



Updated USA Hockey Tier 1 Rules Regarding Recruiting, Tampering, and Player Movement Summary

The purpose and intent of this document is to provide a general summary and overview of the recently adopted USA Hockey rules related to Tier 1 recruiting, tampering and player movement. This is a summary and overview of the rule and is being provided to players and programs to help assist them in understanding the new rules that have been adopted. Any actual interpretations of the rule will be done by disinterested members of Affiliate Presidents Review Subcommittee based upon specific factual situations which arise. While this rule this summary is being provided for guidance, it is not intended to supplant or replace the provisions of the rule.

Overall, the intention of these changes is to provide a uniform set of procedures which will govern Tier I player recruiting and movement nationally. The rule goes into effect August 1, 2024, and covers only Tier I hockey (Youth 13O, 14U, 15O, 16U, and 18U and Girls/Women's 14U, 16U and 19U national bound age groups) and does not apply to Tier 2.

These new rules and procedures are in effect for the 2024-25 season.

Player Agreements and Commitment for the Season

The purpose of the rule is, absent limited exceptions, once a team offers a player/family a roster spot, and the player accepts the spot, the player and team are bound to each other for the entire season. In order to encourage transparency, prior to signing a player to a written agreement, the team must provide the player/family with a fact sheet which provides certain minimum information to the player/family including:

- Specific team upon which the player will be rostered.
- Signing team's anticipated budget and fees for the season.
- The required payment schedule or payment options for the anticipated or planned fees; number of average weekly practices, games, off-ice sessions, etc.; and any player code of conduct or parent code of conduct required for participation on the team.

Once a player is signed, the signing Tier I team is obligated to keep the player for the entire season except in specific circumstances. Players may request a release





from a team and subsequently participate on a Tier 2, High School, Junior Hockey, or College Hockey team.

Tier I teams are only allowed to have signed player agreements equal to the maximum number of spots permitted on their USA Hockey roster at any one time for their age level. For most teams, that will be 20 players (for 18U teams 22 players). A team can only sign additional players to the roster once players have been released pursuant to the player agreement. This eliminates taxi squads or the movement up and down of players from other teams. This does not affect the vertical integration policy within a Tier 1 organization.

As noted above, once a player agreement is signed, a player may only be released from a Tier I agreement under certain limited circumstances (1) by mutual agreement of the player/family and program; (2) violations of player agreement requirements or other violations of its code of conduct; (3) violations of USA Hockey SafeSport policies or other USA Hockey or affiliate or team policies which would justify the player's release, as determined by an independent Affiliate Presidents Review Subcommittee after a hearing.

Player agreements are made to the organization/ team. A coach leaving is not a basis for a release nor does it negate the player agreement.

Unless released, a player may not sign a player agreement with another Tier 1 team for that current season.

A Tier I team may offer or sign players that are not already signed to a player agreement with another Tier I team at any time prior to December 31 of that playing season, provided that at no time may the Tier I team have more signed player agreements than roster spots on its team.

Any disputes regarding the timing and validity of a player agreement will be reviewed and determined by the Affiliate Presidents Review Subcommittee.

Recruiting Rule Changes

Beginning September 1, 2024, teams will be able to speak to players and their families about opportunities beyond the 2024 -2025 playing season. Coaches and persons affiliated with the team are permitted to have conversations and discussions to recruit a player for the following season at any time during the current playing season. Teams are not permitted to have any players not rostered



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on their team participate in any on-ice tryouts during the season. A “tryout” includes any team practices, off-ice training sessions, open skates, skills sessions, or identification skates which include a player that is not on a regular-season USA Hockey roster with that association’s teams or program. USA Hockey programs, coaches and administrators are not permitted to operate a program outside of USA Hockey as a means of avoiding the prohibitions on tryouts or recruiting.

If a player is found to be in violation of this rule, the player will be subject to a minimum of five-game suspension. If the violation has been found after the player has signed a player agreement with another team, then that player will be ineligible to sign a player agreement or participate with that program for 18 months.

While the rule permits recruiting for the following season, any attempt to recruit a player in any way during the playing season for that current season will be a violation of the code of conduct/tampering. Reported code of conduct/tampering violations will be referred by the affiliate involved to the Affiliate Presidents Review Subcommittee, which will investigate and resolve any such allegations. If any coach is determined by the Affiliate Presidents Review Subcommittee or USA Hockey to have tampered with another player, they will face a minimum suspension of one year and a minimum probationary of two years for the first offense.

Tier 1 programs are ultimately responsible for their teams, including coaches, parents, and any personnel affiliated with the program. An organization that has been deemed as involved in a tampering violation is subject to sanctions that could include monetary fines, exclusion from participating in the affiliate, District, or National Tournament play, and or loss of ability to field USA Hockey sanctioned teams at all playing levels.

Enforcement

All decisions regarding any violations or the validity of a player agreement will be made by the Affiliate Presidents Review Subcommittee. Any suspension imposed by the Affiliate Presidents Review Subcommittee shall be appealable to the National Appeals Committee. The binding nature of a player agreement addresses only the player’s commitment to the signing Tier I team, the team’s commitment to the player, and the enforceability of the rules and requirements set forth in this policy. USA Hockey and the applicable Affiliate(s) are not responsible for enforcing the contractual terms of the Team Fact Sheet or resolving any financial disputes.



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