuse policy** within the USA Hockey rules.
- Create a public mechanism (i.e. a closed Facebook group, a bi-monthly newsletter) to share best practices throughout your direct organization and hockey community.
- Train all of your coaches, staff and volunteers on ways that can positively enhance the learning environment on the ice and encourage the adoption of coaching styles that best reflect the values of diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Regularly highlight the success stories of diversity on your website and in media communication.



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### 2. ESTABLISH AN INCLUSIVE TEAM ENVIRONMENT AND PRACTICE BEHAVIORS THAT SUPPORTS THIS CULTURE.

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Use these guidelines to aid your organization in creating and maintaining an inclusive team environment on and off the ice, in the rink, in the locker room and at general group gatherings:

- **Set initial ground rules for interactions.** In order to assure your coaching staff and players are being inclusive and respectful, focus on generating total buy-in by involving the entire team in the process of creating rules. Once rules are made, leadership will need to continuously enforce these rules as an opportunity to correct and educate the team as a whole. This is a chance to restructure an organization's culture and values.
- **Enthusiastically provide necessary accommodations for players with disabilities.** Training coaches and team leadership on how to best provide reasonable accommodations to athletes with documented disabilities. Being mindful that no player learns or communicates the same creates opportunities to adjust a practice plan or teaching methods to help maximize a positive experience.
- **Use tools to better understand your players, coaches and volunteers.** Asking questions to members of your team or organization allows for a better understanding on what you can do to help your players and staff excel in their current roles. Consider creating a survey that includes questions such as, "What type of learner are you?" or "How do you handle conflict?" or "How do you like to be rewarded for a job well done?" Analyze these results to form a plan forward.
- **Generate open discussions with team-building exercises.** One effective way to help your staff and players learn about each other and appreciate their differences is by hosting a team-building day. You can facilitate specific exercises that opens dialogue where everyone answers questions about themselves allowing for a better understanding about players and staff on an individual basis. This can also create additional opportunities for interactions and social connections.

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### 3. FORM STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS WITH ORGANIZATIONS THAT FEATURE DIVERSE POPULATIONS.

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Be prepared to advertise and showcase your program where your target audience is looking. Keep in mind that minorities and other diverse participants are often not necessarily searching for playing opportunities in the same way as non-diverse participants. When forming strategic partnerships with other organizations that have a direct impact on the same underserved youth you are targeting, you are amplifying your organization's message to another group of potential participants. Example of organizations that commonly work and support a large diverse population:

- Boys and Girls Club Churches or religious affiliates
- Local girls and boys scout troops
- Playworks
- YMCA
- Kids in the Game
- Up2US Sports/Coach Across America
- Summer day camps
- Day care or after-school programs
- Historically black colleges and universities
- All-women colleges or universities

### 4. ANNUALLY REVIEW AND REASSESS LOCAL DIVERSITY DATA TO ASSIST IN SETTING GOALS.

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When trying to identify diversity recruitment opportunities within your local community, simply measure your hockey program's diversity and compare it your local city's diversity.

For example, if one percent of the players on your team or league is African-American, but African-Americans make up 30 percent of the local community, you know there is an opportunity for growth.

Reference your national census data to see what the diversity breakdown is in your region at: [www.census.gov/#](http://www.census.gov/#).

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### **5. IMPLEMENT A VOLUNTEER OR STAFF DIVERSITY PROTOCOL THAT OUTLINES THE PROCESS FOR SECURING DIVERSE LEADERSHIP IN YOUR ORGANIZATION.**

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Acknowledging that diversity is important to your organization is a great first step. But it is also extremely important to deliberately seek diverse representation within your volunteers and staff.

Players and parents want to see if there are people within your organization that look like them and who can identify with their values and culture.

Creating detailed strategies that help you increase the number and quality of applicants for your open staff and volunteer positions is important. The hiring process should be consistent and clearly defined to all involved.

To recruit and retain a diverse pool of high-potential staff, your organization should:

- Understand demographic changes in your organization and track the data when possible.
- Educate staff that diversity does not always mean minority. Find ways to recruit beyond issues of race, while also simultaneously increasing access and opportunities to people of color and other minorities.
- Develop a diversity-friendly culture both on the ice, in the rink and office.
- Understand the value of hiring millennials and be conscious of hiring across generations.
- If possible, collect information about who is applying for your volunteer and/or staff positions (veterans, race, disability, age, gender) and use this information to help set a strategy or recruitment method.

### **6. MENTOR AND BUILD A PIPELINE FOR SUPPORT AND ADVANCEMENT.**

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Mentoring is an effective practice for less experienced individuals to connect with and learn from highly seasoned individuals. The relationship between a mentor and mentee can contribute to team or staff success in a variety of ways such as, serving as way to identify and promote high-potential leaders in your organization. By facilitating a mentorship program, it becomes possible to thoroughly search for a diverse group of up-coming candidates to join your team or staff. Mentor programs help with retention, education, critical thinking and leadership.

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### 7. EXAMINE YOUR ASSUMPTIONS AS AN ORGANIZATION.

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It is easy and common for coaches and staff to assume each member of their team shares his/her own background, but that isn't necessarily true. Before you address your team, reflect on what you're about to say and decide if you're acting as if they all share your religious faith, sexual orientation or socio-economic class.

Often, we automatically assume other people have our same frame of reference and we speak as if everybody is familiar with them. Realizing that the terms or examples we use does not resonate as strongly with certain players, and ultimately our language and focus, will help demolish barriers.

Here are some questions we can ask ourselves to help eliminate assumptions:

- Do I expect my players to share my cultural and political views?
- Do I expect most of my players to come from similar backgrounds?
- Do I expect most of my players to understand my culture or media references?
- Do I link certain individual characteristics or tendencies with levels of intelligence and ability?
- Do I treat my players as if they are all heterosexual?
- Do I treat all of my players as if they are all of similar faith or religion?
- Do I think all players look like the gender or race they identify as?
- Do I think I naturally know which players have physical or mental/learning disabilities?
- Do I assume players of certain races come from lower income families or have weaker academic standing?

These questions can also create an open dialogue between you, your staff and players to discuss other life lessons.



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### 8. DEDICATE FUNDS SPECIFICALLY FOR OUTREACH INITIATIVES TO ALLEVIATE BARRIERS TO ENTER THE SPORT.

The cost of equipment, ice time of clinics and training, and expenses associated with playing travel hockey, there are a variety of financial barriers to access the sport of hockey. Developing efforts and dedicating money towards scholarships and assistance for those facing these barriers helps increase access to our sport.

Some simple outreach strategies may include:

- Communicate and advertise financial aid opportunities to low-income and other underrepresented groups.
- Support team development efforts that prioritize resources for financial need.
- Allocate funding specifically for diversity, equity and inclusion efforts within your budget each year.
- Develop a variety of sources for scholarship and financial aid through community members and donors.
- Create a reoccurring scholarship program for low-income athletes in order to assist with costs associated with membership fees, team fees and equipment costs.
- Encourage and require staff members to attend annual local diversity, equity and inclusion awareness training.



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### 9. REEVALUATE AND REFRESH YOUR OUTREACH EFFORTS.

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It might feel overwhelming when trying to determine where to start when prioritizing diversity, equity and inclusion, however, there is no standard approach. There are various and creative ways to welcome and include diverse players and staff within your organization. Not all outreach strategies are best for every location. Your program or organization will always benefit from trying new approaches when trying to grow.

Some recruitment strategies:

- Prior to the season, design and execute specific multicultural recruitment efforts to introduce underrepresented groups to your hockey program.
- Create presentations that can expose underrepresented athletes and coaches to hockey within their schools.
- Pass out flyers at your community's local schools when trying to recruit both coaches and players.
- Build relationships with guidance counselors from diverse schools within your area to assist with recruitment efforts.
- Invite public schools to a hockey practice/game for a day or a week.
- Run free (or minimal cost) clinics in accordance with after-school programs.
- Develop relationships and keep constant contact with diverse community organizations so they are up-to-date with latest opportunities within your program.
- Send recruitment staff that understands diversity, equity and inclusion sensitivity. Make sure they are willing to go out of their comfort zone to attract the best athletes and coaches for your program. If there is no one on your staff that feels comfortable to engage in these exchanges, actively recruit or develop relationships with individuals who can assist with your efforts



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### 10. CONTINUALLY AND CONSISTENTLY REEVALUATE YOUR DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION PLAN.

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In order to ensure you are sticking to your program's DEI plan, create accountability for each objective. By setting monthly goals for your program or organization, you can review steps needed to reach each goal and see where you are in the process of reaching it. Create and stick to a timeline to measure your effectiveness and create policies and procedures to enforce your strategies.

Other guidelines for your inclusion plan should be as follows:

- Create policies and procedures that will retain new staff.
- Carve time into each meeting for your outreach advisory board or diversity representative to give an update on current initiatives.
- Put a variety of staff members in charge of each strategic inclusion initiative. Don't place all duties strictly on your DE&I volunteer or staff member.
- Create a DEI statement and an accompanying plan to develop and sustain diversity.
- Conduct athlete, coaches and staff exit interviews (when possible) to uncover areas needing improvement.
- Provide continuous professional development opportunities like leadership training.
- Build a dynamic and innovative work and play environment.
- Take active steps to continually ensure the rink is free of unprofessional language and conduct.
- Institute a recognition/reward system.



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