

Potomac Patriots Policy Handbook



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Introduction: A Message from Club Leadership

Welcome to the Potomac Patriots Family!

We are thrilled to welcome you to the Potomac Patriots for the upcoming hockey season. Whether you are a new family joining us for the first time or a returning member of our community, we are honored to have you as part of our club.

The Purpose of This Handbook

This Policy Handbook has been created to serve as the official guide for all players, parents, and coaches. Its purpose is to clearly outline the mission, policies, procedures, and expectations that govern our organization.

The policies contained within this document are designed with three primary goals in mind:

1. To ensure a safe, positive, and fair environment for every single player.
2. To create a consistent and professional experience across all our teams and programs.
3. To establish a clear and transparent partnership between the club and our valued members.

This handbook is the single source of truth for our operational, financial, and safety policies. We consider it a shared agreement between the club and our families. We ask that every player, coach, and parent read this document thoroughly and use it as a reference throughout the season. Your understanding of and adherence to these policies are essential for a successful, rewarding, and drama-free year for everyone.

Thank you for your commitment to the Potomac Patriots. We look forward to a fantastic season of development, competition, and community on and off the ice.

Handbook Review and Amendment

This Policy Handbook will be reviewed annually by club leadership to ensure it remains current and effective. The General Manager of the Potomac Patriots holds the sole authority to amend or update this document. The most current version of the handbook will be posted on the website, distributed to the membership at the start of each season, and will supersede all previous versions.



I. About the Potomac Patriots

A. Mission & Philosophy

The Potomac Patriots Youth Hockey program provides a positive and rewarding hockey experience for players of all ages and skill levels within the greater Prince William County community. Our mission is to foster the growth of each participant by developing their hockey skills, promoting sportsmanship, and instilling life lessons in a safe, fun, and competitive environment. We are committed to building a strong community on and off the ice through teamwork, respect, and a shared love for the game.

B. Affiliations

The Potomac Patriots is a sanctioned USA Hockey organization. Our teams compete and operate under the rules and regulations of several governing bodies and leagues, including:

- USA Hockey
- Potomac Valley Amateur Hockey Association (PVAHA)
- Chesapeake Bay Hockey League (CBHL)
- Capital Corridor Hockey League (CCHL)
- Eastern Junior Elite Prospects League (EJEPL)
- National Girls Hockey League (NGHL)
- Atlantic Girls Hockey Federation (AGHF)
- United States Premier Hockey League (USPHL)

C. Home Facility

All home games and practices are held at Prince William Ice Center, Dale City, VA 22193

D. Club Directory & Key Contacts

Title	Name	Contact
Managing GM	RJ Zeigler	rzeigler@innovativesportsva.com
Accountant	Rose Williams	pwicaccounting@innovativesportsva.com
Scheduler / Registrar	Sandra Schrimbeck	patriotshockeymom@yahoo.com
Director of Player Safety	Tony Ryan	tonyryan@theryan-group.com
Director of Player Development	Alex Grose	agrose@innovativesportsva.com
Strength & Conditioning Coach	Jonathan Sucese	jsucese@toptierstrong.com
Travel Hockey Director	Joe Bruno	Ppats.joebruno@gmail.com
Lady Patriots Director	Mikaela Langbaka	potomacladypatriots@gmail.com
Mite Hockey Director	Tommy Prate	Tprate9@gmail.com
REC Hockey Director	Fred Singletary	fsingletary@innovativesportsva.com
PPAC Chairperson	VACANT	



II. Governance & Administration

A. Club Governance Structure

The Potomac Patriots Youth Hockey program operates as a partner of the of the Prince William Ice Center. The General Manager, in conjunction with key program leads, is responsible for the strategic direction, operational oversight, and financial management of the club. They ensure all programs align with the club's mission and adhere to the policies of USA Hockey and other affiliated governing bodies.

B. Role of Club Administration

The club administration, led by the General Manager, is responsible for the day-to-day management of the hockey program. Key responsibilities include:

- *Program Development* - Design, implementation, and oversight of all hockey programs is the responsibility of the appropriate program director (Travel, Recreational, and Girls) with assistance from the GM as needed.
- *Financial Management* - Managing budgets, collecting fees, and handling all club-related financial matters with the support of the club bookkeeper.
- *Communications* - Program Directors are the primary point of contact for members and are tasked with disseminating information regarding schedules, events, and club news.
- *Scheduling* - Coordinating all ice time for practices, games, and club events, managed by the club Scheduler.
- *Compliance* - Ensuring all players, coaches, and volunteers meet the requirements set forth by USA Hockey and other affiliations, including background checks and safety training is the responsibility of the registrar with the assistance of the appropriate program director.

C. Volunteer Structure & Parent Advisory Committee (PPAC)

While the club is professionally managed by the General Manager, its spirit, community, and ultimate success are fueled by the dedication of our parent volunteers. To formalize and empower this partnership, the club has established the Potomac Patriots Advisory Committee (PPAC), a structured, volunteer-led organization that works directly with club leadership.

1. Purpose of the PPAC:

The PPAC serves as vital bridge between the parent base and club management. Its primary goals are to:

- Foster a strong sense of community by organizing club-wide initiatives and social events.
- Serve as a structured and representative voice for the parent membership, offering valuable feedback and suggestions to the Program Directors and General Manager as necessary.
- Organize, lead, and coordinate all club-wide volunteer efforts, ensuring teams and events are well-supported.
- Improve club-wide communication by acting as a conduit between the parent base and management.

2. PPAC Structure:

The PPAC is comprised of dedicated parent volunteers who take on key coordination roles for the season. The General Manager, with input from the Program Directors and the committee, will select a Chairperson to lead the PPAC. Key roles within this committee include:

- *Chairperson* - Leads all PPAC meetings, acts as the primary liaison between the committee and the Program Directors and the General Manager.
- *Vice-Chairperson* - Supports the Chairperson, oversees special projects, and is prepared to lead meetings in the Chairperson's absence.
- *Executive Assistant*- Takes and distributes minutes for all PPAC meetings, manages the master volunteer database, and handles internal committee communications.
- *New Family Welcome Lead* - Manages an "ambassador" program to pair new families with seasoned Patriots families to answer questions and help them integrate into the club.
- *Team Manager Coordinator* - The "head" Team Manager. Provides guidance and support to all individual Team Managers, ensuring consistent communication and administrative practices across all teams.
- *Tryout Volunteer Coordinator* - Manages all non-evaluation volunteers for tryouts, including the check-in desk, distributing pinnies, and directing players.
- *Sponsorship Coordinator* - Oversees the club's Community & Corporate Sponsorship program (as defined in Section VI.E), actively seeking out community partners and managing sponsor relationships and benefits.



- *Social & Events Coordinator* - Plans and executes club-wide social events, such as the season kick-off party, team building events, and the annual trunk or treat event, to build a stronger community off the ice.
- *Newsletter & Website Content Lead* - Gathers stories, photos, and team accomplishments from across the club to be featured in the club newsletter and on the website.
- *Social Media Community Lead* - Manages community-focused posts celebrating teams, players, and events on the club's social media channels.
- *Volunteer Coordinator* - Manages the master list of club volunteers and their interests, actively recruiting for open positions and helping to staff specific events (e.g., tournaments, picture day) as needed.
- *Fundraising Coordinator* - Manages and coordinates all fundraising activities to supplement resources for the club.

3. How to Get Involved:

Being an active volunteer is the best way to support your player and the club. All families are encouraged to participate. To get involved, you can:

- Inform your team's Head Coach or Team Manager of your interest in a team-level role (e.g., penalty box, scorekeeper, team photographer).
- Contact the Volunteer Coordinator to be added to the list for club level event support.
- Express interest in joining the Potomac Patriots Advisory Committee by speaking with a Program Director or the PPAC Chairperson.

D. Leadership Meeting Cadence

To ensure consistent communication and strategic alignment, the Potomac Patriots leadership adheres to a regular meeting schedule. This rhythm provides a formal structure for feedback, planning, and operational oversight. The PPAC will meet monthly to coordinate efforts across all volunteer areas (events, sponsorship, etc.) and prepare topics for the GM meeting. Monthly meetings between the PPAC Chairperson, the Program Directors, and the General Manager serve as the primary touchpoint for club alignment. Club Leaders and Key stakeholders will be brought into these sessions as needed to ensure the right voices are present for specific volunteer or strategic initiatives.

III. Club Policies

A. Player Code of Conduct

All Potomac Patriots players are expected to represent the club with integrity and respect. By joining the club, each player agrees to:

- Play for the love of the game and work hard to improve their skills.
- Always respect teammates, coaches, opponents, officials, volunteers, and facilities
- Learn and abide by the rules of hockey.
- Accept the decisions of officials without argument.
- Refrain from any form of taunting, trash-talking, or unsportsmanlike conduct.
- Maintain self-control both on and off the ice. Fighting, abusive language, and disrespect for property will not be tolerated.
- Adhere to the Social Media Policy and Anti-Bullying Policy
- Come to all practices and games prepared and on time.

B. Parent Code of Conduct

Parents and guardians are essential to creating a positive environment. All parents are expected to:

- Encourage good sportsmanship by demonstrating positive support for all players, coaches, and officials.
- Remember that this is youth hockey; the game is for the children, not the adults.
- Respect the decisions of coaches and officials.
- Refrain from coaching from the stands or engaging in any behavior that distracts from the game.
- Never use profane, abusive, or threatening language or behavior in any hockey environment (rinks, hotels, etc.).
- Adhere to the Social Media Policy and Anti-Bullying Policy
- Address any concerns with the team's coach in a respectful and timely manner, adhering to the "48 Hour Rule" (see Section III.F).

C. Coach Code of Conduct

1. General Code of Conduct (All Coaches)



All coaches will:

- Serve as positive role models, demonstrating sportsmanship, integrity, and respect.
- Prioritize the safety, well-being, and development of every player above all else.
- Know and teach the rules of the game in a positive and constructive manner.
- Obtain and maintain all required USA Hockey certifications and screening.
- Never use physical force, abusive language, or engage in any behavior that could be considered harassment or abuse.
- Communicate clearly and professionally with players and parents
- Adhere to the Social Media Policy and Anti-Bullying Policy
- Do not engage in conduct that is detrimental to the Potomac Patriots

2. Additional Policies for Non-Parent Coaches

To protect both our players and our staff, and to maintain the highest professional standards, all non-parent coaches are required to adhere to the following specific policies in addition to the general Code of Conduct.

- *Travel Policy* - A non-parent coach must never be alone in a vehicle with a single, unrelated player. Any transportation must involve at least two players or another screened adult. For overnight travel, coaches must not share a hotel room with a player.
- *Communication Policy* - All one-on-one electronic communication (email, text message, social media direct message) between a non-parent coach and an individual player must also copy or include the player's parent(s) or legal guardian. Group communications to the team are permissible.
- *Social Interaction Policy* - One-on-one social meetings or activities outside of official, sanctioned team events are prohibited. Any private lessons or off-ice training with players on their team must be sanctioned by the club and parents must be appropriately informed.
- *Expense & Reimbursement Policy* - Non-parent coaches are eligible for reimbursement of pre-approved, club-related expenses (e.g., travel and lodging). All expenses must be submitted with receipts in accordance with the club's financial procedures.



3. Additional Policies for Parent Coaches

The Potomac Patriots relies on and deeply values its parent coaches. To support these volunteers and to ensure a fair and positive environment for all players, parent coaches are expected to adhere to the following guidelines in addition to the General Code of Conduct.

- *The "Two Hats" Philosophy* - Parent coaches must recognize they wear two different "hats." At the rink and during any team function, they wear the "Coach Hat," and their primary responsibility is to the development and well-being of every player on the team equally. At all other times, they wear the "Parent Hat." These roles must remain distinct.
- *Objective Treatment of Own Child* - The coach's child is to be treated as an individual athlete and is subject to the same rules, standards, and consequences as every other player on the team. The coach must avoid any appearance of preferential treatment or unfairly penalizing their own child to demonstrate objectivity.
- *The "Car Ride Home" Rule* - After games and practices, the "Coach Hat" comes off. The car ride home should be a supportive, parent-child space, not an extension of the post-game coaching session.
- *Communication with Team Parents* - In all official team communications regarding team decisions, strategy, or player performance, the parent coach must speak with the authority and professionalism of the Head Coach, not as a fellow parent.

D. Anti-Bullying Policy

The Potomac Patriots has a zero-tolerance policy for bullying, hazing, or any form of harassment. Bullying includes verbal, physical, or social behavior intended to cause harm, distress, or humiliation. Any player, parent, or volunteer found to be engaging in bullying will be subject to immediate disciplinary action, up to and including removal from the club.

E. Locker Room Policy

The locker room is a team space. All members must respect the privacy and property of others.

- Cell phones and other recording devices are strictly prohibited in locker rooms. Limited exceptions exist for music (if pre-approved) or authorized team photos,

provided all individuals are dressed. A certified and screened adult (coach or designated volunteer) must be present to supervise players in the locker room.

- Players are responsible for keeping the locker room and connecting bathrooms clean.
- Disrespectful behavior, rough housing, and hazing are strictly forbidden.

F. Grievance & Disciplinary Procedures

The Potomac Patriots are committed to resolving disputes in a fair, consistent, and transparent manner. This process is designed to handle issues ranging from minor infractions to serious policy violations.

1. Routine Player Discipline: There are three layers of routine player discipline between a coach and his players in order prevent incidents from escalating and meet the primary goals of the program (See Introduction). The three levels are:

- **Preventive** - Ensure the players know the rules with periodic reminders.
- **Supportive** - Coaches take action in practice to set conditions for on task operations. This can be using a whistle to get players back on task or having them take a knee to prompt focus during instruction.
- **Corrective** - Extra laps, pushups, Timeouts during practice, sitting shifts, sitting periods, sitting games.

If a player's behavior or actions are distracting to the point it is impacting others, the player may be removed from the practice or game. All serious incidents will be referred to the Program Director and the Director of Player Safety.

2. **The 48 Hour Rule** - To promote thoughtful and productive communication, the club enforces a strict 48 Hour Rule. All players and parents must wait at least 48 hours following a game, practice, or incident before initiating contact with a coach or club official to discuss a grievance. This "cooling off" period is mandatory.

3. **Chain of Command for Resolution:**

- *Step 1: Player/Parent and Head Coach* - The first point of contact for any team-related issue (e.g., playing time, coaching decisions) is the team's Head Coach. A meeting must be scheduled in advance; "drive-by" or post-game conversations are not appropriate forums for discussion.



- *Step 2: Program Director* - If the matter is not satisfactorily resolved with the Head Coach, it may be escalated to the appropriate Program Lead (Travel, Girls, or REC).
 - *Step 3: Director of Player Safety* - If a resolution is still not reached, the matter can be brought to the Director for Player Safety for a final decision.
4. **Disciplinary & Grievance Panel** - For serious violations of the Code of Conduct, Anti-Bullying, or SafeSport policies, the Director of Player Safety may convene a Disciplinary & Grievance Panel.
- *Composition* - This committee will be appointed by the Director of Player Safety and will consist of impartial individuals, such as the Program Director and an unaffiliated coach.
 - *Process* - The Committee will have the authority to investigate incidents, conduct hearings with all parties involved, review evidence, and recommend disciplinary action to the Director of Player Safety.
 - *Actions*- Disciplinary actions may include, but are not limited to, verbal warnings, written reprimands, game suspensions, or permanent removal from the Potomac Patriots program. All decisions on serious infractions will be documented in writing. Incidents escalating to this level are often shared with the local USA Hockey Affiliate, the Potomac Valley Amateur Hockey Association (PVAHA).

G. Playing Time Policy

Playing time is one of the most complex topics in youth hockey. As players get older in competitive programs, ice time becomes more of an earned currency. The Potomac Patriots aligns its playing time philosophy with the USA Hockey American Development Model (ADM), recognizing that the focus gradually shifts from broad development to competitive performance as players mature.

1. Recreational (House) Program (All Age Levels)

The primary focus of the Recreational program is participation, fundamental skill development, and fostering a love for the game. Coaches will strive to provide fair and equitable playing time for all players over the course of the season.

2. Travel and Girls Programs – Foundational Stage (12U and Below)

These are the foundational years for building the complete player. In alignment with ADM principles, the focus is on long-term skill acquisition for every player on the roster.



- While not strictly equal in every shift or game, coaches will ensure all players receive meaningful and significant ice time in all situations (5-on-5, power play, and penalty kill) over the course of the season.
- The primary goal is the development of every individual player, which requires giving them opportunities to learn and grow in a competitive environment.
- Teams will generally consist of no more than 13-16 players and 2 goalies.

3. Travel and Girls Programs – Performance Stage (14U and Above)

This stage marks the transition to more advanced tactical and physical competition. As players progress from 14U to 16U and 18U, the emphasis on performance and team success intensifies.

- At these levels, ice time is earned and is not guaranteed.
- Decisions regarding playing time, including special teams assignments and ice time during critical game situations, are at the sole discretion of the coaching staff.
- These decisions are based on a combination of factors, including a player's demonstrated skill, work ethic, coachability, attendance, attitude, and their effectiveness in specific game situations.
- It is expected that this performance-based approach will be more pronounced at the 16U and 18U levels, where players are competing for showcase opportunities and preparing for junior and collegiate hockey, than at the 14U level, where players are still adapting to full-body checking and more complex systems. A 10U player can and should expect more even ice time distribution than an 18U player. Furthermore, 14U and above teams playing at the B or Lower-A travel level should expect a greater degree of equity of playing time for development purposes.
- Teams will generally consist of 15-18 players and 2 goalies.

Coach Communication

Regardless of the level, all Head Coaches are required to clearly communicate their team's specific playing time philosophy at the mandatory pre-season parent meeting to ensure all players and parents understand the expectations for the season.

H. Attendance and Punctuality

Commitment is a cornerstone of team success. Players are expected to attend all scheduled practices, games, and team events.

- Players must notify their Head Coach or Team Manager of any anticipated absence as far in advance as possible.
- Unexcused absences or consistent tardiness may result in reduced playing time, as determined by the Head Coach.

I. Social Media & Electronic Communication Policy

Players, parents, and coaches must represent the Potomac Patriots in a positive manner in all online communications.

- Posting derogatory, threatening, or abusive content related to teammates, opponents, coaches, officials, or the club is strictly forbidden.
- Players and parents should not post team related complaints or grievances on social media. The official grievance procedure (Section III.F) is the only appropriate channel for such matters.
- Violations of this policy will subject the individual to disciplinary action.

J. Team & Parent Meeting Cadence

Proactive communication is essential for a successful season. To ensure alignment and provide clear forums for discussion, each team will adhere to the following meeting schedule.

- **Mandatory Pre-Season Meeting:**
Within the first two weeks of the season, the Head Coach will hold a mandatory meeting for all players and parents. Topics will include team rules, communication protocols, playing time philosophy, development goals (12U & under) and season goals.
- **Mandatory Mid-Season Check-in:**
Head Coaches are required to hold a mandatory parent check-in meeting around the mid-point of the season (e.g., late November/early December). The purpose is to provide general updates, address any common questions, and ensure alignment for the remainder of the season.
- **End-of-Season Wrap-Up:**
Following the conclusion of the final league or playoff game, the Head Coach will hold a final team meeting. This meeting is to celebrate the team's accomplishments, recognize player effort and improvement, and provide information on any off-season opportunities.

K. Team Manager Roles & Responsibilities

The Team Manager is a critical volunteer role responsible for the logistical and administrative success of the team. A separate and detailed Potomac Patriots Team Manager Handbook is provided to all managers to ensure consistency and excellence across the club. All Team Managers are required to operate within the guidelines of both this Policy Handbook and the Team Manager Handbook. Team managers are in no way responsible for player decisions or team rules as those are responsibilities of the head coach.

L. Team Rules & Coach's Authority

While this handbook provides the official club-wide policies for all members, Head Coaches are authorized to establish additional rules and expectations specific to their individual teams. These team rules may include, but are not limited to, dress codes for games, curfews during tournaments, or specific sideline conduct.

Team rules must not contradict any policy contained within this handbook. In any instance where a team rule and a club policy conflict, the club policy shall always take precedence. All team-specific rules must be communicated clearly to players and parents at the mandatory pre-season meeting.

M. Damage to Property

All Potomac Patriots members, including players, parents, and coaches, are expected to treat all facilities with respect. This includes our home rink, visiting rinks, hotels, restaurants, and any other property.

Any individual or team causing damage to property will be held financially responsible for the full cost of repairs or replacement. This financial responsibility may fall to the individual, the family, or the team as a whole, as determined by the General Manager based on the circumstances of the incident.

IV. Safety & Compliance

A. USA Hockey SafeSport & Zero Tolerance Policy

The Potomac Patriots are fully committed to creating the safest possible environment for our participants. We strictly adhere to the policies and guidelines of the USA Hockey SafeSport Program, which is designed to protect all members from any form of misconduct, including physical abuse, sexual abuse, and other types of abuse or harassment. All players, parents, coaches, and volunteers are required to abide by the principles of the SafeSport program. We also enforce USA Hockey's Zero Tolerance Policy regarding abusive and inappropriate behavior towards officials, coaches, and players. Any violation of these policies will result in immediate disciplinary action. For more information or to report a concern, members are encouraged to visit the official USA Hockey SafeSport website.

B. Concussion Management Protocol

The health and safety of our players is our highest priority. The Potomac Patriots follow a strict concussion management protocol in line with USA Hockey guidelines.

- *Recognition and Removal* - If a player is suspected of having a concussion during any practice, game, or team event, they will be immediately removed from play. The player will not be allowed to return to activity that day.
- *Notification* - The player's parents or legal guardians will be promptly notified of the suspected injury.
- *Return-to-Play Procedure* - A player who has been removed due to a suspected concussion may not resume hockey activities until they have been evaluated by a qualified medical professional and have received written clearance to return to play. This written clearance must be submitted to the team's Head Coach and the Director of Player Safety before the player can rejoin any on-ice or off-ice activities.

C. Coach & Volunteer Requirements

To ensure the safety and proper development of our players, all coaches and volunteers who have regular contact with players must meet the following requirements before participating in any team activities:

- *USA Hockey Membership* - Must be a current registered member of USA Hockey.



- *Background Screening* - Must complete and pass a national-level background check as required by USA Hockey and PVAHA.
- *SafeSport Training* - Must complete the mandatory USA Hockey SafeSport training course.
- *Coaching Education Program (CEP)* - All coaches must have the proper level of CEP certification for the age group they are coaching.
- *Age-Specific Modules* - Coaches must complete the online age-specific training module for the level of play they are coaching.

D. Player Injury, Insurance & Liability

All participants in Potomac Patriots programs acknowledge that ice hockey is an inherently dangerous sport with a risk of serious injury.

- *Medical Insurance* - All players are required to be covered by their own primary family medical insurance. The supplementary insurance provided by USA Hockey is secondary and has specific limits.
- *Liability* - The Potomac Patriots program and its staff are not liable for injuries sustained during any club related activity, including practices, games, and off-ice training.
- *Reporting Injuries* - All injuries must be reported to the Head Coach and the Director of Player Safety as soon as possible. For serious injuries, a formal injury report may be required. Most facilities require these to be filled out at the time of injury.

V. Programs & Hockey Operations

A. Program Offerings

- *Travel Program* - Our premier competitive program, designed for dedicated players seeking a high level of competition and coaching. All travel teams compete in the Chesapeake Bay Hockey League (CBHL). Select teams may also compete in the Eastern Junior Elite Prospects League (EJEPL), offering exposure to a wider range of high-level competition.
- *Girls Program (Lady Patriots)* - The Lady Patriots program is a premier, competitive program offering a dedicated pathway for female athletes to develop into elite players. Teams compete in top-tier leagues, including the Chesapeake Bay Hockey League (CBHL), the National Girls Hockey League (NGHL), and the Atlantic Girls Hockey Federation (AGHF).
- *Recreational Program (House)* - This program focuses on skill development in a fun, less intensive environment and is ideal for new players or those with other commitments. Teams participate in the Capital Corridor Hockey League (CCHL).
- *8U / Mites & Mini-Mites* - These programs serve as the entry point for our youngest players, focusing on fundamental skills and fostering a love for the game in accordance with USA Hockey's American Development Model (ADM).
- *Patriot Juniors* - The Patriots ice two Junior teams each season, both inside the United States Premier Hockey League (USPHL) umbrella. The top team participates in the National Collegiate Development Conference (NCDC), while the second team participates in the Premier Division of the USPHL. Junior hockey is often a player's last step before college or entry-level professional hockey.

B. Player Tryouts & Team Selection

The club runs a formal, multi-day evaluation process to place players appropriately. This process is overseen by the Program Directors and the General Manager to ensure fairness, impartiality, and consistency.

- *Tryout Format* - Tryouts will consist of multiple on-ice sessions designed to evaluate players in a variety of situations. This will typically include skill stations, small-area games, and full-ice scrimmages to provide a holistic view of each player's abilities.

- *Evaluation Process* - Players are evaluated by a committee that includes Head Coaches, Program Leads, and, where possible, objective, independent third-party evaluators. The use of independent evaluators ensures impartiality in the selection process. Players are assessed on a range of criteria, including technical skills (skating, puck control, shooting), tactical awareness (hockey sense), and personal attributes (coachability, work ethic, competitiveness).
- *Tryout Philosophy* -
 - Travel/Girls: A competitive and selective process designed to identify the most skilled and committed players to form elite teams. Player history with the club does not guarantee a roster spot.
 - REC: Focused on assessing individual player skill with the goal of creating balanced and equitable teams for fair competition.
- *Communication of Roster Decisions* - Roster decisions will be communicated in a timely and professional manner following the final evaluation session. Decisions will typically be posted on the club website, with players identified by their assigned tryout number.
- *Team Declarations* - The level of play each team will declare will be closely a closely coordinated decision between the Coaches and the Travel lead. Teams playing at the AA Travel level will consist of rosters comprised of no less than 75% major birth year players.
- *Tryout Feedback* - Due to the large number of participants and the complexity of the evaluation process, the club and its coaches will not provide individual feedback to players regarding their tryout performance or placement. All placement decisions are final.

C. Player Development & Advancement Philosophy

The Potomac Patriots are committed to the holistic, long-term athletic development of every player. Our philosophy is rooted in the principles of USA Hockey's American Development Model (ADM) and provides a pathway for every player to reach their full potential.

1. Player Development Model:

- *Age-Appropriate Training* - We focus on providing the right training at the right time, from fundamental skills in our 8U program to advanced tactical concepts for our elite travel and junior teams.



- *Comprehensive Approach* - Development extends beyond on-ice skills. We aim to build well-rounded athletes through dedicated off-ice training, guided by our Strength & Conditioning Coach, and by instilling the values of sportsmanship, discipline, and respect.
- *Coaching Excellence* - We empower our coaches with the resources and education needed to be effective teachers. Coaches are expected to act as mentors, creating a challenging but supportive environment where players can thrive.

2. The Potomac Patriots Junior Hockey Pathway:

The goal of the Potomac Patriots development model is to provide a complete pathway from Learn to Play to elite-level junior hockey, all under one roof. Our youth players have a direct line of sight to our two junior teams, providing them with mentorship, internal scouting, and a clear, attainable goal.

- **Potomac Patriots - NCDC | Tier II Junior Hockey** - This is the pinnacle of our program. The National Collegiate Development Conference (NCDC) is focused on developing players for NCAA Division I, II, and III opportunities. Playing for our NCDC team represents the highest level of junior hockey within our organization.



- **Potomac Patriots - Premier | Tier III Junior Hockey** - The USPHL Premier league is the largest Tier III junior league in the United States. It serves as a crucial developmental step for players aged 16-20 aiming for advancement to collegiate hockey (NCAA/ACHA) and our NCDC team. This team provides a highly competitive environment for our youth players to transition into junior hockey.

3. Commitment to Advancement:

The Potomac Patriots aims to be more than just a place to play youth hockey; we strive to be a Player Advancement Pathway. Our goal is to prepare and guide our

most dedicated players through the youth hockey landscape, including high-performance Midget/Tier 1 AAA and High School programs, with the aim of advancing them to our own Junior teams and onward to college hockey (ACHA or NCAA). We achieve this by providing elite coaching, fostering a highly competitive environment, and leveraging our staff's network and experience to provide guidance and exposure for our athletes.

D. Affiliate Player Policy ("Call-Ups")

To aid in player development and to address short-term team needs, the club utilizes a formal affiliate player system. This policy governs the temporary movement of a player from their rostered team to a higher-tiered team.

1. *Purpose* - The primary purpose of this policy is developmental, allowing players to experience a higher pace of play. The secondary purpose is to allow coaches to field full rosters for games and practices in case of injury or absence.
2. *Club Hierarchy and Eligibility* - The club follows a clear affiliation hierarchy. The top team at any age level is designated "Red," the second team is "White," and a third team is "Blue."
 - A House League player may be affiliated with a Travel team ('Blue,' 'White,' or 'Red').
 - A 'Blue' team player may be affiliated with the 'White' or 'Red' team at the same age level.
 - A 'White' team player may be affiliated with the 'Red' team at the same age level.
 - Movement *downward* (e.g., a 'Red' player playing a game for the 'White' team) is strictly prohibited.
3. *Call-Up Procedure* -
 - All player movement must be initiated and approved through a formal discussion between the Head Coaches of both teams, with final approval from the appropriate Program Director.
 - Parents or players may not request an affiliate player opportunity.
 - The needs of the player's primary team always come first.
4. *Primacy of the Primary Team* - An Affiliate Player's primary responsibility is ALWAYS to their rostered team (e.g., the 'White' team). Primary team practices



and games take precedence over any affiliate team activity, unless explicitly approved by the Program Director in extraordinary circumstances.

5. *Game Day & Roster Limitations* -

- The number of games an Affiliate Player can play with the higher-tiered team may be limited by league rules (PVAHA, CBHL, etc.). It is the responsibility of the Head Coach of the higher-tiered team to know and track these limits.
- An Affiliate Player is called up to serve a supporting role. Their ice time is at the discretion of the Head Coach and is not guaranteed.

6. *Cost and Fees* - Playing for an affiliate team is considered part of the club's development program and does not alter a player's seasonal club fees.

E. Coaching Staff & Program Review Meetings

To ensure coaching excellence and the continuous improvement of our hockey programs, club leadership will conduct formal meetings with the coaching staff at key moments of the season.

1. *Pre-Season Coaches Meeting* - The Program Directors will meet with their entire coaching staff prior to the season to review club policies, development goals, and expectations.
2. *Post-Tryout Debrief* - Immediately following tryouts, the Program Director will meet with the evaluation committee and coaches to review the team selection process and discuss the roster for the upcoming season.
3. *End-of-Season Coach Review* - The General Manager and/or Program Director will meet individually with each Head Coach at the end of the season to discuss the team's progress, player development, and the coach's performance and future goals.

F. Player Release Policy

Roster spots for the Potomac Patriots are offered and accepted for the full duration of the hockey season. The club invests significant resources in team and player development based on these commitments.

- *Commitment* - Acceptance of a roster spot and signing the player contract constitutes a commitment to the Potomac Patriots for the entire season.



- *Release Requests* - The club will generally not grant releases for players to join another hockey organization during the season. This policy is in place to maintain roster stability and honor the commitment made to all other players on the team.
- *Extraordinary Circumstances* - A release will only be considered in cases of official military relocation or other extraordinary, unforeseen circumstances. All such requests must be made in writing to the General Manager.
- *Financial Obligation* - A player being granted a release does not absolve the family of their financial obligations as outlined in Section VI.D and their player contract.

G. Uniform & Equipment Requirements

- *Mandatory Equipment* - All players must wear, at a minimum, all equipment required by USA Hockey rules for all on-ice activities. This includes a certified helmet with a full facemask, shoulder pads, elbow pads, hockey pants, shin guards, gloves, and a neck guard.
- *Club Uniform* - Players in the Travel and Girls programs are required to purchase the official Potomac Patriots uniform package, which is a separate cost from club fees.
- *Uniform Care* - Players are expected to maintain their equipment and uniforms in good condition. The official game uniforms are to be worn for games only, not for practices, unless otherwise directed by a coach.



VI. Financial Commitments

A. Program Fees & Inclusions

Program fees (also referred to as "Club Fees") are set annually and vary by program and age level. For the Travel and Girls programs, club fees typically include:

- Practice and game ice time
- Coaching staff stipends
- Officials for games
- League and affiliation fees (CBHL, EJEPL, AGHF, etc.)
- Team-level training sessions
- Administrative costs

Specific fee amounts for each program and level are detailed in the annual player contract. USA Hockey registration is a separate fee paid directly to USA Hockey and is not included in club fees.

B. Payment Schedules, Discounts & Late Fees

- *Payment Schedule* - A non-refundable deposit is required upon signing the player contract to secure a roster spot. The remaining balance is divided into monthly installments, as outlined in the contract.
- *Discounts* - A "Pay in Full" discount is offered to families who choose to pay the entire club fee balance at the time of contract signing. A sibling discount is also available for families with multiple players in the club.
- *Late Fees* - Payments not received by their due date will be subject to a late fee as specified in the player contract. Players whose accounts are not in good standing may be suspended from all team activities until the account is brought current.

C. Team Fees & Additional Costs

In addition to the club fees, families are responsible for other costs associated with participation. These include, but are not limited to:

- *Uniforms* - The required uniform package for Travel and Girls players is a separate cost from club fees.
- *Team Account* - Each team typically collects funds for a Team Account to cover costs not included in the club fees. This may include tournament entry fees, non-league game referee fees, team social events, and other miscellaneous expenses.

The amount is determined by the team's coach and manager at the start of the season.

- *Travel & Accommodation* - All costs for transportation, hotels, and meals for away games and tournaments are the responsibility of the player's family.
- *Coaching Stipends* - For non-parent head coaches only.

D. Refund Policy

The Potomac Patriots Youth Hockey program operates on a fixed annual budget based on player registrations. Therefore, signing a player contract represents a full-season, 12-month financial commitment for the total amount of the agreed-upon club fees.

- The initial deposit made upon signing the player contract is non-refundable under any circumstances.
- If a player voluntarily withdraws from the program for any reason after signing the contract, the family remains responsible for the full season's fees as outlined in their contract.

E. Community & Corporate Sponsorship Program

The Potomac Patriots Youth Hockey program is proud to partner with local businesses and community leaders. Our sponsorship program provides an opportunity for businesses to gain visibility while supporting youth athletes in our community.

- *Purpose* - Funds generated through sponsorship are used to reduce the cost of participation for all families by helping to cover major team expenses such as tournament fees, practice jerseys, and team training equipment.
- *Sponsorship Opportunities* - The club offers a variety of sponsorship tiers (e.g., Bronze, Silver, Gold) that may include benefits such as company logos on team banners, website and social media recognition, and logos on practice jerseys.
- *Use of Funds* - Sponsorship funds are managed by the club and distributed to teams to offset approved expenses. This ensures transparency and equitable use of all community-raised funds. Teams retain 90% of funds raised through team fundraisers.
- *How to Become a Sponsor* - Interested parties are encouraged to contact the General Manager to learn more about our sponsorship packages and how they can support the Potomac Patriots.



Appendix A: Typical Season Calendar & Major Events

This calendar provides a general overview of the typical Potomac Patriots season. It is intended as a planning guide to help families understand the rhythm of the year. Specific dates for all events are subject to change and will be communicated through official club channels.

Timeframe	Key Hockey & Club Activities
March – July (<i>Pre-Season</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tryouts for the upcoming Travel & Girls seasons. • Player Contracts distributed and signed. • Coaching Staff & Program Review Meetings conducted. • Spirit Wear & Apparel orders. • PPAC Leadership planning meetings for the upcoming season.
August – September (<i>Season Kick-Off</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-Season Team Practices begin. • Mandatory Pre-Season Parent/Player Meetings held by each team. • Team Budgets and "Team Account" contributions finalized by Team Managers. • Picture Day for all teams. • Regular Season Games begin for most leagues (CBHL, CCHL, EJEPL, AGHF etc.).
October – December (<i>Mid-Season</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major Showcase Tournaments (often over holiday weekends). • Community Fundraising Events (e.g., Restaurant Nights) organized by the PPAC. • Sponsorship Banners displayed at the rink. • Mandatory Mid-Season Parent Check-in Meetings held by each team. • • Planning for spring hockey
January – February (<i>Playoff Push</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conclusion of league regular seasons. • League Playoffs and Playdown weekends. • State/District Championship Tournaments (for qualifying teams). • Planning begins for next season's tryouts.
March – April (<i>Season Conclusion</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End-of-Season Team Wrap-Up Meetings held. • Club-Wide End-of-Season Awards Banquet organized by the PPAC. • End-of-Season Coach Reviews conducted by club leadership. • Junior Team Tryouts held (providing opportunities for youth players to see the next level).



Appendix B: Hockey Ladder



Appendix C: Policy Handbook Acknowledgment Form

Potomac Patriots 2026-2027 Season

By signing below, we, the undersigned player and parent(s)/guardian(s), acknowledge that we have received, have read, understand, and agree to abide by all the rules, policies, and procedures contained within the official Potomac Patriots Policy Handbook.

We understand that adherence to these policies is a condition of our participation in the Potomac Patriots program and that any violation may result in disciplinary action as outlined within this handbook.

We further acknowledge our understanding of the financial commitments, codes of conduct, and player safety policies detailed in this document.

Player Name (Print): _____

Player Signature: _____

Date: _____

Parent/Guardian Name (Print): _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____

