

RETURN TO PLAY

2020-21 AMHA COVID-19 Plan





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1 INTRODUCTION

Airdrie Minor Hockey Association is dedicated to keeping our athletes, members, volunteers, staff and our family safe. The safety of our hockey community is of the most importance.

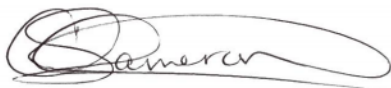
AMHA has been diligently working with Hockey Alberta, the City of Airdrie, Alberta Health Services, and other minor hockey associations in constructing our 'Return to Hockey' plan that will allow our athletes to get back on the ice!

The intent of this document is to provide guidance on how we will execute our 'Return to Hockey' plan, while focusing on safety of our athletes and following current Alberta Health guidelines and restrictions. During these unprecedented times, we ask that you be patient and understanding, as AMHA needs to be fluid as requirements are changing rapidly. As guidance from governing bodies evolves, AMHA will update this document accordingly to remain in compliance with requirements.

We are planning to have similar 'phases' of hockey as Hockey Alberta's Return to Hockey, albeit under "the new normal", using different strategies to achieve our outcomes. We are hopeful that this plan will continue to develop our athletes as people, teammates, community members, athletes, and hockey players. These phases include:

1. Prep Phase - focus is on development and conditioning in preparation for the upcoming season, this phase will take place in August and September.
2. Evaluation Phase - This phase will take place in September and will be for the sole purpose of creating like skilled 'Cohort Groups'. This process will be done through physical distanced skill-based evaluations.
3. Development Season Phase - Once athletes are sorted into cohorts, they will now be able to practice and compete in mini games with other members of the cohort. Players will not be permitted to play against teams or players outside of their cohort until applicable restrictions are lifted. This will be in October/November.
4. Regular Season - This is the final phase of our plan. There are two options:
 - a. All restrictions are lifted and AMHA will return to our traditional program.
 - b. If restrictions are not lifted, we will continue with cohorts and mini games but may revise cohort groups during the holiday break meeting the 14-day isolation requirement. In some cases, cohorts may change after a two-week sole practice period.

We know this will be a challenging year, and so different from what we are used to. For some it will make their intro to hockey such a different experience, for others who are in their final year will experience a season like no other. On behalf of the Executive Committee, I would like to thank you, our membership, for being loyal to AMHA and for trusting that we can get through this together. Thank you.



Christie Cameron | President Airdrie Minor Hockey Association

O: (403) 912-2680 |
president@airdriehockey.com | www.airdriehockey.com

2 PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Regardless of "the new normal" our objects remain the same:

- To promote, govern, and improve minor hockey in Airdrie and other areas that may be added from time to time
- To foster a community spirit among Members, supports and teams
- To increase the interest in the game of hockey in Airdrie

Our values and beliefs remain the same:

- We believe that honesty, integrity and fairness must be demonstrated in all aspects of our Association.
- We believe that respect and open communication will be the foundation of our Association.
- We believe that through cooperation and commitment we will be an Association that we are proud of.
- We will strive to be creative and flexible to meet the needs of all stakeholders.
- By demonstrating the values and beliefs of the Association, we will be accountable and responsible to all stakeholders.
- Emotional and physical safety is paramount in all aspects of our operations

People - Teammates - Community Members - Athletes - Hockey Players

Our Mission Statement remains the same:

Our mission is to provide fair opportunity for positive experiences through a safe and fun environment, with strong, progressive and quality programs for all members of the hockey community.

In addition to these objectives, we will also focus on:

- Safety - creating a safe, healthy environment for our athletes, coaches and volunteers. Safety is critical to ensure the continuation of the Return to Hockey plan.
- Development - create a competitive hockey environment that allows for growth and development, grouping players into appropriate skill level.
- Game plan - Ensuring that some variation of game play can exist (3v3, 4v4, 5v5, etc.).
- Fluidity - allow for flexible transition within our programs to enable us to move within Alberta Health Services guidelines as well as movement through the Hockey Alberta Return to Play phases.

3 REQUIREMENTS

The current guidance, under the Alberta Government Phase 2 stage, has two formats we will be using to operate our programs:

- **Physical Distancing** - all athletes, coaches, etc. must remain 2 meters apart at all times. This will be skill-based programming, focusing on development.
- **Cohorts** - up to 50 participants grouped together to participate in a cohort. No physical distancing required on the ice surface (being on the bench will be considered the 'playing field' and physical distancing will not be required), however physical distancing will be required when not on the 'playing field' (i.e. in the dressing room). If physical distancing cannot be maintained, the use of masks will be required.
 - Cohorts must remain together for duration of Stage 2, unless participants enter into a 14-day isolation period, after which they can be moved to a new cohort group.
 - Note: Per the Government of Alberta: "An individual is only to be part of one **sport cohort** at any time".

In addition, we will be following these AHS guidance as well:

- Programs should operate within a specified, community, zone, region, where travel is limited.
- Game play/competitions will be allowed but only within the team/cohort group. Interaction with others from other cohorts will be permitted for development only and only when physical distancing can be maintained (i.e. additional development for Goalies or players).
- AMHA is required to track attendance of all participants and interactions, maintaining these records for a period of time upon completion of the activity. Daily as a family we ask that you review the Alberta Health Services Daily Checklist prior to attending any activity, see #4 Protocols. Any participant answering YES to any of the questions must NOT attend or participate in the program that day. In the event that their symptoms get worse and are confirmed to be COVID-19 and are not related to a pre-existing illness or health condition: cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose or sore throat then the individual must isolate for 10 days. It is imperative that families comply.
- AMHA members must ensure that they are following all City of Airdrie facility guidelines. For full details, please view the City of Airdrie Arena Letter on our website homepage under Covid Guidelines. It is important to ensure we are all following City of Airdrie facility guidelines as well as direction from facility employees. It will be the facilities that determine spectator access, dressing room use and may have stronger requirements with regards to participation.
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) may be required by the City of Airdrie, through a by-law or facility guidelines. It will be the responsibility of the participant, coaches, and parents etc. to abide by all applicable requirements. PPE will not be supplied by AMHA.
- Under the current Hockey Alberta Development Phase, traditional league play is NOT permitted, only mini games are permitted within the cohort.
- Tournaments & Travel Permits are NOT permitted during the Development Phase of Hockey Alberta's Return to Play plan. No travel permits or tournament sanctions will be approved during this phase.

[Hockey Alberta Return to Hockey \(June 30/20\)](#)

4 PROTOCOLS AND SAFETY

Safety is of the utmost importance. The health, safety and well-being of our athletes, coaches, volunteers, staff and families are the top priority. We are in this together and we must all work together to keep each other safe. This section highlights some guidelines as provided to AMHA from Alberta Health Services, Hockey Alberta and the City of Airdrie. Situations, like "what will happen if there is a positive case?" cannot be answered at this time, AHS is dealing with situations case by case. We must follow reporting guidelines and take direction as it is given.

DO NOT ATTEND HOCKEY ACTIVITIES IF YOU ARE SICK OR HAVE ANY SYMPTOMS

It is imperative that players and/or coaches do not attend AMHA activities if they are unwell or required to isolate as per federal and/or provincial requirements. It is critical that athletes and families adhere to all guidance as to not jeopardize the health of our athletes and families, or AMHAs ability to bring hockey to our members.

Contact Tracing and Symptom Screening

As per above, AMHA is required to track attendance of all participants and interactions and maintain those records for a period of time. This will be done at the start of each event. Daily families are required to review the Alberta Health Services Daily Checklist, that was described in section 3 and a link can be found on our homepage.

Anyone who has traveled internationally, is sick or has been in contact with someone who has COVID-19 is not permitted to attend practices or games. Participants must adhere to provincial and federal requirements. Follow AHS and government guidelines if you are not feeling well. Acquaint yourself with COVID-19 signs and symptoms.

DO NOT ATTEND HOCKEY ACTIVITIES IF YOU ARE SICK OR HAVE ANY SYMPTOMS

[Government of Alberta - Symptoms](#)

Reporting

Members and sanctioned partners are to report any COVID-19 cases as required by Alberta Health Services, Member, hockey association, league and facility. AMHA must be notified immediately after Alberta Health has been notified.

[Hockey Canada - Reporting a Positive COVID-19 Case](#)

Hockey Canada Guidelines/Resources

Hockey Canada, Hockey Alberta and its 13 Member Branches have built a comprehensive Safety Guidelines document, along with an FAQ document, to provide direction and support as organizations (administrators, coaches, managers, safety staff, trainers), parents and players prepare to return to hockey. The information included in these documents should be reviewed regularly, as it provides a solid framework to follow for any organization (and its members) as Return to Hockey planning is undertaken.

4 PROTOCOLS AND SAFETY (Cont'd)

[Hockey Canada Safety Guidelines](#)

The Safety Guidelines provide guidance on a safe and positive return to hockey experience for our participants and stakeholders. Sections include:

- Insurance Coverage
- Hygiene Requirements and Checklist
- Recommended Return to Hockey Procedures
- What to do if there is a positive COVID-19 test
- Junior Hockey guidelines
- Guidelines for Officials

Responsibilities

Parents and players also play key roles in the Return to Hockey. Their responsibilities include:

- **Stay at home if experiencing any symptoms.**
- Become educated on the safety protocols and procedures prior to attending session and adhere to them while at the session.
- Follow all AHS, HA, City of Airdrie and AMHA requirements.
- Ensure each player has his/her own water bottle which is sanitized prior to each session, and his/her own hand sanitizer (for use in dressing room).
- Ensure equipment is dried, cleaned and/or sanitized following each session.
- Arrange appropriate transportation to and from the session.
- Refrain from cheering and yelling as it presents a high risk of spreading droplets.
- Do not spit, blow nose freely or release any bodily fluid anywhere in any facility due to an extremely high risk of virus transfer.

A detailed outline of responsibilities of Administrators, Coaches and Managers, Safety Person and Trainer, Players and Parents can be found in the Hockey Canada Safety Guidelines – Roles and Responsibilities.

[Hockey Canada Roles and Responsibilities](#)

5 FACILITIES

AMHA does not own or manage any of the arena facilities within the City of Airdrie. The City of Airdrie has implemented protocols to meet the requirements of Alberta Health. They also have the ability to strengthen these guidelines if they feel it is important to the safe operation of the facility.

As user groups, it is our responsibility to follow the requirements as outlined by the City of Airdrie and ensure that we are respecting the premises. The facility management has the ability to cancel any and all bookings and stop AMHA programs from operating in their building.

Not respecting the facilities protocols and procedures jeopardizes the entire AMHA program.

Please note that each facility may have slightly different protocols in place, therefore upon entering a facility for the first-time families are encouraged to read the information posted at the entrance and follow the guidelines.

In addition, the City of Airdrie has provided a guiding document regarding arena use. Should AMHA utilize other ice (i.e. Crossfield), our members need to be familiar with all applicable facilities requirements. These can be found on the home page of our website www.airdriehockey.com under the Covid Guidelines.

- Highlights for our athletes include:
 - accessing the facility 15 minutes prior to the booking start time
 - Participants should arrive to the arena fully dressed, including skates whenever possible. If skates must be tied at the arena, dressing rooms will be used, and physical distancing and masks will be required.
 - Participants should only have one parent/guardian in the building per child.
 - Participants should bring their own filled water bottle; fountains are not in use.
 - Parent/guardian may accompany their child (if necessary) to the change room and then head immediately to the viewing area, if applicable. Parent/guardian must maintain physical distance while doing so.
 - Parents/guardians must maintain physical distance in the viewing areas at all times.
 - Dressing room use is discouraged. Participants may quickly pass through change rooms to drop off skate guards or to access the ice. Change rooms have a 6-person capacity (Genesis Place) or 8-person capacity (Ron Ebbesen) for non-cohort groups.
 - There is no loitering in the lobby. This is a drop off/pick up zone only.
 - Participants must vacate the arena within 15 minutes after booking end time.
 - Parent/guardian may wait in the lobby to collect their child (if necessary) and then promptly vacate the building.
 - No shower facilities available.
 - All participants must refrain from spitting on or off the ice.
 - If attendees are unable to maintain physical distance, non-medical face masks should be worn in common areas.

6 POLICIES

Please refer to AMHA's website for up to date policies. These can be found here:

[AMHA Bylaws, Policies and Procedures](#).

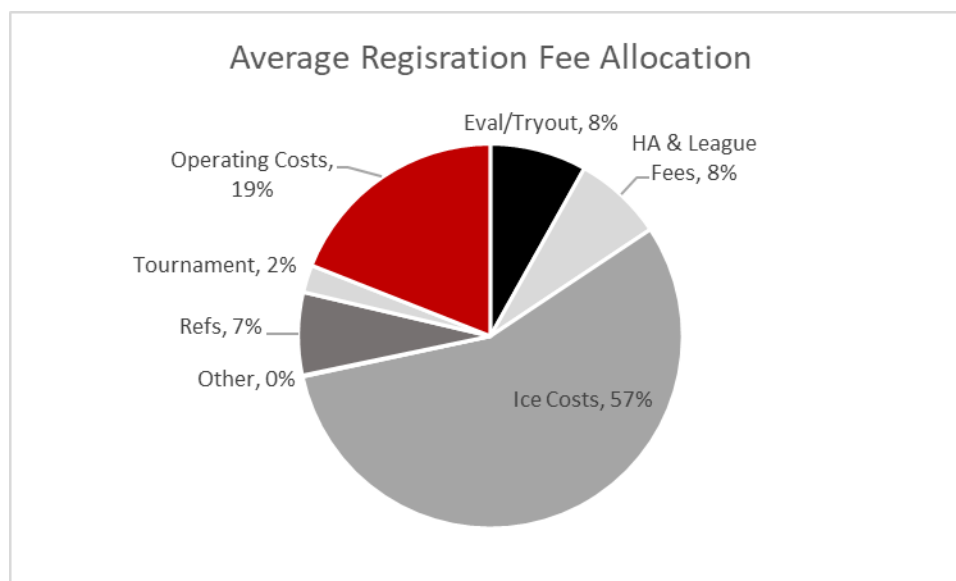
Please note, specific to refunds, [Registration Policy 7.3](#) states:

- 2.5 *Refunds will not be made to players or teams in the event of ice cancellations that are out of Airdrie Minor Hockey's (AMHA) control. AMHA will attempt to reschedule any cancelled ice if there is ice available in the current season, but if ice is cancelled by the City or for some other unforeseen reason and AMHA is not able to reschedule, they will not be obligated to refund members or teams.*

As per the above, in the event the season length is affected by a lockdown or a cohort is required to quarantine for a period, AMHA will do everything in their power to be fair to their members. However, please understand that there are several considerations and factors that impact how registration dollars are spent.

Some expenses are fixed and will be difficult to recuperate in the event of a cancelled season, while other expenses may be easier to recuperate with enough notice. It is not possible to determine any of those details at this point, but please know that AMHA will do everything they can to ensure fair treatment of players and families and return as much of their registration fees as possible in the unfortunate event that the season length is negatively impacted.

As a reference, please see the high-level average breakdown of how AMHA hockey registration fees are spent:



7 RETURN TO HOCKEY

A safe return to hockey that meets the guidelines of Stage 2 of the Government of Alberta's Relaunch strategy is paramount. As mentioned earlier in this document there are two ways AMHA can operate programs, either **Physically Distanced** or using **Cohorts**. Hockey is a contact sport and while we can operate skill development sessions that keep players physical distanced, we understand that in order to meet all of the key objectives of our program, we will need to use a cohorts model for various phases of our return to play.

Government of Alberta Cohorting Guidelines:

Cohorting has been identified as an option for Sports teams. If an athlete is participating in a camp or program not using physical distancing, that group is considered a Cohort. A Cohort is a closed, small group of no more than 50 individuals who participate in the same sport or activity and remain together for the duration of Stage 2 of the Government of Alberta's relaunch. If Cohorting is being used, this should be clearly communicated to participants/parents prior to Cohort formation.

Sports teams can play in region-only cohorts (mini-leagues) of up to 50 players and coaches.

Cohorts include those individuals (participants, officials, coaches and trainers) who cannot maintain a 2-metre distance from others at all times.

- *Sports cohort numbers do not include parents or spectators.*
- *Instructors, Coaches and/or Team Officials can be part of one Cohort and remain with that group throughout the duration of this program, or they may maintain physical distancing from all other participants. If physical distancing is maintained, this not considered cohorting. Individuals can only be part of one sport Cohort.*
- *Interacting with the same people and the same cohorts will be safer than constantly changing the people you interact with.*
- *Government of Alberta has indicated that: Cohorts are only to play within the same geographical region (for example, within a county, town or quadrant of a city). Activities should be restricted to local regional opportunities. Participants should not seek sport, physical activity and recreation opportunities in other regions, or out of province. Cross jurisdictional, or inter-regional, play should not occur at this stage.*
- *An individual is only to be part of one **Sport Cohort** at any time. If an individual wish to move to a new Sport Cohort, s/he is to complete a 14-day non-participation period prior to joining the new Cohort.*
- **NOTE: Even while using cohorting, physical distancing must be maintained in all aspects of hockey activity except while participants are on the ice (for example, dressing rooms and in public areas).**
 - *Options could include indicating physical distancing by using tape to mark areas on player benches in dressing rooms.*
 - *When using Cohorting, it is recommended to try and utilize physical distancing on the ice whenever possible.*

7 RETURN TO HOCKEY (Cont'd)

AMHA Program Phases

The primary concern for AMHA is that the programs offered focus on the health and safety of all athletes, coaches, and families. The intent is not to re-create the regular season structure, but to offer development, modified game play and fun.

Phase	Timing	Activity
Prep	August	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Programs will be delivered using Physical Distancing.• Skills camps and development sessions.
Evaluations	August/September	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evaluation and sorting will be delivered using Physical Distancing.• Time trials and skill-based evaluation sessions will be used to form cohorts for the 'Development Season'
Development Season	October	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Programs will be delivered using cohorts.• Cohorts will group like skilled players together, 35-48 players, depending on division.• Within these cohorts, parity mini teams will be created and may play mini games against each other.• In addition, cohorts can participate in on-ice training, off-ice training and game play.
Regular Season	TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Upon approval, return to regular play format• If restrictions are not lifted, we will continue with cohorts and mini games but may revise cohort groups or partnering MHAs.

Prep Season

Prep skates and Conditioning Camps were made available for athletes during registration. These camps will be done by a third-party provider. The sessions will all be done with social distancing.

Evaluations

As in prior seasons, we may use external providers for time trials. This will ensure accuracy, efficiency and physically distancing. After time trials players will be evaluated on skill-based drills, using physically distancing. Volunteers will be required as evaluators. External providers may also be used to facilitate Goalie evaluations. This will ensure practiced individuals are assessing appropriate skills.

AMHA will be defining what skill-based drills will be assessed. The Directors will enlist their coordinators to find sufficient evaluators, ensuring that evaluators are assessing divisions other than their players'. During the evaluations, only the evaluators will be permitted to view the skills-based drills. The evaluators, coordinators and directors will be present for the skills-based drills assessments and any 'war-room' discussions may take place in the stands. Evaluators, Coordinators and Directors will maintain physical distancing at all times. Evaluation sheets will be collected by the Director, to arrange for data entry. Spectators must refrain from entering the viewing areas to ensure evaluators have sufficient space to physically distance from each other.

7 RETURN TO HOCKEY (Cont'd)

Once cohorts of like skilled players are formed, cohorts can break into parity mini teams, if applicable.

Evaluations for AA will continue to be Coach Selection. Coaches will be mindful of the impact of their evaluation process on players that will be released to other streams to ensure that players will be able to participate, adhering to all guidelines without needing to isolate.

Development Season

Stream	Division	Notes:
AA/Female/Competitive	U9 U11 U13 U15 U16 U18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cohort with another applicable tiered team(s) from other MHAs (if possible); else AMHA cohorts will be created with like skilled groups (i.e. 1-45; 45-90 etc.) and parity/balanced teams within the cohort will be created. Max 50 participants, including other MHA if applicable Mini games will be played within the cohort May practice for 2 weeks, have game play, then have solo practices for two weeks, then mini games with a different cohort. no shared practices if cohort with other MHA; if AMHA cohort, may have shared practices Transition to 1 team per tier for 'Regular Season'
City	Rec U7 U9 U11 U13 U15 U18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cohort with AMHA teams Max 50 participants Mini games will be played within the cohort May have shared practices May have mini games, 3v3, 4v4, 5v5 All HC guidelines will be followed, including U7/U9 third or half ice practices and games as per HC Intro to Hockey May practice for 2 weeks, have game play, then have solo practices for two weeks, then mini games with a different cohort. Cohorts will be like skilled groups (i.e. 1-45; 45-90 etc.) and parity/balanced teams within the cohort will be created. Transition to appropriate team sizes should we move to HA Regular Season phase.

7 RETURN TO HOCKEY (Cont'd)

Regular Season

AMHA will follow the lead of the Government of Alberta, Alberta Health, and Hockey Alberta to determine when it is appropriate to transition from the 'Development Season' to a return to normal 'Regular Season'. We are optimistic that we will be able to transition to a traditional 'Regular Season', perhaps with a different timeline. However, we will only do so when it is safe and when the approval has been given.

One of the key objectives of the AMHAs Return to Play plan is to allow for flexible transition between the phases. AMHAs 'Evaluations' and 'Development Season' phases are designed with the intent to transition easily to a traditional 'Regular Season'.

If and when we are able to transition cohorts will be split into formal teams and sizes. The plan as written does not require that 'full evaluations' need to be redone or completed again for this transition. Players have already been evaluated base on their skill during the 'Evaluations' phase.

AMHA will be prepared to transition into the next phase of Hockey Alberta's Return to Play Regular Season phase if and when it is safe to do so. In house cohorts will have rich data from the 'Development Season' to form applicable teams.

Referees

Decisions still needs to be made with regards to the use of referees. As always, Hockey Canada and Hockey Alberta will determine training and clinic protocols. During the 'Development Phase' referees are not required. AMHA is waiting on further clarification from Hockey Alberta, who in turn is waiting on further clarification from AHS and Hockey Canada regarding several important clarifications regarding referees such as:

- Are referees part of the cohort?
- Can they effectively do their job while physically distancing (ex. breaking up a scrum)?

Coaches, Team Officials and Off-Ice Officials

Decisions still needs to be made with regards to coaches, team officials, and off-ice officials. As always, Hockey Canada and Hockey Alberta will determine training and clinic protocols for coaches. Hockey Alberta has announced that coaching clinics will be available this season and deadlines remain the same.

Coaches are permitted to coach in multiple cohorts provided they are only a 'cohort coach' (contact with players) in one cohort, i.e. A coach can be a 'cohort coach' with a U7 team, and a 'physically distanced' coach with a U13 team.

- AMHA still needs to determine the proper usage for coaches, managers and other team officials such as:
Will their roles and responsibilities change?
- Will they assist with contact tracking and symptom screening?
- Will they need to use PPE?

AMHA will work with the City of Airdrie to determine the appropriate usage of off-ice officials (timekeepers and scorekeepers).

8 FAQ

General:

Q. AMHAs fees were based on a regular season, what if there isn't a regular season?

A. At the time the fees were calculated, the budget was based on a regular season. Because of the uncertainty of the season, we cannot begin to recalculate fees on so many unknowns. AMHA will be fiscally responsible with our members' fees.

Q. Are players allowed to opt-out of the development/early phases and rejoin for the Regular season?

A. No, players must be registered with AMHA from the beginning.

Q. Can my child be involved in multiple cohorts? For example, can they be in a school based cohort as well as a hockey cohort?

A. Cohorting guidelines state that "an individual is only to be part of one Sport Cohort at any time." This means that they can be involved in a hockey cohort in addition to a school-based cohort. Technically they may also be part of another sport program that operates under the 'physical distancing' criteria. I.e. A power skating class or school based 'skill based' program that has limited #'s and operates under physical distancing criteria.

Q. Why is physical distancing mandatory in the dressing rooms if they are within their cohort?

A. This is a Government of Alberta guideline and a Hockey Alberta mandate. Technically, there should be no activities with any close contact. HOWEVER, if the activity must have close contact (i.e. hockey), then the contact should only take place when it is necessary, in the play itself. All other efforts to distance must be taken in the dressing rooms.

Q. Would elite releases need to isolate for 14 days prior to participating in evaluations?

A. No. Technically they would be going from a cohort or physically distancing skills to physically distanced evaluations, which means they are not entering a new cohort. However, if evaluations take less than 14 days, they may need to sit out the balance before engaging with their assigned community hockey cohort. Each situation will be assessed accordingly, to ensure everyone's safety.

Contact Tracing/Screening

Q. How will AMHA handle contact tracing and symptom screening?

A. Hockey Alberta has set guidelines to follow to ensure we track all interactions and that symptomatic players do not participate. We are actively looking at ways to make this easy for families and coaches. However, regardless of the method, this will be a required step prior to participation at any session.

Q. What happens if a player answers yes to any of the symptom screening questions?

A. Any participant who answers YES to any of the questions may no longer participate in the camp/ program until a minimum 14-day quarantine period has elapsed.

COVID-19

Q. What happens if there is a positive test in a Cohort? If that participant gets tested and the result is negative, can they return to the activity?

A. There will be a formal reporting process if any participant contracts COVID-19. AMHA will take all direction from the Alberta Health Services. We do not have any more clarity at this time and may not have any more clarity as our programs begin. AHS is treating every situation differently and are not providing concrete 'what ifs'. We must simply follow reporting guidelines and take direction as it is given.

Coaches

Q. Are coaches part of the cohort number?

A. Coaches will not be part of cohorts at the U11 and up levels. Therefore they must physical distance and will not be included in the cohort number. U7 and U9 will have cohort coaches, who will be able to be in contact with players and will be part of the cohort number. U7 and U9 can also have additional coaches who are physical distance coaches and therefore are not part of the cohort and must physical distance.

Q. Can a coach be part of a U7 or U9 cohort and also coach (physically distanced) with a different cohort?

A. Yes

Q. What happens if a coach notices a player is showing symptoms before or during participation?

A. Like an injury, coaches will have full authority to deny a player participation if they believe the player is sick. Coaches will be given resources to help assist them. However, if parents and players are honest in their pre-participation symptom screening, we should avoid any situation where a coach must deny participation.