



October 14, 2021

Potomac Valley Amateur Hockey Association Players, Parents and Coaches;

We hope you are all well and have enjoyed the first month of the season. As the weather turns colder, we want to make you aware of a very serious issue that all Potomac Valley Amateur Hockey Association (PVAHA) programs and leagues are dealing with - a severe shortage of officials. As you may be aware, at this point, a large number of officials have either not returned this season or left since the season started. Over the past two weeks, the CBHL has had to postpone several games already, with many more likely to be postponed, rescheduled or canceled throughout the season.

While we are still investigating and trying to determine the cause of this shortage, our initial investigation has determined that the biggest reason cited is the abuse they receive from coaches, parents, and players. The constant harassment over calls over the split-second decisions they are making on the ice has taken its toll. The PVAHA is down 50% of officials from pre-Covid season numbers to now.

Since this season started, across the country, there have been several troubling incidents including: an official needing a police escort after an 8U game; a young female official quitting in the middle of a set of games due to parent harassment; a parent coming on the ice trying to approach an official; a parent entering the scorer's box to berate a player on the other team for a penalty against her child and a parent challenging an official to "come up here and make me" when told to leave the building after continually verbally abusing an official during a 10U game. These are just a few examples of what is going on every weekend.

In the PVAHA, we've racked up more than a dozen reports of players, parents and coaches thrown out of rinks for their unprofessional conduct towards officials in the first two weeks of this season. We have received reports of parents chasing after officials to berate them off the ice and in the parking lot. Reports have been received of adult coaches and parents verbally abusing MINOR-AGED officials. This is beyond unacceptable and a direct assault on our ability to retain enough qualified/experienced officials for our leagues.

Youth hockey is a high-stress, emotionally-charged sport. But that is no excuse to abuse our officials. There is no excuse for adults to make a spectacle of themselves....to embarrass their kids...and to embarrass the organization they represent. It is our collective responsibility to create a safe and positive environment for **EVERYONE** in our hockey community. Every club requires their coaches and parents to sign a code of conduct at the start of every season and every club is being challenged to hold your coaches and parents accountable to it. Unprofessional, unsportsmanlike and inappropriate behavior at our youth hockey events will not be tolerated!





The pool of officials is dwindling, and we need to take steps in a positive manner to reverse this. Our officials are everyday people just like our parents and coaches, who have real jobs but try to work a side job to help our kids play a game, earn a little extra income and give back to the game. It would appear that many coaches, parents and spectators, for whatever reason, have lost this understanding and somehow believe that our officials need to be at the same level as what they see on TV at the college or NHL level.

Just as a player will turn a puck over or a coach make a wrong decision during a game, we realize that our officials can miss calls that may or may not have an impact on a game. That said - this does not give **ANYONE** (parents, spectators, players, coaches) the right to abuse them. Talk to your children about respecting the officials. Coaches and players should not be arguing every call against their team. Unfortunately, this is what is happening far too often and it is unacceptable.

The PVAHA **CAN NOT** afford to lose a single official. The loss of **ONE** official can result in the cancelation of multiple games every weekend. Again, we are likely to lose our ability to fill several games per weekend with qualified officials. If there are continued reports of officials being abused, then leagues will be asked to look to de-prioritize the games of the offending teams. If a parent or coach can't treat an official with respect...we'll stop sending officials to the rinks where they are likely to be abused. Our newest officials...our Level 1 and Level 2 officials, on average, last about less than three seasons before quitting. Given that trend, it will be increasingly difficult, if not impossible, in the next 3-5 years to facilitate a hockey season like we do today.

The PVAHA and USA Hockey have a Zero Tolerance Policy for abuse of officials. If someone is found abusing officials, including a player, coach or a parent, they will be subject to discipline including suspension and/or being banned from attending future games. All disciplinary directors in the PVAHA, from all leagues, have asked SHOA to enforce our Zero Tolerance policy and the severest punishments allowable to any player, spectator or coach who has been reported by an official for inappropriate behavior will be administered. We encourage all club leaders and rink managers to do the same.

Again, we ask you to practice patience and good judgement. Our kids are watching how we behave...and our inappropriate behavior is now having a significant and measurable impact to our sport. We **MUST** do better. We must start now to set the conditions to keep our sport viable for future generations.





If you or someone you know is interested in becoming a solution to the problem, then please consider becoming a certified, credentialed hockey official. SHOA is looking for new officials and experienced skaters with any availability. If you are interested in learning more, please contact SHOA at membership@shoarefs.org.

Supporting the growth and development of our children is a team sport.

Linda Jondo
President
Potomac Valley Amateur Hockey Association

