



29 September 2023

Dear PNAHA Association Administrators, Coaches and Team Managers:

In the past two seasons, PNAHA has seen an uptick in reports of the use of hateful and discriminatory language during youth hockey games. We are writing today to reiterate the proper reporting mechanism (and response) provided by USA Hockey Rule 601 (e.3.) that governs any reports of hateful or discriminatory language during games. Rule 601 (e.3.) reads as follows:

- A match penalty shall be assessed to any player or team official who commits the following actions: Uses language that is hateful or discriminatory in nature **anywhere in the rink before, during or after the game.**
- (Note) The officials are required to immediately file a game report and the offending player/team official is suspended until their case has been dealt with by the proper authorities. Appropriate discipline will be determined using the USA Hockey Standardized Discipline Policy (see Preface).
- **If the incident was reported to, but not heard by the official(s), the officials are required to notify the coach of the offending team and submit an incident report to the Proper Authorities immediately following the game outlining what was reported to them.**
- (Note 2) Any match penalty assessed under this rule must be reported via written game report by the officials no later than 24 hours following the game. The official(s) should also provide a verbal report to the USA Hockey District Referee-in-Chief within 48 hours.

On-ice officials have protocols in place to immediately address situations where a player is accused of saying something that violates Rule 601 (e. 3) but is not heard by the officials. While the officials cannot assess a penalty in that circumstance, they are instructed under this rule to notify the coach of the offending team and it is critical that the coach take immediate and appropriate action. The incident does not have to have occurred on the ice to be reported. The rule clearly states that Rule 601 (e.3.) is in effect anywhere in the rink before, during or after a game. Upon receipt of a report, officials are required to then submit an Incident Report no later than 24 hours following the incident.

Rule 601 (e.3.) governs ALL situations wherein language is used that is hateful or discriminatory in nature anywhere in the rink before, during or after the game. The proper reporting authority is to the officials.

In contrast, Safe Sport will govern all reports of hateful or discriminatory language that are NOT reported in a game context (ie., language between teammates at a practice, for example).

It is imperative that coaches educate their players that if hateful and/or discriminatory language occurs before, during or after a game, the player reports directly to their coach, who will then report to the official. It does not matter whether the official heard the language, and it does not matter whether it occurred on the ice. Upon receipt of a report, officials are REQUIRED to notify the coach of the offending team and submit an Incident Report. It is imperative that this reporting process is followed by all parties to the game (players, coaches and officials) to immediately STOP the behavior from occurring, and to notify all involved of the report for further investigation.

It is further recommended that associations enforce a zero-tolerance policy for hateful language and discrimination and that it is made clear to all participants that any form of discrimination, including racial slurs, sexist comments, or homophobic remarks, will not be tolerated.

It is further recommended that coaches (and parents) take time in the season to educate our youth athletes about hateful and discriminatory language. Removing this type of language from our great game requires a concerted effort from all stakeholders involved, including players, coaches, officials, fans, and administrators. By taking these proactive steps, hockey can become a more inclusive and respectful sport for everyone.

Thank you for your prompt dissemination of this memo to your youth hockey coaches and managers.



Educating youth athletes about hateful and discriminatory language is essential for fostering a respectful and inclusive environment in hockey – and beyond. Here are some steps parents and coaches can take to address this issue:

- **Lead by Example:** Parents and coaches should model respectful and inclusive behavior. Avoid using derogatory language or making discriminatory remarks, and ensure that you treat everyone with respect.
- **Open Communication:** Encourage open and honest communication with youth athletes. Create a safe space where they feel comfortable discussing any concerns or questions they may have about language and discrimination.
- **Teach Empathy:** Help youth athletes understand the impact of hateful language on others. Encourage them to consider how their words may hurt or exclude others and how it feels to be on the receiving end of such language.
- **Explain the Consequences:** Discuss the consequences of using hateful or discriminatory language, both within the sports context (such as penalties or team sanctions) and in the broader context of life (such as damage to relationships and reputation).
- **Promote Inclusivity:** Emphasize the value of diversity and inclusivity in sports and society. Explain that embracing differences makes teams stronger and more successful.
- **Set Clear Expectations:** Establish clear guidelines and expectations for behavior on and off the ice. Make it known that hateful language will not be tolerated and will result in appropriate consequences.
- **Provide Training:** Consider organizing workshops or training sessions on diversity, inclusion, and respectful communication for both players and coaches. These sessions can help raise awareness and build skills to address these issues effectively.
- **Address Incidents Promptly:** If a player or athlete uses hateful language, report the incident to your Association and address the issue promptly with the player. Use it as a teaching moment to explain why the language is hurtful and unacceptable.
- **Encourage Reporting:** Ensure that players, parents and coaches know how to report incidents of hateful language or discrimination, and assure them that their concerns will be taken seriously and handled promptly.
- **Support Victims:** Provide support for individuals who are targets of hateful language or discrimination. This may include counseling, resources, and a supportive network within the hockey community.
- **Involve Parents:** It's crucial for parents to support these efforts by reinforcing the same values at home and by being engaged in these important conversations with their child.
- **Promote Inclusive Policies:** Advocate for and support policies within your association that promotes inclusivity and diversity. This may include anti-discrimination policies and training for all participants.
- **Monitor Social Media:** Remind athletes about the impact of their online presence and how using hateful language on social media can have severe and long-lasting consequences.
- **Celebrate Diversity:** Highlight the achievements and contributions of athletes from diverse backgrounds to underscore the positive aspects of inclusivity.

Educating our athletes about hateful and discriminatory language is an ongoing process. By fostering a culture of respect and inclusivity, parents and coaches can help create a more welcoming and inclusive environment for everyone involved in our great game of hockey.