



## CAHA STRATEGIC PLAN & ACTION STEPS



# USAH ADM AGE GROUP GUIDELINES & RECOMMENDATIONS

## **USAH/CAHA GUIDELINES & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ALL AGE GROUPS**

The key principles for all age groups is to align with USA Hockey's ADM best practices for practice to game ratios, maximizing skill development, increasing value to families, and playing more games locally while minimizing overall travel costs. For House programs, most programs are currently at a 1:1 practice to game ratio so any movement towards a 3:1 practice to game ratio will increase overall skill development. Recommended guidelines for practice to game ratios, maximum games/game days, and geographic boundaries are designed to increase retention, improve family value, and increase skill development.

<b>6U</b>	<b>24x36 nets</b>	<b>5v5 Cross-Ice Games</b>	<b>Blue pucks</b>	<b>House only + Jamborees</b>
<b>8U</b>	<b>36x48 nets</b>	<b>4v4 Cross-Ice Games</b>	<b>Blue pucks</b>	<b>House only + Jamborees</b>
<b>10U</b>	<b>48x72 nets, 36x48 in half-ice games</b>	<b>4v4 or 5v5 Half-Ice and Full-Ice Games</b>	<b>Black Pucks</b>	<b>Travel Hockey Available</b>
<b>12U &amp; older</b>	<b>48x72 nets</b>	<b>Full-Ice Games</b>	<b>Black Pucks</b>	<b>Travel Hockey Available</b>

### **ADM GUIDELINES & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SEASON STRUCTURES BY AGE GROUP/LEVEL**

<b>AGE GROUP</b>	<b>TARGET # PRACTICES (50-60 mins)</b>	<b>OFF-ICE SESSIONS PER WEEK</b>	<b>GAME DAYS OR GAMES - RECOMMENDED FOR ALL AGES IN 2020-21</b>	<b>GAME FORMAT FOR 2020-2021</b>	<b>TARGET PRACTICE TO GAME RATIO</b>	<b>RECOMMENDED MAXIMUM TRIPS OUTSIDE OF CAHA</b>
<b>6U/8U</b>						
<b>6U</b>	50-60	1	16-20 GAME DAYS	Cross or ¼ ice	3:1	0
<b>8U</b>	50-60	1	16-20 GAME DAYS	Cross-Ice	3:1	0
<b>8U Development</b>	60-75	1	20-25 GAME DAYS	Cross-Ice	3:1	0
<b>10U</b>						
<b>10U House</b>	50-60	2	20-25 GAME DAYS	25% Half-Ice	2:1	0
<b>10U B/Select</b>	50-60	2	20-25 GAME DAYS	Full-Ice	2:1	1
<b>10UA</b>	75-80	2	20-25 GAME DAYS	Full-Ice	3:1	2
<b>10UAA</b>	75-80	2	20-25 GAME DAYS	Full-Ice	3:1	3
<b>12U</b>						
<b>12U House</b>	60-70	2	30-35 GAME DAYS	Full-Ice	2:1	0
<b>12U B/Select</b>	60-70	2	30-35 GAME DAYS	Full-Ice	2:1	1
<b>12A Travel</b>	80-90	2	30-35 GAME DAYS	Full-Ice	3:1	2
<b>12AA/AAA Travel</b>	80-90	2	30-35 GAME DAYS	Full-Ice	3:1	No limit
<b>12U Girls Travel</b>	80-90	2	30-35 GAME DAYS	Full-Ice	3:1	No limit
<b>14U</b>						
<b>14U House</b>	80-100	2	40-50 GAMES	Full-Ice	2:1	0
<b>14UB/Select</b>	80-100	2	40-50 GAMES	Full-Ice	2:1	No limit
<b>14A/AA/AAA Travel</b>	120-130	2	40-50 GAMES	Full-Ice	3:1	No limit
<b>14U Girls Travel</b>	120-130	2	40-50 GAMES	Full-Ice	3:1	No limit
<b>16U/18U</b>						
<b>16/18 House</b>	80-100	2	50-60 GAMES	Full-Ice	2:1	0
<b>16/18 B/Select</b>	80-100	2	50-60 GAMES	Full-Ice	2:1	No limit
<b>16/18 A/AA/AAA Travel</b>	120-130	2	50-60 GAMES	Full-Ice	3:1	No limit
<b>19U Girls Travel</b>	120-130	2	50-60 GAMES	Full-Ice	3:1	No limit

## **GUIDELINES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE TO GAME RATIOS, GAME DAYS OR GAMES, AND GEOGRAPHIC TRAVEL**

**Why is CAHA recommending a certain amount of game days or days 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. USA Hockey ADM Model recommends a specific amount of game days or games for each age group. We want to clearly communicate these to the Associations and recommend that they are followed. Ideally, we work to improve practice to game ratios especially at the 10U and 12U age groups where skill development needs to be maximized.

**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 skill 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.

**Why geographic guidelines and recommendations by age group and level?** We want to encourage Associations to provide more value to parents. Some travel outside of CAHA and overnight is fun and a positive experience. Too much travel and overnights increase the overall cost of playing hockey and lowers the value received by families. Over time, we see burnout when families spend too much time and money traveling at the 10U and 12U age groups.

**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.

**How will CAHA keep Associations accountable for implementing the new guidelines and recommendations?** First, we hope that the Associations will do their best to adopt these Best Practices. They are guidelines and recommendations – not mandates. 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 and feel that these USA Hockey ADM Guidelines and Recommendations are the best practices for a great hockey experience. We will also have a pre-season ADM Program registration of teams via SportsEngine that will outline the specifics of each team in every program.

## 6U & 8U AGE GROUPS

The key principles for 6U/8U are to focus on fun, engagement, active practices, and age-appropriate training which includes 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. House teams maybe be formed but standings and scores are not kept. 8U Player Development programs may be offered that include skill development sessions and 8U Player Development teams. These programs & teams must be open to all players via open registration with no tryouts.

<b>6U</b>	24x36 nets	Cross-Ice or 1/4-Ice Games	Blue pucks	House only + Jamborees
<b>8U</b>	36x48 nets	Cross-Ice Games	Blue pucks	House only + Jamborees

- **Practice to Game Ratio** - strive to attain a 3:1 Practice to Game ratio – ideally a rotation of 3 practices and 1 game. Each practice is 50-60 minutes in length. The use of small area games can be an effective way to increase skills and provide additional learning through playing the game. Where a 3:1 ratio is not possible, use a maximum of 16-20 Game Days and the balance of ice for 50-60 practice hours for a 1.5 or 2:1 ratio.
- **Game Format** – 6U games are played 4v4 in the cross-ice format with no goalies. Associations may also want to experiment with the ¼-ice format that has been used in some Affiliates. 8U games are played 4v4 in cross-ice format with players rotating through the goalie position.
- **Goaltending** - 6U uses no goalies except if players want to try the position. The goaltending focus at 8U is to have goalie equipment available to try the position and eventually convert to full-time goalies. However, all goalies should play out and not play goalie full-time at this age. Players should rotate playing the position on a regular basis – try goalie with quick change gear.
- **Equipment** - Requirements for 6U: 24 x 36 nets, blue pucks, cross-ice games. Requirements for 8U: 36x48 nets, blue pucks, cross-ice games.
- **Skill Levels** - The use of Advanced, Intermediate, Beginner levels are encouraged to have players play with players of similar skill. 8U teams may be formed for play in House leagues. No standings are kept. Team rosters should be 9-12 players.
- **8U Development** - Associations may offer an open-registration “8U Development” program that may include additional skill development sessions and the formation of teams that would play other Association’s 8U Development teams. No tryouts are allowed for these teams except to separate players into Beginner and Intermediate/Advanced groups of teams. If only 1 team is formed, all skill level players are allowed to play on these teams. These players are not “selected” as an All-Star or Select team – it is an open registration for all players who wish to participate.
- **Jamborees** - 8U scramble cross-ice or team Jamborees may be held by any Association at any time – in partnership with CAHA or separately. These Jamborees must be open to all players or teams in CAHA, use 36 x 48 nets and blue pucks, rotate goalies and no winners/losers or scorekeeping. We encourage the use of Student Referees to help with referee development. Teams may only attend Jamborees that are scramble, cross-ice, use 36 x 48 nets, and use blue pucks.

### **ADM Guidelines & Recommendations**

Age Group	Level	Practices (2:1 to 3:1 Ratio)	Game Days	Off-Ice	Game Format	Geography
<b>6U</b>	House only	50-60	16-20	1 per week	Cross-Ice or ¼ ice	May participate in Scramble Jamborees within CAHA
<b>8U</b>	House only	50-60	16-20	1 per week	Cross-Ice	May participate in Scramble Jamborees within CAHA
<b>8U Player Development</b>	Open Signups	60-75	20-25	1 per week	Cross-Ice	8U Scramble Jamborees within CAHA. Team Jamborees with travel permit to GA, TN, VA, MD, DC only.

## 8U AGE GROUP FAQs FOR ASSOCIATIONS & PARENTS

### Can you explain how the 8U Development Program differs from 8U Select program?

One of the fundamental development principles for 8U is that all players receive the same opportunity for development – good coaching, station-based practices, same amount of practice, same number of games. However, we recognize that some Associations and families want to add more development to their programs for those players who want more. The 8U Development Program is designed to do this. Associations may offer additional development – more practices, opportunity to play in Jamborees (team or scramble) and attend a tournament. The important distinction between 8U Select and an 8U Development Program is that the **8U Development Program must be offered to any player or family that wants to participate**. If Associations then want to attend a team Jamboree or tournament, they must offer this opportunity to ALL players. For Associations with more than 1 team of players, it is acceptable to separate players into teams from the skill groups used in practices. However, ALL players must then have the opportunity to attend the same number of Jamborees or tournaments. Associations should work together to match up 8U Development teams so teams play other teams of equal ability and ALL players have the opportunity to play in as many Jamborees or tournaments as any other player.

### 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
- Competitive environment at 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
- small games in practice for learning hockey sense and hockey concepts like puck support
- 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 competitiveness if no scores are kept & there are no winners or 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. Will they still be able to?**

8U players may play on teams in their House leagues and we are forming the 8U Development Program for Associations that want to offer 8U players additional development opportunities. One of the key principles at this age group is that all players should have the opportunity to get more development opportunities as we do not know who the best players will be in the future. The 8U Development Program can offer additional practices and a team format to play in 8U Team Jamborees. However, these are open to any player and there are no tryouts. If there are enough players, 2 levels of teams may be formed – Advanced/Intermediate and Beginner. Both the levels should receive the same amount of practice, skill development, games, and coaching.

**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.

**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

Key principles at 10U are to follow age-appropriate concepts and skills so players enjoy the experience and develop both as hockey players and young kids. The focus is on fun, engagement, active practices, age-appropriate training, and basic hockey knowledge. To increase retention and the value to families, we look to achieve 3:1 practice to game ratios, increase local play, and reduce travel.

- **Practice to Game Ratio** - we encourage the use of 3:1 practice to game ratio. For a full season, the target is 75-80 practices (50-60 minutes in length) and 20-25 game days at this age group. This does not include 10U scramble or team Jamborees. At the House level, we want to appeal to those players who are content with 1 practice and 1 game per week but we also want to increase the focus on skill development versus games. Therefore a 2:1 practice to game ratio is attainable if practices are increased and number of games is decreased. To achieve this, we recommend 3 teams on ice in practices.
- **Supplemental Skill Development** - We encourage House Associations to offer supplemental skill development programs for those players who wish to improve their skills to move into Select or Travel hockey.
- **Teams Rosters** - Team rosters of 11-12 skaters plus goalies. Goalies play out as player when not in goal.
- **Game Format** – 25% of all House 10U games be in the Half-Ice format with all travel 10U teams will play 4 Half-Ice games per season.
- **Game Days** - recommended maximum game day count is 20-25 days for all ages and levels at 10U. Time spent in practices should be optimized at this age group.
- **Jamborees** - There is no limit on participating in 10U scramble or team Jamborees.

### **10U ADM Guidelines & Recommendations**

Age	Level	Practices (2:1 to 3:1 Ratio)	RECOMMENDED GAME DAYS	Off- Ice	GAME FORMAT	Recommended Geography
<b>10U</b>	House	50-60	20-25 games	2 per week	25% of games must be Half-Ice	Local
	House Select/B	50-60	20-25 games	2 per week	4 Half-Ice games per season	Recommend no more than 1 trip outside of CAHA per season.
	A	75-80	20-25 games	2 per week	4 Half-Ice games per season	Recommend no more than 2 trips outside of CAHA per season.
	AA	75-80	20-25 games	2 per week	4 Half-Ice games per season	Recommend no more than 3 trips outside of CAHA per season.

## **10U AGE GROUP FAQs**

### **Why are you testing Half-Ice 4v4 for 10U games for House?**

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. All other sports introduce the adult-sized version of their game to children at the age of 13-14. Hockey has 9-year-olds playing the adult-sized game. 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. We want to continue to try this at the House level, measure the results and learn from it.

### **Why only implement some 10U half ice games?**

We want to test the concept, work out the logistics and give Associations the opportunity to see the benefits of half-ice.

### **How will my player be ready to play full-ice games if they play 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 & 10U players should concentrate the majority of their time on skating and puck handling skills. Concepts such as off-sides, positions, & 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, & 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.

## 12U AGE GROUP

Key principles at 12U are to follow age-appropriate concepts and skills so players enjoy the experience and develop both as hockey players and young kids. The focus is on fun, engagement, active practices, age-appropriate training, skill development, and competitive contact. To increase retention and the value to families, we look to achieve 3:1 practice to game ratios, increase local play, and reduce travel.

- **Practice to Game Ratio** - USAH encourages the use of 3:1 practice to game ratio. For a full season, the target is 60-90 practices (1 hour in length) depending on the level and 30-35 game days for all levels at this age group. At the House level, we want to appeal to those players who are content with 1 practice and 1 game per week but we also want to increase the focus on skill development versus games. Therefore a 2:1 practice to game ratio is attainable if practices are increased and number of games is decreased. To achieve this, we recommend 3 teams on ice in practices.
- **Game Days** - recommended maximum game day count is 30-35 days for all ages and levels at 12U. Time spent in practices should be optimized at this age group.

### 12U ADM Guidelines & Recommendations

Age Group	Level	Practices (2:1 minimum to desired 3:1 Ratio)	Recommended GAME DAYS	Off-Ice	Recommended Geography
12U	House	60-70	30-35 Game Days	2 per week	House only
	House Select/B	60-70	30-35 Game Days	2 per week	Recommend no more than 1 trip traveling outside of CAHA per season.
	A	80-90	30-35 Game Days	2 per week	Recommend no more than 2 trips traveling outside of CAHA per season.
	AA	80-90	30-35 Game Days	2 per week	Recommend no more than 3 trips traveling outside of CAHA per season.
	AAA	80-90	30-35 Game Days	2 per week	No limitations but encouraged to minimize travel and lost school days

## 14U & 16U & 18U AGE GROUPS

Key principles at 14U/16U/18U are to follow age-appropriate concepts and skills so players enjoy the experience and develop both as hockey players and young kids. In 14U, the focus is on fun and engagement, practice activity and structure, age-appropriate training, skill development, and body contact/body checking. At 16U/18U we add team play, training, and learning to compete as additional focus areas. To increase retention and the value to families, we look to achieve 3:1 practice to game ratios, increase local play, and reduce travel.

- **Practice to Game Ratio** - USAH encourages the use of 3:1 practice to game ratio. For a full season, the target is 80-130 practices (1 hour in length) depending on the level and 40-45 games for 14U and 50-60 games for 16U/18U. At the House level, we want to appeal to those players who are content with 1 practice and 1 game per week but we also want to increase the focus on skill development versus games. Any movement towards a 2:1 practice to game ratio is desired – more practices and fewer games. Recommended games per season are 40-50 for 14U and 50-60 for 16U & 18U.

### 14U & 16U & 18U ADM Guidelines & Recommendations

Age Group	Level	Practices (2:1 to 3:1 Ratio)	Recommended GAMES	Off-Ice	Recommended Geography
14U	House	80-100	40-50 games	2 per week	House only
	House Select/B	80-100	40-50 games	2 per week	No limitations but encouraged to minimize travel and lost school days
	A/AA/AAA	120-130	40-50 games	2 per week	No limitations but encouraged to minimize travel and lost school days
16U/18U	House	80-100	50-60 games	2 per week	House only
	House Select/B	80-100	50-60 games	2 per week	No limitations but encouraged to minimize travel and lost school days
	A/AA/AAA	120-130	50-60 games	2 per week	No limitations but encouraged to minimize travel and lost school days