

**Mendota Heights Athletic Association**  
**Travel Basketball**  
**Guidebook/Policies & Procedures**

*This document describes how our MHAA Travel Basketball operates. The best way to impact and influence this program is to participate in the process. This is a volunteer-run organization. Commissioners and Directors do not receive any compensation or discounts based on their volunteer work to run this basketball program. Volunteer contributions of time and talent are crucial to the sustainability of this program. Those with concerns/feedback about how the Program is run should consider volunteering to help influence and operate the Program.*

**I. Program Overview**

**A. Philosophy**

1. The intent of our MHAA Travel Basketball Program (the “Program”) is to coach and support all traveling players such that they can develop the necessary skills and competencies to perform at a competitive level in that respective year AND to prepare for future basketball success (middle school, high school and college). Therefore, emphasis will be placed on maximizing a player's potential, competing successfully in games and creating a realistic environment that players will experience in the future.
2. A player's position, playing time, and responsibilities on a travel team will be determined by the coach/es and assigned accordingly. All players will be developed, but not all players will have the same experience on the team (e.g., not all players will play point guard; players will not share equal minutes and are not guaranteed playing time in games, but all players will contribute to the team; some players may be asked to score more, while others may be assigned more difficult defensive or rebounding tasks).

**B. Travel Basketball is Different than Rec or In House Programs**

1. In-house and Recreational (“Rec”) basketball teams typically practice one to two nights a week (for an hour each) and play one game every Saturday. Traveling basketball teams practice two nights a week (for 1.5 hours each) and play in 6-8 weekend tournaments with an average of at least three games a tournament.
2. Traveling teams play at tournament levels appropriate for their team (A, B or C).
3. A competitive atmosphere, intensity of training, and the determining of positions and playing time are all significant differences between in-house and traveling.

**C. Timing/Schedules**

1. Registration will begin in mid August with tryouts will typically be held in September.
2. The season runs from mid-October to the middle of March. Tournament play typically begins in November. Teams play 6-9 tournaments on weekends. Should the Team Coach choose to participate, Grade State tournaments are typically held the last week of February and/or early March.

**II. Evaluations & Formation of Teams**

- A. Number and Level of Teams Formed. The number of teams, if any, at each age level will vary each year depending on the number of players participating. The ultimate decision for the number and level of teams rests with the MHAA Basketball Commissioner, in consultation with the MHAA Travel Director.
- B. Player Eligibility.
1. The Program intends to comply with all [Minnesota Youth Athletic Services \(MYAS\) league rules regarding eligibility](#). (MYAS sets the participation requirements for most Grade State Tournaments.) Basketball participation and eligibility is based on Grade Level in school. If a player is older or younger than a team's grade level, an exception request must be reviewed and made by the Commissioner, in consultation with the Travel Director.
  2. To be eligible, a player must,
    - a) Reside or attend school in District 197.
    - b) Commit to attending practices and games;
    - c) Participate in tryout evaluations;
    - d) Be offered a roster position;
    - e) Complete the registration process; and,
    - f) Cannot play basketball simultaneously for another Association. However, players are permitted and encouraged to play for their school teams (in middle school, but not high school).
  3. Playing Up. Families must make a request to "play up" in writing to the Commissioner (via email or registration forms). A player may "play up" one grade level based with the approval of the Commissioner. To qualify, a player must score as one of the top 6 players at the advanced grade level. (Thus, it only applies for a A or B level travel team - whichever is the highest level available.) Qualifying does not guarantee player movement to the advanced team. Special circumstances may warrant the Commissioner to limit player movement. An exception to these requirements may exist when two grade levels are combined into a single team (i.e. a 4th/5th Grade combined team). The Commissioner may consult coaches, evaluators and Travel and In-House Directors to gather information to make this decision.
  4. Attendance: Traveling requires a significant time commitment from players and coaches. Players must be available for the entire season and must commit to attending all scheduled practices and games. If a player misses practices or games, playing time can be impacted. If a player frequently misses practices or games, they could be removed from the roster after review by the coaches and Commissioner.
  5. Waivers
    - a) Players who reside and attend school outside the geography area of District 197 will only be allowed to participate under the following conditions:
      - (1) Waivers/transfers of exemption/release must be signed by the organization for which the player is otherwise eligible to play; and,
      - (2) Approval is provided by the Commissioner.
    - b) Requests for waivers for players residing or attending school within District 197 seeking to play in another program will be reviewed by the Commissioner, in consultation with the Travel Director.

#### C. Evaluation Process

1. Tryouts will generally be held in September.
2. Evaluation Managers will coordinate with the Basketball Commissioner and Travel Director to plan and execute tryouts. This team is encouraged to coordinate with the Two Rivers High School Girls and Boys Varsity Coaches to run tryouts.
3. Evaluation managers and their designees, ideally high school basketball coaches, will act as evaluators. Coaches will not attend evaluations. The Travel Director will oversee logistics for evaluations, but will not complete any scoring or evaluation forms for players.
4. A minimum of 2 evaluators will score each tryout attendee. Evaluators may not score their own child.
5. Tryout exceptions will be reviewed by the Basketball Commissioner. Consideration may be given to feedback provided by previous MHAA Basketball coaches or consultation with a coach from another association if the player transfers into MHAA.

#### D. Team Formation

1. Roster sizes and player selection will be determined in consultation, as outlined below, between the evaluators, coach/es and the Commissioner. Final decisions rest with the Commissioner. Teams typically have 8 players.
2. Players who register for tryouts late may be placed on a waiting list. Placement will be based on availability and the discretion of the Commissioner.
3. Once evaluations are completed, the Commissioner will work with selected head coaches to form teams.
4. The top team for an age group will be formed first and then subsequent teams by level of ability/competition. This top team may participate at the "A" level, or potentially be a top "B" team. The decision of whether the team will participate in "A" or "B" is a determination by the MHAA Basketball Commissioner, Travel Director and the coaches at that level.
5. The top 6 players based on evaluation scores will be locked onto the roster of the top team.
6. The next 2-4 players are selected by head coaches, along with the commission
7. If there is a 2nd team, this process is repeated.
8. Under rare circumstances, a "locked player" based on being one of the top 6 scores could be moved down one team if the selected head coach desires the player to not play on their team. In this rare circumstance, the Commissioner and Travel Director must approve this decision. A coach must provide reasoning behind the decision. Decisions that will be considered, include, but are not limited to, behavioral issues (bad impact on the team), commitment issues (doesn't show up, prioritizes other sports in the summer), or parental issues.

#### E. Coach Selection/Application Process

1. Coaches for each team will be selected by the Commissioner, in consultation with the Travel Director.

2. A coach must have his/her player score in the "top 6" for evaluation scores in order for that player's guardian to be eligible to coach.
3. All selected Coaches (head and assistants) must complete any coaches training and background checks, as directed by the Commissioner and/or Travel Director, to be eligible to coach.
4. If multiple individuals express interest in a single position and are qualified to coach that team, the Commissioner and Travel Directors will implement a reasonable application process to select a team coach.

F. Philosophy. Tryouts aren't perfect. Everyone knows it. There are flaws. The MHAA Basketball Commissioner and Directors will not just accept the flaws; they will continually strive to improve the process and make it transparent. As such, they will continue to tweak and improve what they can by applying reasonable changes to the Program's processes. Note that "reasonable" is a key standard as the Program must consider the return on investment for any changes it considers.

### **III. Roles & Responsibilities**

- A. Commissioner. The Commissioner will be responsible for executing the following duties:
  1. Selection of Coaches;
  2. Management of Gym Rentals and Permits;
  3. Act as a Liaison to MHAA Board and Executive Director;
  4. Create, manage and track a Budget for the basketball program, including, but not limited to In House, Recreational and Travel basketball programs;
  5. Oversee Scholarship program applications in conjunction with the MHAA Executive Director;
  6. Create, manage and oversee registration activities and payments for the basketball program, including, but not limited to In House, Recreational and Travel basketball programs;
  7. Act as a Liaison with Sports Engine, or other vendors, to execute the duties listed in this Roles & Responsibilities section; Oversee and manage compliance activities, including, but not limited to, volunteer training and certification, and health and safety plans; and,
  8. Other duties as reasonably required to carry out the Program as outlined in this document.
- B. Travel Director. The Travel Director will be responsible for executing the following duties:
  1. Coordinate Equipment needs for the travel teams;
  2. Create and manage practice schedules for travel teams;
  3. Oversee and approve Tournament Registration for travel teams;
  4. Track compliance with Coaches training and certification requirements; and
  5. Other duties as assigned by the Commissioner.
- C. Coaches. Coaches will be responsible for executing the following duties:
  1. Successfully complete any required training, compliance and background check requirements as assigned by the Commissioner and/or Travel Director;

2. Tournament registration, as approved by the Travel Director<sup>1</sup>;
3. Manage Sports Engine Team page;
4. Communicate with players' families; and,
5. Other duties as assigned by the Commissioner and/or Travel Director.

#### IV. **Grievance Policy**

- A. 24 Hour Rule. Most problems are best solved through discussion. The first point of contact for any grievance should be a team's Head Coach. Discussions should take place away from other players and parents and not immediately before, after the event in question. All conversation should remain civil and courteous. When a player or parent has a concern, they should follow the "24 Hour Rule" which urges a party to wait at least 24 hours, if reasonably possible, before approaching a Head Coach to discuss a matter. The 24-hour waiting period permits passions to subside so that the parties may address issues objectively.
- B. Additional Resources for Grievances. If a player or parent believes their question/issue is not addressed by the Head Coach in a satisfactory manner or the matter doesn't pertain to a specific coach or team (i.e. a grievance related to the tryout or team formation process), the dispute or grievance should be submitted in writing to the Travel Director and Commissioner. The player or parent should follow the same guidelines for civility and discretion as indicated above.

*A Note about "Politics" - What is it and why does it happen. "Politics" is often used as the reason for why certain things happen in youth sports. It is often considered evil. In reality, there are very few volunteers involved in youth sports that are out to make things unfair. More often, these decisions are based on something else. As parents, it is important to understand that your player's performance at tryouts and their performance on the field in previous seasons are not the only determining factors when players are being selected for teams. Their tryout score will dictate if they are available in the selection window. Whether they get selected is based on many factors, which can include behavior. Both your player's behavior and your behavior. Coaches and committee members are parent volunteers that are giving their time to make this program and their community a better place. We invest heavily to make sure they are highly qualified volunteers, but that doesn't change the fact that this is a donation of their time. If a coach wants to make a decision that will make their season easier and more enjoyable, that is not evil "politics" at play. We have an incredible association with wonderful families and these issues aren't usually a problem. But it's important for us to be transparent about our processes and concerns in order to make sure that we continue to improve in the years to come.*

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<sup>1</sup> MHAA Travel Basketball's Program philosophy is that travel teams should be registered at a tournament level/bracket such that the team strives for a .500 record. This encourages competitive play, development and growth. The Commissioner and Travel Director will review coaches' tournament registrations and revise, as appropriate.