

LET'S GET  
STARTED



## Starting an ASHA Program

Starting a new special hockey program can be both a bit exciting and a little intimidating. We are here to help support you through the many details and will help guide you every step of the way. Remember that the first program started with just two players!

ASHA staff will assist you in starting your program by providing advice and support with both administrative details such as incorporation and insurance to on the ice details such as developing practice plans and volunteer support for individuals with developmental disabilities. By joining ASHA you will be connected with 100+ other organizations who are excited to help and support you. At this time, there is no charge or fee for ASHA Membership or for our support.

1. **Submit the New Team Application:** We understand that your organization may be just forming and you may not have a rink, or head coach or not for profit corporation in place or a formal Board of Directors – *That's OK!* Simply fill out what you can, and we will use this form to help create a game plan to get your team underway!
2. **Onboarding:** Once we have received your new team application, we will set up a time to “On Board” you and your group. On Boarding will include a brief overview about ASHA and Special Hockey and the Abuse Prevention regulations. This is will also give ASHA an opportunity to get to know you and learn more about your goals and vision for your team.
3. **Register for ASHA:** Once we have received your new team application, we will get you set up in our system and you will be ready to start registering your coaches, volunteers and athletes. In order to be a “Team in Good Standing” we ask that you have a Team application on file and that all coaches have completed their registration. You can find information about our registration process [HERE](#).

We are attaching the new team application, and information about ASHA and our benefits. Most importantly – ASK QUESTIONS! We are excited to help get you started, and support your team!

**Contact: ASHA@specialhockey.org**



**THE AMERICAN SPECIAL HOCKEY ASSOCIATION**  
 37 KENILWORTH ROAD ~ BINGHAMTON, NEW YORK 13903 ~ (607) 765-4529  
**NEW TEAM APPLICATION**

**Team Name**

<b>Mailing Address</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>State Zip</b>
<b>Team Manager</b>	<b>Team Manager Contact</b>	<b>Team Manager Email</b>
<b>Head Coach</b>	<b>Head Coach Contact</b>	<b>Head Coach Email</b>
<b>Rink Name</b>	<b>Rink Contact Name</b>	<b>Rink Contact Email</b>
<b>Rink Location Address</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>State Zip</b>

**GOVERNANCE INFORMATION**

<b>State &amp; EIN</b>	<b>IRS Tax Status</b>
<b>Board President/Chairman</b> Name/Affiliation	<b>Board/Vice Chair</b> Name/Affiliation
<b>Board Secretary</b> Name/Affiliation	<b>Board Treasurer</b> Name/Affiliation
<b>Please Attach</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Copy of IRS Determination Letter <input type="checkbox"/> or Letter of Explanation (explain the status of your organization) <input type="checkbox"/> Please provide a full list of key personnel.	<b>Affiliations: Is your team part of:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> A School <input type="checkbox"/> An Agency <input type="checkbox"/> USAH Association If yes, please list name and address:
<b>Other Comments:</b> Please note that Board officers should not be related or reside at the same address.	<b>Registrations &amp; Membership:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Will your team require a membership fee to play? If so, how much _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Will you have equipment needs? <input type="checkbox"/> Have you registered with USAH?

**Mission Statement:**

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Application Approved (District) \_\_\_\_\_

Application Declined (Reason) \_\_\_\_\_



# Membership Benefits



The American Special Hockey Association supports its members with the following benefits:

## COMMITMENT TO SERVICE AND FOCUS ON MISSION

- ASHA is a 100% volunteer organization with a dedicated Board of Directors.
- ASHA currently asks for no membership fees for its operations.
- All donations to ASHA directly impact ASHA Member organizations & their programs.
- ASHA connects members with a network of special hockey teams & opportunities to engage

## FOCUSED SUPPORT FOR SPECIAL HOCKEY ORGANIZATIONS ASHA PROVIDES:

- Specialized training & support for working with individuals with special needs in adaptive recreation.
- New innovative training programs are being offered for the 2024/2025 season, updating to include new regulations.
- Recognized guidelines for game play, player ratings, code of conduct & volunteers.
- Access to over two dozen ASHA sanctioned tournaments & events throughout the season.
- ASHA also provides support and guidance for tournament & event coordinators.
- Skills camps throughout the year including summer; with a continuing connection to the sport and community.
- A network of over 100 member organization bringing coaching techniques, camaraderie and opportunity to play.

## ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT ASHA PROVIDES:

- Participant Insurance (currently no cost to registered organizations and players) Umbrella policy includes commercial liability, participant coverage, catastrophic loss, crime and accidental medical. There is access to Directors & Officer Coverage (minimal cost).
  - As requested, liability insurance can cover special events and team related activities.
- Website with updated news and information ([www.specialhockey.org](http://www.specialhockey.org))
- Online Registration
- Background Checks and Abuse Prevention Training (Minimal Vendor Costs)
- Individualized Team Pages on SpecialHockey.org
- Responsive support (via phone and email) for any questions and concerns. Where needed we will connect member organizations with the appropriate professional service in their area.

## MARKETING AND AWARENESS ASHA PROVIDES:

- Website, social media and media content support.
- Assistance in developing personalized marketing brochures, posters and awareness campaigns.
- Professional support with your area agencies and schools serving individuals with special needs.

## ADVOCACY ASHA PROVIDES:

- Collaboration with the hockey community (Governing Bodies, Leagues and Associations) to ensure consistency, accessibility and opportunity for individuals with special needs to participate.
- Cooperation with the hockey community to ensure that the diverse needs of Special Hockey are met with inclusion, support and positive communication.
- Partnerships with community stakeholders and supporters. We will work with teams to build connections that assist them in supporting and sustaining their programs.
- Recognition which supports volunteers, coaches and family involvement.

## DEVELOPMENT & FISCAL SUPPORT ASHA PROVIDES:

- New program grants an in-kind equipment support.
- Scholarships recognizing junior coaches and individuals going to post an annual Junior Coach Scholarship
- Fiscal support through grants, grant writing and general grant administration.
- Resources and referrals regarding not-for-profit governance and best practices (State Specific) ensuring that member organizations can make educated decisions for their sustainability.
- Access to community and corporate partnerships for group discounts on equipment or merchandise.

# Tips for New ASHA Programs

**Mission & Vision:** Having a clear mission and vision for your organization not only gives a direction for your group to rally around, it also provides consistency for all leadership and coaches.



- 1) **Bylaws:** Ensure that your ByLaws are complaint with current IRS and State Not For Profits regulations. If your organization is part of an agency or school, you may want to adopt a set of “Club Rules” or Charter, which outlines expectations of leadership and organizational structure.
- 2) **Incorporation and Non-Profit Status:** If your team is already with a school or agency, you will need to obtain a copy of their 501C3 determination letter. If not, we can assist you with the incorporation process in your state, and with your IRS application for Not For Profit Status.
- 3) **Legal and Financial Representation:** If you are starting a new team, the best practice is to have good governance practices in place with legal and financial matters. If you are with a school or agency, you should follow the organization’s accounting and legal procedures.
- 4) **Insurance:** ASHA Provides General Liability and Umbrella Coverage for all member teams. You can request a certificate of additional insured with a written request. Coverage Limits are included in the attached information.
- 5) **Board of Directors:** Your initial Board of Directors should include a President, Vice President, Treasurer and Secretary. As a best practice, these people should not be related nor live in the same household. Initial board members are usually invited by the incorporators to join the board. Selecting people who share your sense of mission and care deeply about the very purpose of the organization. Board members should possess a certain level of business or organizational competency, and should understand principles of good business practices. They should be willing to give their time and money to see the organization’s mission accomplished. They should understand that their role is governance, not management. Governance establishes mission and programs, while management actively works those programs under accountability to governance.
- 6) **Communication with Parents of Special Needs Athletes:** Understanding the schedules and needs of families with special needs will help you connect with your players and community more effectively. Parents and caregivers are strong advocates, and are often protective and defensive of the needs. Communicating with parents about expectations and boundaries is critical for success. Creating a position of “Parent Liaison” to hold parent meetings and help navigate any concerns will alleviate any potentially negative situations.
- 7) **Fund Raising and Marketing:** Raising money for your team can be a full time job. Enlist the help of parents and coaches, and work with your group to create a fundraising plan. ASHA can assist member teams with grant writing and passing through any grant awards. ASHA can also help create brochures and other marketing pieces that are specific to your team and needs.
- 8) **Budgeting and Financial Management:** You will need to budget for such things as ice time, equipment, jerseys and any overhead required for the club to function (phone line, fax line, PO Box, business cards, etc.). There is NO COST to your team for ASHA liability and Umbrella Insurance, and ASHA does not require any membership fees. After ice time and equipment, considering the costs of any festivals your group would like to attend will be important to plan for.
- 9) **Coaching:** Selecting a Head Coach, Team Manager and Assistant is key for your team. Making sure that there is adequate coaching staff for each practice takes some coordinating. The Head Coach will need to be someone with hockey experience because he or she will be primarily responsible for teaching the game to the special athletes. However, the best Head Coaching candidate does not necessarily need to be the coach with the most hockey experience. A coach that is a former player, or that has many years of coaching typical hockey players may not have the patience to coach special athletes. A Head Special Hockey Coach must be able to design and manage a practice that takes into account a wide variety of mental and physical abilities, as well as attention spans. Coaching candidates should share the mission to see hockey made available to special athletes. The candidate should be someone of even temperament, with the adaptability to handle many different on ice situations. The candidate should be willing to become a student of developmental disabilities, in order to be prepared to deal with the unique characteristics they involve. The candidate should be certified with USA Hockey level 1 certificate, and he or she should be willing to make a long-term commitment of time and effort. Part time assistant coaches are fine, but the Head Coach should be at almost every practice, game and tournament. ASHA provides adaptive practice plans and other coaching tools to help any coach wishing to get further involved.
- 10) **Using Junior Coaches:** Many teams welcome Junior coaches (ages 14 and up) to help with practices. Managing Junior Coaches and expectations is extremely important. Matching a Special Player with a Junior Coach can help form lifelong friendships and give your team a sense of camaraderie, and connection that only comes with the integrated experience. Finding the right balance of dedicated Junior Coaches and Players is unique to each team.

- 11) **Recruiting Players:** Players are often recruited through word of mouth, typical siblings and schools. You can also grow your team by connecting to local agencies that serve individuals and families. ASHA can help you with a recruiting brochure that is specific to your team if you need.
- 12) **Player Qualifications:** Special Hockey Players must be at least 5 years old, with an intellectual or developmental disability. Players do not need to be self-ambulatory or standing, they simply need to have the desire to try. While you may also register individuals with ADD/ADHD and behavioral plans, it should be noted that some children need the extra time to learn, but can transition into a typical house team. There is no maximum age, and teams are not age determined. Each Player is assessed on their ability and rated an “A, B or C” (see attached) A team may determine (due to the level of coaching and supports) any specific qualifications.
- 13) **Ice Time:** Securing ice time and setting a regular schedule of ice is another critical factor in a team’s growth and sustainability.
- 14) **Naming Your Team and Choosing a Color Scheme:** While this may seem like a small detail, having an identity that others can connect to will help people find and support your team.
- 15) **Adaptive Equipment:** ASHA allows adaptive equipment on the ice during practices and games. Adaptive equipment can include gait trainers, sleds or adaptive chairs. We do ask that all users be trained to use any equipment and take all safety precautions. In a game scenario, we expect that both coaches and referees (if applicable) hold a discussion prior to address any safety concerns. ASHA provides communication cards and other adaptive coaching tools as needed. If personal equipment needs further adaptation, ASHA resources can assist with appropriate referrals.



## “Wish List”

- Ice Time
- Gently Used Equipment
- Jerseys
- Hockey Bags (Storage)
- Brochures/Posters
- Chairs with a metal “Sled” base
- PVC Skate Guides in multiple heights
- Gait Trainer (if Needed)
- Connection to other ASHA Teams



# THE ABC'S OF SPECIAL HOCKEY

## SPECIAL HOCKEY GUIDELINES

Each coach should attempt to match lines with similarly skilled players from the other team.

The more skilled players from a team should be matched with players of the same skill level from another team.

At the lower levels, if a team has an odd number of players and requests to skate 6 players on a line instead of 5, they must ask permission from the opposing coach and inform the referee before the start of the game.

A special effort should be made to control any "A" level player playing in a "B" game not to ruin it for the rest of the players. No player should be double shifted if it can be helped.

During any game on the lower skill level or where the outcome is lopsided and the coaches agree, extra penalty shots can be awarded by the referee to help improve the game and give some players a chance to shoot on net. The coaches can designate which players get the shot.

Coaches should rate players/teams appropriately

Important that game/event organizers match teams by ability whenever possible

## RATING YOUR SPECIAL HOCKEY PLAYER

### A LEVEL (A+ TO A-)

- able to skate unassisted
- able to play at a faster pace
- able to play structured game with minimal to no assistance
- has more advanced hockey skills (skating, stick handling, passing, and shooting)
- has better understanding of game rules and concepts
- able to follow rules / instruction / drills
- always engaged in the play
- has the ability to change on the fly
- needs no prompting

### B LEVEL (B+ TO B-)

- able to skate unassisted
- able to play at a mid-level pace
- able to play structured game with minimal assistance
- has mid-level hockey skills (skating, stick handling, passing, and shooting)
- has basic understanding of game rules and concepts
- able to follow rules / instruction / drills (occasional prompting may be needed)
- always (or mostly) engaged in the play
- may need assistance in positioning
- may need occasional prompting

### C LEVEL (C+ TO C-)

- may need assistance in skating (use of walker or volunteer)
- able to play at a slower pace
- needs assistance to play structured game
- has lower level hockey skills (skating, stick handling, passing, and shooting)
- has limited understanding of game rules and concepts
- has difficulty following rules / instruction / drills
- may need some (or constant) prompting to engage in the play
- needs assistance in positioning

## A LEVEL GAMES

- Each team may have 5 skaters plus 1 goaltender on the ice during play, unless the goalie has been pulled for an extra attacker
- No coaches on the ice (exceptions may be granted for safety purposes)
- No player should be double shifted if it can be helped
- Players to change on the fly (no buzzer)
- Score will be kept (maximum 4 goal difference on scoreboard)
- Penalties will result in a penalty shot. The penalty shot must be taken by the player who was interfered with, if possible. In addition to the penalty shot, a 2 minute penalty will be served in the penalty box by the offending player if the referee or player's coach thinks they should. At no time will any team serving a penalty have less than 5 skaters on the ice
- Coaches are expected to make an effort not to run up the score in the event of a lopsided game

## B LEVEL GAMES

- Each team may have 5 skaters plus 1 goaltender on the ice during play (1 or 2 "roamers" may be on the ice during play with coaches consent)
- Two (2) mentors are allowed on the ice but are not to interfere with the play
- No player should be double shifted if it can be helped
- Players change shifts on the buzzer (on the fly can be done with coaches' agreement)
- Score will be kept (maximum 4 goal difference on scoreboard)
- A special effort should be made to control any "A" player playing in a "B" game to avoid any domination of the game at the expense of the other players
- Penalties will result in a penalty shot. The penalty shot must be taken by the player who was interfered with, if possible. In addition to the penalty shot, a 2 minute penalty will be served in the penalty box by the offending player if the referee or player's coach thinks they should. At no time will any team serving a penalty have less than 5 skaters on the ice
- Extra penalty shots can be awarded by the referee to help improve the game and give some players a chance to shoot on net (with coaches' consent)
- Coaches are expected to make an effort not to run up the score in the event of a lopsided game

## C LEVEL GAMES

- Each team may have 5 skaters plus 1 goaltender on the ice during play (2 or more "roamers" may be on the ice during play with coaches consent)
- Three (3) mentors are allowed on the ice (they may assist in the play with coaches' consent)
- Players change shifts on the buzzer
- Scoreboard will be utilized but each team awarded a goal when one team scores (actual score may be kept with coaches' agreement)
- A special effort should be made to control any "B" player playing in a "C" game to avoid any domination of the game at the expense of the other players
- Penalties will result in a penalty shot. The penalty shot may be taken by any player
- Extra penalty shots can be awarded by the referee to help improve the game and give some players a chance to shoot on net (with coaches' consent)



# 2024 2025 American Special Hockey Association Member & Affiliate Insurance Summary

The following is a summary of the insurance policies provided to ASHA registered members & affiliates in good standing.

## General Liability Coverage

General liability coverage provides commercial general liability insurance with a \$4,000,000 general annual aggregate limit. This coverage protects the American Special Hockey Association (ASHA) and its registered members against claims of negligence during an ASHA-sanctioned event. General Liability Insurance provides coverage for negligence, injuries, property damage, and lawsuits including but not limited to:

- Third-party bodily injuries.
- Third-party property damage.
- Products Liability
- Advertising injuries.

### General Liability Limit of Insurance

- \$4,000,000 General Aggregate Limit
- \$4,000,000 Products/Completed Operations Aggregate Limit
- \$2,000,000 Personal and Advertising Injury Limit (Any One Person or Organization)
- \$2,000,000 Each Occurrence Limit
- \$100,000 Rented To You Limit (Any One Premises)
- \$5,000 Medical Expense Limit (Any One Person)



## Accident Medical Benefits

Accident & Health Insurance is excess medical payments for athletes, volunteers, coaches and officials, and participants or affiliates of ASHA, if injured during sponsored and supervised activities. The coverage may pay up to a maximum of \$50,000 for covered medical expenses incurred for medically-necessary treatment required as a result of an accidental bodily injury. All medical and dental expenses are payable in excess and only after all other valid and collectible insurance in force at the time of the accident has been applied to the claim.

Accidental Medical Benefits: Full Excess – coverage will respond after the primary insurance of the injured party, or in the absence of primary health insurance. For covered incidents, the following coverage applies:

- \$500 deductible
- Accident Medical Expense \$25,000
- Benefit Period: 52 weeks
- Accidental Death: \$10,000
- Accidental Dismemberment: \$10,000
- AD&D Aggregate Limit: \$500,000

## Crime Coverage

Crime coverage is a necessity and has a variety of purposes; ASHA carries a \$25,000 limit for each of the following:

- Employee Theft – covers ASHA from loss due to theft from employees or volunteers
- Funds Transfer (including 'social engineering' coverage) – covers ASHA for loss of funds due to unauthorized transfers, willful or not
- Counterfeit Funds & Money Orders – covers ASHA for unauthorized transactions or checks

## Directors & Officers Coverage

(available optionally to Member Teams)

Directors & Officers Insurance (D&O) is a business liability policy that protects board members who are sued over decisions they make while serving on your board. The policy usually covers legal expenses for accusations of discrimination, defamation, and mismanagement of funds.

- D&O Limits of Insurance
- \$1,000,000 Each Policy Period
  - \$1,000,000 Aggregate
  - \$1,000 Retention

Association members are encouraged to independently obtain additional D&O Coverages. Contact us for details.

## Participant Legal Liability Coverage

Participant Legal Liability (PLL) offers coverage if an incident occurs during participation which is the alleged result of poor or defective quality and conditions of the playing surface or area. PLL is an essential part of any sports & recreation insurance policy and is a requirement for ASHA and all its affiliates.

All normal ice hockey-related activities, such as games, practices and scrimmages, between registered ASHA hockey teams and affiliates (in good standing) are automatically sanctioned/approved. Coverage is provided for affiliated members from the United States and Canada for approved and sanctioned events. Regular use of premises for meetings and fundraising do NOT require a special event sanction/approval, unless the proprietor (owner) requires being named as an additional insured on ASHA's coverages. The selling of alcoholic beverages will not be sanctioned/approved, and such sales are not covered. Other restrictions apply.

**Certificates of insurance will be provided with a completed and approved  
2024/2025 ASHA Season Member/Affiliate Team Application and Event Sanctioning Request.**

No certificate of insurance will be issued unless the proper request form has been submitted, and the activity or event is sanctioned/approved by the ASHA Risk Manager.

**While this may seem overwhelming, we promise it's not!**

## **Here are the basic steps to start a not for profit special hockey team**

This process is very similar to creating a regular corporation except that you have to take the extra steps of applying for tax-exempt status with the IRS and their state tax division. These are the steps to take to incorporate your nonprofit:

1. Choose a business/team name - Make sure to check the state-by-state information on the various laws that apply to naming a nonprofit in your state.
2. Submit New Team Application to ASHA: This form is to register your Information with ASHA and to issue your Program a Certificate of Insurance. Each program should have at least two coaches and a team manager (program manager). After submitting your ASHA New Team Application, it will be reviewed and your program will be registered as an ASHA Member Organization. Your Program will be given a program page on the ASHA website and it will be time to start to register your players, coaches and volunteers.
3. Register volunteers and players for ASHA. Ensure at all adults and volunteers are compliant with background and Safe Sport Abuse Training.
4. Appoint a Board of Directors - Draft your bylaws with guidance from your Board of Directors. These are the operating rules for your nonprofit. (ASHA can provide samples and templates to review)
5. Decide on a legal structure - Choose whether your organization will be a trust, corporation, or association. (In most cases this is a corporation, but check with your State's regulations to determine which is best for you)
6. File your incorporation paperwork - You must next file formal paperwork, or articles of incorporation, and pay a small filing fee to your state. Look up your state office through the National Association of State Charity Officials (NASCO).
7. Apply for tax-exempt status - A nonprofit organization may be eligible for exemption from federal income tax. The IRS provides guidance and instructions on applying for tax-exempt status. Learn more about federal tax exemption requirements in IRS Publication 557 - Tax-Exempt Status for Your Organization.
8. Obtain necessary licenses and permits - When working with individuals with disabilities, there may be additional licenses, permits or training mandated by your State. Contact your Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (or like title) to ensure that you are compliant.

