MAHA Winter Meetings
January 23 - 25, 2026
Associate Coach-in-Chief, Female Development Report

The Coaching Education Program (CEP) continued to deliver its curriculum in a fully virtual format. The expanded use of the virtual clinic platform has further established CEP as a national program, allowing coaches to attend clinics offered by any affiliate. As a result, Michigan coaches have benefited from instruction delivered by coach developers from other districts, while Michigan coach developers have educated coaches from across the country. The virtual platform has also provided increased flexibility, enabling coaches to select clinics that best align with their schedules.

Associations should encourage their coaches to begin their CEP training as early as possible. In Michigan, coaching clinics start as early as July, giving Michigan-based coaches an opportunity to get a head start on requirements. We have also found that associations that set an internal coach-education deadline earlier than USA Hockey's annual December requirement see stronger completion rates and fewer last-minute issues.

Michigan Coaching Education Numbers

Confirmed as of Dec. 17, 2025

- Level 1: 8 clinics | 422 coaches
- Level 2: 14 clinics | 759 coaches
- Level 3: 11 clinics | 482 coaches
- Level 4: 6 clinics | 281 coaches

Updated Totals (Estimates as of Dec. 30, 2025)

- Level 1: +2 clinics | +140 coaches
- Level 4: +2 clinics | +120 coaches

Estimated Totals - All Levels (as of Dec. 30)

- Total Clinics Hosted: 42 Total Coaches Educated: 2,204+

In addition, Associate Coach-in-Chief for Goaltending, Brad Johnson, hosted five (5) Bronze Goaltending Clinics this season and continues to be a tremendous goaltending resource for the greater community.

By making this a consistent practice, these totals reflect the Michigan District's ability to meet or exceed the number of clinics assigned by USA Hockey for the 2025 clinic season. See Coach-in-Chief Matt Kakabeeke's report for the full CEP Clinic Summary.

CEP Continuing Education Credits

For the 2025 - 26 season, coaches were awarded USA Hockey Continuing Education (CE) credits for attendance at the following events:

- The Coaches Site Live - June 2025
- Michigan State University Hockey Coaches Conference - July 2025
- Michigan High School Hockey Coaches Association Meeting - October 2025

These continuing education credit opportunities are likely to be available again for the 2026 - 27 season -- coaches should be on the lookout for MAHA communications with additional details.

Student Coach Recognition - Youth Leader in the Community

Elizabeth “Liz” Kiryakoza, a 2011 birth year, who continues to make a remarkable community impact on and off the ice. This season, she plays for Honeybaked 19U Tier II Split Season and is a freshman on the Orchard Lake St. Mary’s girls varsity hockey team. She also hosted her 4th Annual Detroit Girls Hockey Fights Cancer event, raising nearly $2,000 in 2025 alone, and has raised more than $12,000 for the American Cancer Society over the past four years - an effort inspired by her brother’s strength in his journey with cancer. Liz began as a student coach on her 10U team and continues to volunteer regularly with younger players and Learn to Play sessions. Beyond hockey, she volunteers weekly at St. William Catholic Church in Walled Lake, plays piano, sings in her school choir, participates in multiple school clubs, and will compete on the St. Mary’s Clay Shooting Team this spring. She also maintains a 4.03 GPA.

The Coaching Leadership of MAHA proudly recognizes Liz’s efforts and the leadership she displays. There are many leaders like Liz in our Michigan community, and their work is what makes our hockey culture so strong. Great leaders create future leaders.

Michigan District Female Role Model for Growth

Michigan hockey clubs and organizations often encourage leadership opportunities through a Student Coaching program for players ages 13-17 (https://www.usahockey.com/studentcoaches). Encourage student coaches ages 18 & 19, and alumnae to take a CEP course, have an opportunity to advance, and acknowledge their volunteer roles are valued in their community.

Research underscores why this work matters: girls with strong social connections in sport are three times more likely to keep playing, and 80% of girls cite a positive relationship with their coach as a top reason they stay involved. In that context, seeing women in leadership roles can be a meaningful confidence-builder for female student-athletes - reinforcing belonging, aspiration, and self-belief. Grassroots coaches are supported year-round through monthly “Bring It In” Zoom sessions and USA Hockey’s broader network provides a platform to exchange experiences, challenges, and practical solutions. Recent discussion topics have included goaltending, Girls Try Hockey events, youth programming and NHL partnerships, ice rink management, equipment rental programs, official - coach relationship building, and more. Coaches who are Level 4 or Level 5 may request Continuing Education Credits by coordinating with Kris Wing.

Kris sends email invites to the monthly Zoom sessions and to a GroupMe chat to USAH registered coaches. Email kristine.wing@usahockey.org if there is a coach interested in joining a female coaching network.

Suggestions are welcome for expanding outreach, strengthening collaboration, and accelerating the growth of female coaches at both the local and district levels. Please email the ACIC and FD with highlights from your team or association, along with specific examples of what makes Michigan’s hockey community a standard-setter - and how it continues to grow stronger each season.

USA Hockey National Player Development Camps

The 2026 USA Hockey Girls Player Development Camps begin July 13 in Oxford, Ohio. These camps are designed for players ages 15 - 18 and run through August, with an emphasis on player development while also serving as evaluation camps for various international team opportunities. Every game is livestreamed exclusively on USAHockeyTV.com, and the broadcasts are a valuable resource

for both coaches and players -- a practical way to study the pace, details, and decision-making standards that are expected at those levels.

In addition to player programming, these camps also offer coaching opportunities across a variety of roles (on-ice instruction, off-ice video and team support, player/goaltender evaluations, and operational support). Associations are encouraged to share the coach application information when it is released --typically late February through March-- to ensure strong coach participation statewide. More details will be distributed by the MAHA Girls' and Women's Representative; association representatives and coaches may also contact me in my role as a USAH National Camp Coach Mentor with questions regarding coaching pathways and opportunities to be involved at camp in Oxford, OH.

MAHA Development Camps

2026 MAHA Girls Player Development Camp will be held at Patterson Ice Arena in Grand Rapids, Michigan, from April 24 - 26, 2026. For additional details, please visit the MAHA website, or contact Jean Laxton or the MAHA Player Development Manager, Joe Jones.

2026 MAHA High Performance Camp will be held August 6 - 8, 2026 and is designed for boys and girls ages 14 - 16. The camp's mission is to expose Michigan's top young athletes to elite-level coaching, innovative teaching methods, and developmental concepts they may not encounter with their regular teams or hockey academies. For additional details, please visit the MAHA website, or contact Jean Laxton or the MAHA Player Development Manager, Joe Jones.

Coach and Player Development Support from USA Hockey Available

For Michigan-based programming, coaches and local associations are encouraged to connect with Dan Jablonic, USA Hockey Manager, Player Development, to coordinate coach and player development support in your area. Dan can help align your programming with Long-Term Athlete Development principles, strengthen coach development initiatives, and provide parent education resources that support a healthier, more informed hockey environment. We are fortunate to have Dan as a resource for our district; he is an excellent mentor and a steady partner in advancing both coach and player development. To explore opportunities such as clinics, ADM support, and broader development partnerships, please reach out directly: dan.jablonic@usahockey.org.

Michigan Impact on the PWHL & U.S. Women's Olympic Team

PWHL Representation as reported by *The Hockey News* (Jan 1, 2026):

> ***"When you go out for warm-ups and you see all the girls wearing jerseys that you wore growing up… now they're able to kind of dream about being in your shoes instead of going to a Red Wings game and hoping they had something to play. Now they really do."***
>
> **- Mellissa Channell-Watkins, PWHL Vancouver**

Michigan Players in the PWHL:

- Boston Fleet - Amanda Thiele (Milford), Megan Keller (Farmington), Riley Brengman (China Twp)
- New York Sirens - Abby Roque (Sault Ste. Marie), Kaley Doyle (Livonia)
- Vancouver - Mellissa Channell-Watkins (Plymouth)

- Montreal Victoire - Shiann Darkangelo (Royal Oak)
- Toronto - Emma Gentry (Alpena), Clara Van Wieren (Okemos)

Coaching Impact in the PWHL:

- Brian Idalski (Warren) - Head Coach, Vancouver
- Josh Sciba (Westland) - Assistant Coach, New York

2026 U.S. Women's Olympic Team - Michigan Representation

Michigan continues to play a powerful role in shaping the future of women's hockey, with five individuals representing the state on the 2026 Olympic roster and staff.

Players:

- Megan Keller - Defense (Farmington Hills)
- Kirsten Simms - Forward (Plymouth)

Staff:

- Josh Sciba - Assistant Coach (Westland)
- Ellen Hughes - Player Development (Canton)
- Carrie Aprik - Sports Dietitian (Royal Oak)

Outdoor Women's College Hockey Game at Clark Park - Free Event

Clark Park is hosting a free outdoor ACHA Division 1 women's college hockey game in Detroit: Saturday, January 25, 2026 - 2:30 PM Michigan State vs. University of Michigan

This is a high-level game featuring athletes who have earned the right to compete while pursuing degrees at top-notch universities. You may also recognize a few familiar names -- many players came up through Michigan's local associations before reaching the college level. And for the student-athletes who arrived here from other states or countries, this is a great showcase of how strong Michigan's girls' and women's hockey support truly is. MSU ranked #14 | U of M ranked #15. Choose your colors and support the continued growth of women's college hockey in Michigan.

Closing Thoughts

The representation we're seeing at the highest levels of the women's game -- in the PWHL, on national teams, and on the Olympic stage -- is the direct result of long-term investment in coaching leadership and player development. Michigan continues to lead the way.

And yet, none of this is possible without volunteers at the grassroots level. The work you do every day with youth players -- teaching, supporting, listening, mentoring, and modeling what it means to be part of a team -- is what builds the foundation for future national teams, professional leagues, and Olympic dreams.

Thank you for the countless hours, the behind-the-scenes preparation, the patience, and the often thankless work it takes to make coming to the rink a positive, meaningful, and lifelong experience for players and families. Your commitment does more than develop athletes -- it helps shape confident people and future leaders in our sport and in our communities.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kim Gallagher Michigan District, Associate Coach-in-Chief, Female Development Info@DetroitPerformanceHockey.com