

# CAHA STRATEGY PLAN - KEY POINTS

At the 2018 and 2019 CAHA Annual Meetings, the Associations expressed a need for a CAHA Strategic Plan to help guide us and to address how to best grow hockey in the Carolinas. The CAHA Board of Directors put together a Strategy Committee that did a deep dive into the data to review growth and retention trends, reviewed the state of youth sports, looked at what other USAH Affiliates were doing, and looked at the success of approaches to growing youth hockey in countries like Finland and Sweden. Some of the most important data came from the following sources:

**ADM Best Practices** – we reviewed ADM Best Practices for all age groups and looked at how we are doing in the Associations at implementing these. There are challenges to implementing them fully that include parental pressure, turnover in Hockey Directors, lack of communication, and the confusing amount of information.

**CAHA & USA Hockey Registration Growth** –CAHA registrations for youth players (0 to 18 years of age) have increased by 23.3% in the last 5 years (2014-15 to 2018-19 seasons). This exceeds the USA Hockey national average for this time period where total youth player registrations increased by 7.6%.

**CAHA & USA Hockey Player Retention** – CAHA player retention from one age group to the next has been strong for 6U moving to 8U (50% average growth in last 4 years), 8U moving to 10U (22% average 4 year growth) and 10U moving to 12U (7% average 4-year growth). After 12U, our retention declines to -9% for 12U to 14U, -17% from 14U to 16U and -30% for 16U to 18U. The concerning thing for CAHA is that our retention flattens out when players move from 10U to 12U and our 2018-19 retention is the lowest it has been in 4 years. This is concerning as we look to the future.

**Studies on the Growth of Youth sports** – many studies have been done on why kids are not playing sports and are not staying in sports as long as they used to. The Aspen Institute's Project Play (see Sport for All, Play For Life –did a large study on youth sports that we embrace and agree with. We have seen the same trends in hockey in CAHA and want to address and reverse some of these trends. Some of the key findings that apply to our strategy include the fact that kids, via their quitting the sport, are telling us that our model is broken. We have increased travel teams at the detriment of our House programs, focused on winning, separated kids out too early, and not allowed everyone to play. According to the kids, it isn't fun. The chart shows what kids are telling us.

MORE FUN	LESS FUN
Trying your best	Winning
When Coach treats player with respect	Playing in tournaments
Getting Playing time	Practicing with specialty coaches
Playing well together as a team	Earning medals or trophies
Getting along with teammates	Traveling to new places to play
Exercising and being active	Getting pictures taken

[https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/2015/01/Aspen-Institute-Project-Play-Report.pdf?\\_ga=2.142859957.1251152985.1569339182-577084284.1569339182\)](https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/2015/01/Aspen-Institute-Project-Play-Report.pdf?_ga=2.142859957.1251152985.1569339182-577084284.1569339182)

TOTAL RESULTS (WHOLE GAME)								
/s/	puck control	changes of direction	starts	stops	passing	passes received	shooting	1-1
3-3 X ice	48,8	29,5	38,1	31,0	19,2	19,5	13,4	23,3
4-4 X ice	25,3	36,9	43,7	31,7	18,9	16,9	8,6	35,9
5-5 X ice	18,0	59,1	50,0	45,4	9,5	13,5	2,3	55,0
3-3 H ice	71,3	21,8	39,4	14,2	15,5	8,2	15,6	16,7
4-4 H ice	77,2	25,6	36,8	23,7	12,9	8,9	11,0	18,1
5-5 H ice	66,2	15,3	37,7	11,8	8,4	4,5	10,4	12,4
5-5 full ice	58,7	27,1	29,3	21,8	13,5	10,3	8,1	18,2

**10U Skill Development Study** – in 2015, a study was done in Prague looking at the best skill development options for 10U players. The conclusion is that full-ice 10U hockey is the worst format for skill development and any cross-ice or half-ice option is better at developing skills.

• Best results for different activities are:

puck control	changes of direction	starts	stops	passing	passes received	shooting	1-1
4-4 H ice	5-5 X ice	5-5 X ice	5-5 X ice	3-3 X ice	3-3 X ice	3-3 H ice	5-5 X ice

This data and research resulted in a Strategic Plan that was shared with the Associations for their input, ideas, and feedback. This Action Plan is the culmination of these efforts and represents the views of the CAHA Strategic Committee, input from the Associations, USAH input (especially ADM Regional Managers Scott Paluch and Joe Bonnett and Diversity & Inclusion Manager Stephanie Jackson), input from the NHL Hurricanes (Shane Willis) and AHL Checkers (Derek Wilkerson). The plan consists of 5 strategies to grow hockey in the Carolinas in the next 10 years.

**STRATEGY 1: Focus on the on-ice content or execution so that ADM Best Practices are implemented in every age group in every Association with a primary focus on 6U/8U/10U/12U and Goaltending** - this includes maximizing ADM execution on the ice, growing house programs, investing in the growth and development of coaches and referees, and developing a “Model Association” program to communicate Best Practices and reward Associations for success.

**STRATEGY 2: Improve the Value that Families Receive By Playing Hockey** - this includes improving the overall experience like having more fun, improving our coaching expertise to deliver better on-ice content in practices, reducing travel and associated costs, reducing games played, and maximizing skill development especially at the 8U, 10U, and 12U age groups.

**STRATEGY 3: Diversity & Inclusion** - improve our reach and our membership in terms of diversity. Includes partnering with USA Hockey Diversity & Inclusion Manager to pilot some community outreach, reach out to different types of people for involvement in CAHA leadership positions, expand the Hurricanes/Checkers OneGoal program to all markets.

**STRATEGY 4: Grow our sport in growth areas including Girl’s Hockey, Disabled, Sled, and Adult** - invest in these areas to grow existing programs and develop new programs.

**STRATEGY 5: Improve the local marketing of the sport to all groups** - explore a Social Media campaign to focus on fun, excitement, energy, teamwork, friendships that hockey provides. Also, looking a possible CAHA-wide charity foundation event work to focus on certain communities.

**SPECIFIC ACTION STEPS TO IMPLEMENT THE STRATEGIES** - *the CAHA BOD approved the Strategy Plan and gave the go ahead to bring the Action Steps to the Associations for feedback. An official vote to accept the Action Steps will take place after the Associations provide feedback.* The areas where we can get the biggest impact are changes to maximize skill development and add more value to families. These include capping the number of games played, increasing practice time, improving on-ice content in executing ADM, and implementing geographic limitations for travel at the younger ages.

- Begin Travel hockey at 10U. This means no 8U Select teams while expanding scramble Jamborees.
- Implement 10U Half-Ice Games in 70% of all 10U games. We will phase this in with 50% of games in 2020-21 and 70% in 2021-22.
- In the 8U, 10U, 12U, 14U, 16U, 18U age groups – implement practice to game ratios, game maximums, and geographic travel boundaries with some differences by age and skill level (B, A, AA, AAA). Practice to game ratios will be implemented as guidelines while game maximums and geographic limitations will be implemented as rule changes. With geographic boundaries, teams will be encouraged to play more CHL games to keep travel more local.
- Girls’ 8u, 10u, 12u, 14u, 16u, 19u – implement many of the same standards as the youth in the bullet point above, however, realize that any geographic travel limitations for youth may differ for all girl teams due to the geographic distribution of current girls’ hockey teams.
- Work closely with the CHL to help them improve the satisfaction of the Associations so they have confidence that the CHL will provide a competitive and effective local option for playing games.
- A team of Market Goalie Managers and Market ADM Managers will work directly with Associations on goalie development and ADM implementation.
- CAHA deployment of a fine-tuned USA Hockey Model Association Standards – we will implement best practices via CAHA’s “Association of Excellence” program where we work with Associations to meet the criteria for a model association and reward Associations annually for their results.
- Supplement Coaching Education - ADM Education to Coaches via communication, clear guidelines, Coaching Symposium, and Positive Coaching Alliance Certification

- Diversity & Inclusion – embrace the addition of diverse leaders in CAHA, reach out to diverse talent to add them to our leadership, and put together a comprehensive Diversity strategy.
- Marketing – improve our marketing of the sport to include using USA Hockey data, focusing on diverse populations, partnering with other sports, and embracing a charity umbrella like “Hockey Fights Cancer” to create awareness of the sport and give back to the communities.

## **FAQs**

### **How does my Association or hockey program fit in with USA Hockey ?**

USA Hockey is recognized by the International Olympic Committee and the United States Olympic Committee as the governing body for organized ice hockey in the United States and is a member of the International Ice Hockey Federation.

### **What is CAHA?**

The Carolina Amateur Hockey Association (CAHA) is the USA Hockey affiliate for hockey in North and South Carolina. CAHA is a non-profit organization that is governed by USA Hockey by-laws and their own by-laws. CAHA is made up of Associations that run local hockey programs in the Carolinas – this includes youth, girls, adult, sled, and disabled hockey.

### **Who is on the CAHA Board?**

There are 9 members of the CAHA Board that serve 3-year terms and represent different geographies within the Carolinas. Elections are held each year and the Associations vote in the Board members. The BOD includes the following and their contact information can be found at <https://www.carolinahockey.org/page/show/852388-board-of-directors>:

Paul Fidishun (Greensboro) – President  
 Rick Daniel (Raleigh)– Vice President  
 Robert Engler (Charleston) - Treasurer  
 Brian Mehm (Raleigh) – Secretary\*  
 Chad Boerst (Charleston)\*  
 Matt Hurley (Fayetteville)\*  
 Jeff Holdenrid (Charlotte)  
 Brad Hoffman (Charlotte)\*  
 Jake Yenser (Greenville)

Other people in positions that are non-voting members of the CAHA leadership

Kevin Universal – President Emeritus  
 Joe Spitz – Assistant Treasurer  
 Jessica Westphal – Registrar  
 Matt Meinig – SafeSport Coordinator  
 Ed Morris – Coach-in Chief\*  
 Brian Haaland – Goaltending Coordinator\*

\* Strategy Committee member

### **Can my Association make its own rules and by-laws?**

Each Associations makes its own rules and by-laws that follow the CAHA and USA Hockey rules and by-laws.

### **Hockey has been going well in the Carolinas, why the need for any changes?**

Hockey has been growing in the Carolinas - CAHA registrations for youth players (0 to 18 years of age) have increased by 23.3% in the last 5 years (2014-15 to 2018-19 seasons). This exceeds the USA Hockey national average for this time period where total youth player registrations increased by 7.6%.

### **What research and data backs up these conclusions?**

See the data mentioned above on retention, studies on youth sports, ADM Best Practices, and 10U ice utilization.

### **Did the Associations have input to these changes?**

Yes – the Strategy Committee gave every Association the opportunity to meet to discuss the Strategy Plan and give input, ideas, and feedback. Many of the specific steps were suggested by the Associations.

### **What about the larger Association's needs? Smaller Associations?**

The Strategy Committee made sure to keep an eye towards both Large Association and Small Association needs. We feel that the Action Steps help to address both large and small needs and have enough flexibility to help Associations of all sizes. Some of the action steps may take some changes in "how" Associations address certain areas of growth and development but there is flexibility to do the right things to grow.

### **How do these changes result in the growth of hockey in the Carolinas?**

CAHA believes that the long-term growth of hockey depends on some key factors – attracting new players, retaining existing players, and ensuring that we are focused on fun, skill development, and the value that families get from playing the sport of hockey. Currently there are barriers to growth that we are concerned about – inconsistent implementation of ADM Best Practices to maximize skill development, the growth of travel hockey versus House hockey. Currently approximately 40-45% of CAHA youth players are playing travel hockey – this is more than double the national average. Travel hockey can be a very positive experience but we believe that in general, we rush kids into travel hockey at too young an age, focus on games versus practice, and wear out families with the travel and associated costs of travel. This happens over time and we want players and families to enjoy the sport so they play hockey for life.

### **What is ADM and isn't it really a way for USA Hockey to control my hockey Association?**

The American Development Model (ADM) is a comprehensive development model from 6U to 18U. It provides guidance on optimal, age specific programming based on Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) principles (sports science, physical education and child development research). It is comprised of Age Appropriate Development Principles and High Performance Coaching Techniques. USA Hockey has been a leader in the development and implementation of ADM for the last 10 years. The Best Practices include age-appropriate ice surface sizes, puck size, net size, etc. Best Practices also include the focus on skill development using skill stations and focusing on building the skills of skating, stickhandling, passing, shooting, and body contact. There is an optimum practice to game ratio at every age group and this is typically 3:1 practice to game. In CAHA, we are closer to 1:1 or 1.5:1 practice to game ratio and this stunts our skill development. It has been proven that players get as much skill development in 1 practice as they get in 11 games. We recognize there are parental pressures associated with wanting to watch their children play in games and this has pressured Associations to expand their game counts. Addressing the practice to game ratio is a cornerstone of the Action Plan and achieving our goals.

### **Where did LTAD and ADM come from?**

The ADM was developed after a review of USA Hockey's current development system and how players progress from 6U to the very highest levels of our sport. Best practices for hockey and sport development were looked at from sources inside and out-side our sport. Much of the proven developmental material in the ADM has been around for a long time, but in the past was not applied to ice hockey on a broad scale.

### **What other countries use LTAD principles?**

LTAD principles are being utilized by over 100 different sport federations and government ministries for athlete development in a wide variety of countries including Australia, New Zealand, England, Sweden, Russia, Czech Republic and Finland. Closer to home, Sport Canada (the equivalent of our United State Olympic Committee) has adopted the LTAD platform across all sport in their country. Each NSO (National Sports Organization) including Hockey Canada has developed or is in the process of developing individual sports specific LTAD plans.

### **What do other countries do to develop their players?**

There are several things that other countries much smaller than the US have done to change the way they develop hockey players. There are 7 key elements:

- **Emphasis on Skills, Not Stats or Standings-** Sweden eliminated standings and statistics for all players and leagues at 13U and younger. Scores are kept during the games, but at the end of it there's no written record of wins or losses — it's immaterial. There are no individual stats kept for the regular season or for tournaments at the U13 level. They play games, but there are no tryouts and no real "leagues" as such for those ages. The focus is more on skill development and less on wins and losses. They lead the world in producing elite hockey players per capita.
- **Everybody In** - In Finland, because there is no position-specific play until the age of 10, the players get to focus on their hockey skills. There's no rush to start separating players by skill level while they're still children in Europe. Parents are not in a race to have their kid be on the best 8U, 10U or 12U team. Everybody plays, everybody develops, and plays different positions,"

- **Less Whistles, More Player Autonomy** - Coaches in Europe use their whistles less, and let their players experiment more. European coaches build in the pond hockey mentality. They hardly ever use their whistles. And if you think about it, it makes sense. There are not a lot of whistles in the game.
- **Putting a Premium on the Goaltending Position** - How has Finland, a country with the population of around 5.5 million people, been able to produce so many NHL goaltenders? Kids play every position – including goaltender – until the age of 10. Each hockey club provides free goaltender equipment, and each team has a goalie coach. They put that position on a pedestal – it is a great position that is fun and challenging. They give coaches the tools and the resources to create a culture where kids want to play goalie.
- **Holistic View of Development** - In Europe, there is a more holistic view of development. There was a clear plan and progression in place not just for the next practice, but for the entire season. They make practice plans that make it clear what you're working on and there is a progression in what you're trying to teach. There is also the opportunity for kids to learn on their own and learn by playing the game.
- **Off-Ice Emphasis** - Their practice plans include off-ice training – for all ages. Dryland drills and games can build a variety of skills and help build well-rounded athletes.
- **Doing More with Less** - When discussing athletic development around the world, one cannot ignore Norway's dominance in the 2018 Winter Olympics. With a population of just 5.3 million, the Norwegians captured 39 medals – approximately 7.33 medals per million people, compared to the United States, which won 23 medals with a population north of 326 million. Norwegian clubs do not record game scores until age 13. They encourage kids to play multiple sports at least through the age of 15 and beyond. There are many other structural and cultural differences in Norway's sport system. They focus on delivering the best experience for all players – they are going to give them the best age-appropriate training and environment that they can to let them thrive. They don't train their 8-year-olds like they're on the high school team. They develop that culture over time.

#### **If ADM is supported by the NHL and USA Hockey, why is a lot of the ADM focused on non-hockey activities?**


The better you are as an athlete the greater your potential in any specific sport. We want to encourage our kids to develop a wide range of athletic skills so that when they reach an age where they should start to specialize in hockey, they have the foundation for much greater success.

#### **What kind of things should we see in a program that follows the ADM model and Best Practices?**


Programs should implement ADM in a way where the development structure is different for 8 year olds versus 18 year old – in other words, development structure should be age-appropriate. In some cases the system places nine-year-olds the same structure as eighteen-year-olds as adults feel this makes sense because it is what they remember experiencing. But kids are not “mini-adults”. They are at different stages of development mentally, physically, and emotionally at different ages. Adults are a finished product and their mental, physical, and emotional development is complete. So we need to make sure to look at development from the kid's perspective and not the adult perspective. The ADM is an athlete centered model. It places what is best for our kids first.

#### **What are the development stages in the ADM/LTAD?**

These are detailed below in the chart. This summarizes best practices for development at every stage of life.



# USA Hockey's American Development Model



## Hockey for Life

**Any Age** – Players can enter at any stage. 'Hockey for Life' can provide quality recreational opportunities for all ages. USA Hockey also hopes that as adults we lead a physically active lifestyle and continue to contribute to the sport through volunteerism as coaches, referees and administrators.

Active Start	FUNDamentals	Learn to Train	Train to Train	Learn to Compete	Train to Compete	Train to Win
<p><b>Ages 0-6</b></p> <p>This early development period is essential for acquiring fundamental movement skills (running, gliding, jumping, kicking, catching, striking...) that lay the foundation for more complex movements, thereby preparing children for a physically active lifestyle. USA Hockey encourages activity that incorporates fundamental movement skills in the 4 environments that lead to physical literacy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>In the water:</b> Swimming</li> <li><b>On the ground:</b> Athletics</li> <li><b>In the air:</b> Gymnastics</li> <li><b>On ice and snow:</b> Sliding (skating)</li> </ul> <p>Kids should start with a learn to skate program and then a learn to play program as their initial steps into ice hockey.</p> <p><b>6 &amp; Under (Mites):</b>  50-60 ice sessions  2-3 ice sessions per week  50-60 minute ice sessions  7-9 skaters per team  0 full-time goalies  34-40 quality practices  16-20 cross-ice game days</p>	<p><b>Ages 6-8 Female Ages 6-9 Male</b></p> <p>The objective of this stage is to refine fundamental movement skills and begin to acquire basic sports skills. This is the time when a foundation is laid for future acquisition of more advanced skills.</p> <p>The focus is on the development of physical literacy. Fundamental movement skills should be mastered and motor development emphasized, while the participation in many sports/activities is encouraged. For optimal skill acquisition, the basic hockey skills of skating and puck control are introduced. FUN competitions are also introduced in a team environment.</p> <p><b>8 &amp; Under (Mites):</b>  50-60 ice sessions  2-3 on-ice/1 off-ice sessions/week  50-60 minute ice sessions  8-12 skaters per team  0 full-time goalies  34-40 quality practices  16-20 cross-ice game days</p>	<p><b>Ages 8-11 Female Ages 9-12 Male</b></p> <p>This is the period of accelerated learning of coordination and fine motor control and is the critical stage for the acquisition of hockey skills.</p> <p>Prior to the beginning of the growth spurt, players have the best opportunity to learn and begin to master fine motor skills that can be used in combination with other skills. In most cases what is learned or not learned in this stage will have a very significant effect on the level of play that is achieved later on.</p> <p>Players should be able to begin to transfer skills and concepts from practices to games. Group interaction, team building and social activities should be emphasized. A balance of practices and games will promote the continued development and mastery of key hockey skills.</p> <p><b>10 &amp; Under (Squirts):</b>  95-100 ice sessions  3-4 on-ice/2 off-ice sessions/week  60 minute ice sessions  10-12 skaters and 1 goalie  75-90 quality practices  20-25 game days</p> <p><b>12 &amp; Under (Peewees):</b>  105-120 ice sessions  4 on-ice/2 off-ice sessions/week  60+ minute ice sessions  12 skaters and 2 goalies  90-90 quality practices  30-35 game days</p>	<p><b>Ages 11-15 Female Ages 12-16 Male</b></p> <p>The focus of this stage is to further develop sports specific skills, begin to introduce competition, and start to emphasize support training to continue development of speed, strength and stamina while maintaining flexibility.</p> <p>Players should consolidate sport specific technical skills with an increased emphasis on hockey and a reduction in the number of other sports played. A continued emphasis is also placed on the development of individual and group tactics. Social and emotional considerations are addressed by placing an emphasis on team-building, group interaction and social activities.</p> <p><b>14 &amp; Under (Bantam) &amp; 16 &amp; Under (Midget):</b>  160 ice sessions  4-5 ice sessions per week  80 minute ice sessions  Combined and separate practices for team/position  9 month training calendar  16 skaters and 2 goalies  120-130 quality practices  40-50 games  Appropriate off-ice training for LTAD stage</p>	<p><b>Ages 15-18 Female Ages 16-18 Male</b></p> <p>This is the time to prepare athletes for the competitive environment, continue to refine technical skills, ancillary skills and develop the physical attributes.</p> <p>The focus is on optimizing fitness preparation and to begin to specialize in ice hockey. Training should be individualized to the athlete's particular needs in skill development, mental preparation, fitness and recovery. During this stage, training volume will increase, as does training intensity. Competitions become more important and the focus shifts to performance. Training will stress the development of position specific technical and tactical skills under competitive conditions. Mental skills that contribute to performance are also emphasized.</p> <p><b>18 &amp; Under (Midget) &amp; 19 &amp; Under (Female):</b>  200 ice sessions  5-6 ice sessions per week  80 minute ice sessions  Combined and separate practices for team/position  10 month training calendar  18 skaters and 2 goalies  130-140 quality practices  50-60 games  Appropriate off-ice training for LTAD stage</p>	<p><b>Ages 19-21 Female Ages 19-23 Male</b></p> <p>The objective of the Train to Compete stage is to transfer from the training environment to a competitive environment. Athletes must consolidate technical skills, and maintain ancillary skills and underlying physical capacities. During this stage training volume remains high while intensity increases with the importance of competitions. The training is usually 10+ months of the year and is disciplined and hockey-specific. Athletes will usually be required to move away from home for training and competition environments that fit this level of athlete development. The training is individualized to the athlete's particular needs in skill development, mental preparation, fitness and recovery.</p> <p><b>Junior, NCAA:</b>  Training calendar that equally supports both training and competition.</p>	<p><b>Ages 19+ Female Ages 19+ Male</b></p> <p>The focus of this stage is the stabilization of performance on demand characteristics and excellence within the highest level of performance at the NHL, World Championships and Olympics. This is the final phase of athletic preparation that only a very small minority will achieve. Maturation is complete and all the performance factors should be fully established to optimize performance in national or international competitions. The athletes in this stage will be the performers in the highest level professional league and at the highest international level. It is important to build a winning strategy with these athletes, and to individualize training and recovery programs to prevent over-training.</p> <p><b>NCAA, Professional:</b>  Appropriate training that supports competition calendar.</p>

**For complete details, visit [ADMkids.com](http://ADMkids.com)**

### Give me some examples of Age-Appropriate Development

Some examples of Age Appropriate Development include smaller ice surfaces for 6U, 8U, and 10U, appropriate net sizes for 6U, 8U, and 10U and older age groups, blue pucks at 6U and 8U. It also includes tailoring on-ice skill development, off-ice development, and how we coach kids at different ages. For example, we focus on those areas of development that the players are physically and mentally ready to be developed. This includes a focus on Agility, Suppleness, Flexibility, and Speed at the 4-8 year old Window of Trainability. This is the age is when kids should be playing multiple sports and focusing on athleticism. At the 9-12 year old Window of Trainability, we focus on skills, suppleness, speed and stamina. At 13-16 we focus on strength, stamina, and speed. The focus includes what types of activities we do during off-ice training, what skills we work on, hockey sense, and team tactics by age. For example, we spend no time on team tactics at 8U and only 10% at 10U and 12U – the focus is on skill development and hockey sense.

Age Group	Skills	Sense	Systems
8U	85%	15%	0%
10U	75%	15%	10%
12U	65%	25%	10%
14U	50%	35%	15%
16U	50%	30%	20%
18U	50%	25%	25%

### Give me some examples of High Performance Coaching Methods

Examples of High Performance Coaching Methods include small games, small ice surfaces, skill stations to maximize touches and repetitions, getting more teams on the ice to increase practice minutes and practice to game ratios, coaching to the age, station-based practices, focus on skills, focus on development and coaching to improve skills and not win games, battles and body contact, competition, small area games.

### Is this approach supported by the NHL?

Absolutely! The NHL specifically supports USA Hockey's commitment to ADM and LTAD. NHL teams use a lot of the ADM High Performance Coaching methods in their practices – small games, skill development stations, goalie development focus, etc. Frank Serratore, Air Force Academy Coach said it best –

*"The American Development Model is just what the doctor ordered for youth hockey. USA Hockey and the NHL should be commended for implementing it across the United States, as evidenced by many other youth sports following this lead. I'm a teacher by trade, and the concept of age-appropriate training is bang on. What a 6-, 8- or*

*10-year-old needs developmentally is vastly different than what a 14-, 16-, or 18-year-old needs. Delivering high-energy, activity-based practices full of skating, puck skills and competitive small-area games is what 12U, 10U and 8U players need, and the formula of three practices to one game at these ages gives players the best chance for long-term success. This formula, combined with playing two or three other sports is vital. As players move into their teenage years, the equation changes a bit, as players need to acquire an understanding of team concepts which comes with playing more games. The bottom line is I want and need players at the NCAA Division I level who can skate, shoot, handle pucks and think the game at a high level. If you as a parent want your child to enjoy the game to its fullest while training in a program which will maximize their potential as a player, find an ADM club near your home, sit back and enjoy the experience.”*

### **My child’s coaches have been great, why do they need supplemental coaching education?**

USA Hockey does a great job of communicating the best coaching techniques, certifying coaches via the Coaching Education Program (CEP), and providing on-line resources and tools. CAHA believes that a supplemental program of Coaching Development will further enhance our coach’s expertise. Hockey is an evolving sport and there are Best Practices in development and coaching that are being implemented every year. We want to make sure we have a forum to communicate these effectively to coaches beyond the annual CEP certification.

### **Are you trying to change the way Coaches coach?**

Yes, the ADM wants to make coaches aware of what is most important at each stage of a child’s athletic development. We only have so much time with the kids so we need to be efficient and give them what they need most at each stage. Understanding these ‘Windows of Opportunity’ will optimize player development and limit coach’s frustrations. Many coaches in CAHA do an outstanding job of using ADM principles when developing players. We want to make sure that every coach is using the same principles and high performance coaching methods.

### **I heard that there are some myths about development that have been dispelled by ADM and LTAD. What are they?**

The chart below shows some hockey development beliefs that have been disproved by implementation of ADM and LTAD as well as scientific studies in these areas.

<b>Hockey Beliefs</b>	<b>Myth or Truth?</b>
You have to be on the Best Team to Develop	<b>Myth</b> – you want to be on a team that is fun for the players, emphasizes skill development over winning, has a minimum of a 3:1 practice to game ratio, practices in smaller areas, uses small games to teach hockey sense and concepts, lets players learn and think while playing the game, plays everyone in games, and uses age-appropriate and high performance coaching methods.
You have to Excel early	<b>Myth</b> – hockey is a late developing sport as it is very difficult to master. That is why the LTAD focuses on skill acquisition until the Learn to Compete and Train to Compete stages of development at 15-18 years of age. There is no way to determine if the best 8U or 10U player today will be the best player at 16U or 18U because a player’s hockey development is something that evolves over the course of 10-15 years.
You have to play hockey 12 months a year	<b>Myth</b> – LTAD and ADM encourage playing other sports – the best athletes become the best hockey players. Too often players specialize too early and burn out on the sport. They also do not develop as the best athletes and this stunts their hockey development.
You shouldn’t specialize in hockey until you are 15	<b>True</b> – waiting until 15 means the player will develop their overall athleticism which will make them a better hockey player in the long-term
You have to travel extensively to improve	<b>Myth</b> – practice time is one of the biggest causes of improved hockey skill. Travel can inhibit improved skills putting too much emphasis on games. Studies show that players receive 11 games of development in just 1 practice. Travel also tends to burn out players and families over the long run – time, family issues, and financially, lost school days. This is why we recommend 3:1 practice to game ratios, the start of travel hockey at 10U and game maximums to minimize travel.
You need more practice to develop your skills	<b>True</b> – absolutely true – 3:1 practice to game ratio is optimum. Just remember that every practice you have, you are getting 11 games of skill development due to increase repetitions and touches.

## **8U AGE GROUP**

**What are the advantages of practicing in small areas and playing cross-ice games?**



The USA Hockey Red, White, and Blue program is based on a model of practicing and playing hockey across the ice surface as compared to practicing and playing along the full length of the ice surface. This cross-ice practicing and playing model actually has been around for as long as the game has been played. When players played on a pond did they use an ice surface 200 x 85 feet? No, they played in a small area that developed and sharpen their skills without the rules of off-sides, icing, penalties, face-offs, or even positional play. Hockey sense and hockey instincts were developed. This model has been used in many of the leading hockey nations and by the world's best players for a number of years and has stood the test of time. It has been shown that children who begin their hockey training in this environment have an outstanding hockey experience and develop a better base of skills as they progress through our sport.

### **What are some of the “Best Practices” for maximizing the development of players at 8U and younger?**

The key principles for 6U/8U are to focus on fun, engagement, active practices, and age-appropriate training which include station-based practices to teach skills and concepts. This is where the “Hockey for Life” seed is planted and fun should not be underestimated. If it is not consistently fun at this age, the novelty of the sport will wear off and players may eventually quit. Players need to have a foundation of skill, fun, competition, and age-appropriate training. Keeping score, travel teams, winning & losing, and adult-sized playing surfaces and skill development will minimize development and fun over the long-term. Without a basis of fun and skill development at the younger ages, players have a higher rate of leaving the sport – this is something we are addressing with our approach to 8U. In your program you should see:

- Focus on fun, engagement, and development with no lines, no laps, no lectures
- No time spent at the board drawing up drills and plays
- Lots of movement of players – no one standing around
- A competitive environment at an individual level – puck battles, competing in games, doing their best
- blue pucks and smaller nets (24x36 for 6U and 36x48 for 8U) should be used for age-appropriate development.
- a 2:1 or ideally 3:1 practice to game ratio
- station-based practices in small areas
- competition that is focused on individual competition like competing for the puck
- hockey sense and hockey concepts like puck support
- small games
- 4v4 or 3v3 cross-ice format in games

### **Why does the ADM call for 6U & 8U to use a smaller surface for games?**

Like other sports, we are fitting the playing environment to fit the physical size of our kids. By doing this, kids get to play a version of the real hockey game that is actually more comparable in key areas that a full ice game is for kids on this size. Physical contact is increased, repetition of the most important skating and puck control skills are increased and the environment is better suited to the cognitive development of the players.

### **How will my child develop their competitiveness if no scores are kept and there are no winners and losers?**

Fostering a competitive environment is an important part of a child's development. It is important for the games and practices at the 8U level to foster a competitive environment for all the players involved. Although we do not keep score or track of winning and losing at this age, this does not mean that we do not encourage competitiveness. At this age, competitiveness must be fostered and enhanced at an individual level. Players should be encouraged to be the very best they can be, to battle for the puck, and to compete hard in every cross-ice game, competition and practice.

### **I'm concerned about my 8U player not being able to compete for a spot on a travel team. This sounds like “everyone gets a trophy” and isn't life about competition?**

Life is competitive – *adult* life. This is where the ADM and LTAD focuses on the development of the child. Imposing adult-level competitive philosophies on young children has been shown to reduce fun, hurt skill development, and reduce retention of players playing our sport. Competitiveness grows and develops in kids. As an adult, your competitiveness is fully developed. For example, you may be upset about a loss for a day or 2 as you work through your competitive drive and feelings. A player may be just as disappointed about the loss but they recover in 5-10 minutes. It doesn't stay with them like an adult. The approach to competition is also different. At 6U and 8U, competition is learned by children at the individual level and competition is learned by competing for the puck, body contact, working hard, being the best they can be. Keeping score, playing on teams, travel hockey, and winning & losing are concepts that are important but are more appropriate at the 10U and 12U age groups. When we push the wrong type of competitiveness on kids at too early an age, players don't have as much fun, learn less, are less engaged, actually become less competitive, and eventually quit the sport.



**My 8U child likes to play on a team. Why can't they?**

8U players may play on teams in their House leagues but we encourage that there are no standings, scores or stats kept - no winners and losers. For those smaller Associations with a small number of 8U players, they may travel as a team to Jamborees but they will be scrambled and put on different teams. Players acquire team skills when they reach the 10U and 12U age groups and this is age-appropriate. At 8U we want to focus on fun, skill development, and engagement. Keeping score and playing competitive "travel" hockey at 8U results in lower retention and higher burn out at 10U and 12U.

**What if my Association is small and we only have a small number of players?**

CAHA will work with Associations to cooperate and combine into regional House leagues. These would still be separate Associations but they would practice together and play games in a combined House league with other Associations close to them.

**Why can't my 8 year old use full size nets and black pucks?**

Age-Appropriate Development is very important at the younger ages. The nets and pucks should be at the right size for the age group. For 6U we have blue pucks and 24x36 nets and cross-ice games, at 8U we have blue pucks and 36x48 nets and cross-ice games, at 10U we use black pucks and full-size nets but we are moving to half-ice 4v4 games, and at 12U and older, players move to full-ice games.

**If my Association no longer has a 8U Select travel team, we will go play hockey in a place that does.**

We hope that you review the data and see that this would be detrimental to the long-term development of your player. Also, every Association in CAHA (NC & SC) will be following the same standards so everyone will be implementing the best practices of ADM and LTAD.

**Will players compete against other players of a similar ability?**

One of the most important ADM principles is the grouping of players of like ability. At 8U this is a cornerstone of a player's development. It is important in both practice and in cross-ice game competition for players to be grouped by similar ability whenever possible.

## **10U AGE GROUP**

**Why Half-Ice 4v4 for 10U games?**

Much of the basis for half-ice 10U games can be found in the reasoning behind the 8U cross-ice format. 10U Half-Ice games provide more touches and skill development for all players. This format also helps to increase the value to families and enables programs to improve their practice to game ratios. The Pacific Northwest and Alaska have embraced this format and seen a dramatic increase in skill development, player retention, fun, and positive parent comments. This also provides a logical transition from 6U/8U cross-ice to 10U half-ice to 12U full-ice. It makes for less of a giant leap from 8U cross-ice to full-ice immediately.

**Why phase in 10U half ice?**

We want to work out the logistics and give Associations the opportunity to see the benefits of half-ice before moving to the 70% format in 2021-22.

**Why no 10AA?**

At this age, it should not be about talent identification. It should be about talent development. We want to develop the athlete, the player and the person. We believe we can increase the retention of players from 10U to 12U by not burning out 10U players with excessive travel and competition. This is why there will be a House/Rec level, a limited B/Select level, and one A travel level. This will improve retention, broaden the base of the pyramid, improve the value to families, and refocus on skill development and fun. USA Hockey is losing 60 percent of kids prior to reaching the 12U levels. In CAHA we see a similar trend as our growth dramatically declines between the 10U and 12U age groups. At this age group, the most important thing is focusing on the development of the individual athlete – skill development, training, practice, and doing things that are age appropriate. We want to move away from the trap that everybody falls into when we get so caught up in the competition model - who's on what team, who they're playing against, what's the label of the team – is it AAA, AA, A? We want to refocus on age-appropriate training that is critical to the development of young people and athletes. Places like Duluth in Minnesota Hockey have eliminated Travel from 10U entirely and this has paid huge dividends in reversing their negative retention trends.

### **How will my player be ready to play full-ice games if they play 50% of their games in a Half-Ice format? What about teaching off-sides?**

Age appropriate training is one of the most important cornerstones of the ADM. 8U and 10U players should concentrate the large majority of their time on skating and puck handling skills. Concepts such as off-sides, positions, and face-off positioning can still be introduced at the 10U level for that portion of games that is full-ice. These concepts are easier to learn as the cognitive ability of players increase with age. Most coaches will tell you that teaching positioning, off-sides and face-offs takes very little time versus teaching elite skills like skating, puck handling, body contact, and hockey sense.

### **What are the rules for Half-Ice 10U games?**

Games will be run in 2 run-time halves and teams will switch ends at the half. 4 teams will play at the same time (2 games will be played simultaneously and they will utilize the same clock. Teams will share benches and penalty boxes. A premium will be on keeping the game moving so there are very limited face-offs. Nets will be placed at the usual spot for 1 net and at the other end for a second with a crease drawn by the referee. Referees will call penalties. Scoring flip cards will be used for all games. The scoreboard will only be used for the time with both games using the same clock.

## **GOALTENDING**

### **How do these changes help my goalie develop?**

You may already be in an excellent situation in terms of goalie development. We want to make sure that all Associations provide opportunities for young players to try the position and to get the goalie-specific development that they need at the right time. CAHA Goalie Coordinator Brian Haaland will lead a team of Market Goalie Coordinators to work with individual Associations to put together a strong goalie development program if they don't already have one. These Market Goalie Coordinators will help the Associations with on and off-ice goalie development, developing goalie coaches for each Association and teams, and developing a goalie-specific training program. We also want to work closely with Head Coaches to make sure that goalie development is a priority and that goalies get 1-1 development time during regular practices and that managing goalies in games is age-appropriate.

### **What opportunities are there in CAHA for goalie development?**

CAHA will continue to hold goalie development clinics, communicate "Best Practices" for coaching goaltenders to coaches, and training coaches to be more effective in goalie development.

### **Will there be more Try Goalie For Free events?**

CAHA is encouraging Associations to hold these events and to make it a regular practice to have players try the position on a regular basis at 8U. 8U players should play goalie in some games to try the position. Associations either have strap-on "quick change" goalie equipment or are in the process of securing these to use with their 8U program.

## **GEOGRAPHIC LIMITATIONS & GAME COUNT MAXIMUMS**

### **Why is CAHA looking at game count maximums for youth hockey's age groups?**

Our goal is to increase the number of players playing hockey in the Carolinas and this can be done through attracting more players and retaining more existing players. Right now our retention rate after 10U is flat and then declines and we believe this is in part due to too many games which negatively impacts the optimum practice to game ratio. Retention is also impacted by the value that families get out of hockey and in many cases the value equation is skewed because families are spending a large amount on travel expenses to play games. Game count maximums and geographic limitations are designed to help Associations to maximize the practice to game ratio and to play more games locally within CAHA so that the overall value is increased. More practice and less cost to families and players. The geographic limitations are for 10U and 12U only and the game counts are for all ages and levels.

### **What difference does it make if we play more games?**

There are several reasons why ADM specifies how many games each age group should play. First, 1 practice delivers as much development as 11 games. Skill development is optimized when players have a 3:1 practice to game ratio so moving towards an optimum number of games at an age group may free up time to add practice time which increases development. Second, we want to provide more value to families. Playing games is much more expensive than practice. For example, 1 game costs approximately 50-100% more than 1 practice. If a team exchanged 5 games for practices, they could get 7-10 more practices and exponentially more skill development.

**How does this affect Girl's hockey?**

At this time we are still working to develop a critical mass for supporting Girl's hockey so geographic restrictions don't make sense at this time. Girl's teams will still be subject to game count limitations.

**Why no geographic limitations at 14U to 18U?**

We feel that our focus should be on the ages where skill development is at a premium. Also, with hockey in the Carolinas the number of players playing 14U, 16U, and especially 18U fluctuates and many times these age groups have to travel more to find teams to play. We do encourage all age groups and levels to look for local games, help to support our CHL travel league, and minimize travel expenses.

**What happens if we are at tournament and 5th game puts us over the maximum and this is a Championship game?**

CAHA will be flexible in these situations. We ask that Associations and teams plan their game schedules to come in under the maximum but we will allow for tournament format changes when necessary.

**Do CHL playoff games count in game count?**

Yes – teams should plan for this just as they currently do. A team should plan on making the CHL playoffs but have a Plan B in case they do not.

**Do CHL play-in games count in game count?**

If the CHL holds a play-in tournament early in the season to determine what division teams should play in, these games will NOT count towards game maximums. The primary reason is that these games will typically be in a different format as the CHL will be looking at the skill of a team – not winning and losing.

**Will the CHL be more competitive?**

We hope so. We are encouraging more local play so if all teams play in the CHL, teams should be able to get more games in the Carolinas against a greater number of competitive teams. Currently there are teams that do not play in the CHL because they feel it is not competitive.

**We want to play different teams so will we be only playing teams in the Carolinas?**

You can still be able to play a lot of different teams as there is flexibility to play in tournaments outside of CAHA at each age group.

**How will CAHA keep Associations accountable for following the new guidelines and rules?**

With the overall buy-in of Associations we hope that they will be very willing to accept and implement these changes. We believe this is an educational process where CAHA and USA Hockey can help Associations be more effective in delivering the best practices of skill development and the best hockey programs possible. We are committed to working with the Associations to help them achieve this. We will also have a pre-season registration of teams via SportsEngine that will outline the specifics of each team in every program. If there are issues, we will consult with MyHockeyRankings which lists virtually all travel games. If there are Associations that do not follow the rules, this will be handled via the CAHA Disciplinary Committee who will determine the specific response. Overall, we feel that Associations are on board and will work hard to implement these programs because it's the right thing to do for all of the kids.

## **VALUE FOR MY FAMILY**

**You talk about increasing the value for my family for playing hockey. What is this?**

The value that a family receives from any activity includes things like what their child learns in life lessons, what sport-specific skills they learn, what the experience delivers in fun, the feeling of belonging by the child and the family, the coaching expertise, and overall satisfaction with the experience. What is also included in value is the cost of the program, the structure of the program (is my child safe and in good hands), and the non-fee related costs like travel, extra fees, and discretionary costs like private coaches and supplemental training. All of this goes into determining value. To increase value, one can improve on any of these factors and/or reduce the monetary cost.

**I already am happy with my program, why should I be concerned about increased value?**

Value is one factor why players and families leave the sport. It is also a reason why families choose to play the sport versus other options. We recognize that hockey is not imbedded in the Carolina culture like basketball, football, soccer,

or baseball. We need to find ways to remove barriers to playing the sport and to reduce retention. Improving the overall value that a family receives from the sport is one of the ways to do this.

## **DIVERSITY**

### **Why does diversity matter for hockey?**

There are many reasons to make hockey more inclusive for everyone. If we want to grow the sport, we want to attract the biggest pool of people – everyone. Not just white families or economically advantaged families – everyone. Playing sports makes people happier, helps them deal with stress and makes society better for everyone. When children see people they identify with playing sports, it expands their horizons and makes them believe they can be anything they want to be. Sports create a template for wider society, showing what's possible when we all work together and talent from all walks of life has the opportunity to flourish. So this effort will help with growth, retention, and be a key component of the value that every family gets from playing hockey.

### **I don't see many people who look like me playing or coaching hockey. Why should I choose hockey instead of other sports?**

Hockey is a fast-paced, exciting game where players learn tremendous life lessons about teamwork, respect, hard work, accountability, and more. However, we do recognize that we need to grow our representation from all communities and this will take hard work to make all people feel valued and included. We hope that our efforts in partnering with other sports will help us to reach out and attract different people. We also are looking to add more diversity to our leadership team in CAHA.

## **GROW THE SPORT IN GIRLS, SLED, DISABLED HOCKEY**

### **How will you be looking to grow the sport in girls, sled, and disabled hockey?**

All of these areas of hockey in CAHA continue to grow. However, we need more players in all of these areas to build this growth. Our Girls Hockey Committee as well as Sled/Disabled is looking at ways to specifically address growth and support of these areas. These are things like ensuring that all House programs put their girl players together at an early age to develop a girl's hockey critical mass of players. We are also looking to invest in these areas via equipment, coaching, training, and focus.

## **MARKETING THE SPORT**

### **What types of marketing programs will be implemented?**

Marketing to all people who may be interested in hockey is a key component of growing the sport. We need to reach out via social media, partnerships with other sports, and targeted marketing to bring more people into the sport. We also feel we need to publicize our current success – growth, changes to grow the sport, team and individual role models and success, and more. We have a lot of positives to talk about and we need to expand our communication of these successes.

### **Will these programs cost me and decrease my value that I receive from hockey?**

Marketing of the game will not be an added cost any player or family. We hope that by growing the sport and retaining players that everyone will benefit. We also hope that by improving our diversity and inclusion that we will be more diverse, more successful, and more inclusive to everyone.

### **How can I help with the marketing efforts?**

We would love to have the help of people in CAHA to work on these marketing initiatives. More details will be out in the coming months but we will need help and expertise so please offer these if you have them!

