



Hockey Manitoba partners with Buddy Check for Jesse to help create awareness for mental health in youth sport.

Hockey Manitoba is pleased to announce that we have partnered with www.BuddyCheckforJesse.com to help create mental health awareness in sport for youth athletes. Buddy Check for Jesse is a Canadian Charity, founded by Dr. Stu Gershman in memory of his son, Jesse Short-Gershman, who died by suicide on October 29, 2014.

The Buddy Check for Jesse program was initially provided by Stu to his sons' hockey teams to help them feel supported by their teammates during the difficult months after Jesse's suicide. Stu wanted to take action and create awareness surrounding mental health challenges. He also wanted to teach his athletes to check on (aka Buddy Check) one another and teach his players that being a part of a team is so much more than how you play on the ice.

Stu believes that coaches are in a unique position to share this positive message to help raise awareness that mental health issues can affect anyone.

In the years since Buddy Check began, it has grown, expanded and become a staple conversation in many hockey dressing rooms in BC, and across Canada. Even better, the request for Buddy Check talks in other sports bolstered the charity's desire to reach more athletes so that Buddy Check for Jesse is now provided on a multi-sport platform where all sports are encouraged to participate in talks and events to raise awareness for mental health in youth sport.

The goal of Buddy Check for Jesse is to destigmatize mental health and to empower and encourage youth and young adults to support one another. During our inaugural partnership with Buddy Check for Jesse and Hockey Manitoba, our Buddy Check program will focus on working with Hockey Manitoba coaches and teams to host events and Buddy Check talks.

This year, Hockey Manitoba will be sending out Buddy Check for Jesse packages to our U13, U15, and U18 teams throughout the province. All U13, U15, and U18 teams in Manitoba will receive a package that includes rolls of green tape (green is the color for mental health), wristbands, and printed Buddy Check materials.

We will be sending a shipment of packages to each Minor Hockey Association that **should then be distributed to each U13, U15, and U18 team in early January 2022.**

PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU HAVE SOMEONE (A "POINT PERSON") WHO WILL BE IN CHARGE OF RECEIPT AND DISTRIBUTION OF THE PACKAGES.

These packages will then be delivered to the Head Coach/Manager of each team and each team's coaches should review the material within each package. In addition to the Buddy Check for Jesse swag for your athletes, there are Coaches Notes that provide a bit of a guideline of what to say and what to talk about during your Buddy Check talk.

Coaches: You do NOT need to be mental health experts to give this talk, you simply need to provide a safe space for your players and open up the conversation around mental health and what it means to support one another both on and off the ice. You have resources to help you and please feel free to review the website!

Our Hockey Manitoba Buddy Check Events SHOULD TAKE PLACE BETWEEN JANUARY 24 - 30, 2022 PLEASE PLAN ACCORDINGLY.

Here's how Buddy Check for Jesse works:

- 1) Receive the Buddy Check package from Hockey Manitoba and review its contents.
- 2) Familiarize yourself with the Coaches Notes and take a few minutes to plan what you'd like to say. You can simply read from the script provided, or you can personalize your message—whatever you are most comfortable with.
- 3) Choose a date (practice, game, tournament, whatever you decide is best between January 24 - 30, 2022!) for your Buddy Check talk.
- 4) Schedule 15-minutes before or after a practice or game for the Buddy Check talk.
- 5) Get your players to tape their sticks with green tape **before or after** your talk.
 - a) Get them to tape before and then explain what the green tape represents; or,
 - b) Get them to tape after your Buddy Check talk and let them know by doing so they're showing that they support mental health conversations in sport.
- 6) Hand out the Buddy Check swag to your players.
- 7) Be open and honest with your players and enjoy the effects of the Buddy Check talk on your team.

It's that simple. We will be sending follow-up emails as a reminder and there will be a social media push to help create momentum for this event.

Please post pictures on Twitter or Instagram with the hashtags #BuddyCheckforJesse and #BuddyCheckManitoba.

Our hope is that by opening up the conversation about mental health, we begin to normalize checking in on one another and destigmatize mental health disorders. We hope this Buddy Check talk will encourage teammates to support one another and become more aware of potential mental health issues so they are more prepared to step in with support when they see a teammate, friend or family member struggling. We hope that this can all lead to an improvement in the culture of sport.

Jesse's family hopes that through creating the program in Jesse's honor, it will help other youth and families.

Please note: There **may** be additional packages **available** that could be sent out on a first-come, first-serve basis. If you wish to sign up more teams outside of the U13, U15, and U18 age groups in your Minor Hockey Association, you can make a request to eginsburg@hockeymanitoba.ca.

Again, the Buddy Check for Jesse week will be January 24 - 30, 2022. Go to www.BuddyCheckForJesse.com for more info on the Buddy Check program. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us if you have any questions.