



# Michigan Amateur Hockey Association

## MAHA Announces Michigan '8u Hockey Plus Program' for January 2025

### New program focused on transitioning 2016 birth years to full-ice hockey

The Michigan Amateur Hockey Association (MAHA) will launch its second annual '8u Hockey Plus Program' in January 2025. Approved by USA Hockey for an official launch in the 2023-24 season, the new program represents a defined path of transition for 8u hockey players into full-ice hockey, prior to their introduction into the 10u classification the following season.

Inspired by ADM player development programs, the 8u Hockey Plus Program will consist of an 8-to-10-week schedule of regional games, consisting of teams made up of exclusively 2016 players. All participants must have competed in its association's half-ice program between September 1<sup>st</sup> and December 31<sup>st</sup> of the current season. The new program concept will run concurrently with each participating association's regularly-scheduled 8u season calendar, starting in January 2025, and concludes with a season-ending tournament in March.

"We're very excited that USA Hockey has granted MAHA approval to launch this new program," MAHA President George Atkinson explained. "With this new concept in place, we offer a clear path from Learn to Skate to Cross-Ice Hockey – and then a transition to Full-Ice Hockey during the proper development window for those players moving on to 10u hockey the following season."

The MAHA will organize and run the regional games, as well as the season-ending tournament. While the program is intended for 2016 players participating in their local association, exceptions may be granted for a combined association program if two neighboring associations do not have enough players to field a team by themselves.

MAHA Director of Operations & Marketing Jason Reynolds believes the new program serves as a learning opportunity for young players, as well as young officials.

"8u players will get an early adjustment to all of the facets of the full-ice game – new playing area, spatial awareness and traditional game rules," Reynolds said. "With that in mind, the new program also serves as a potential training ground for young officials as well. The increased on-ice experience will instill confidence in their management of the game."

MAHA will offer an informational Zoom call on **Thursday, October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024 @ 8pm** for all organizations, coaches and managers interested in participating. Program details, as well as Q&A, will be addressed at this time.

For immediate questions, please contact Hockey Events Manager Jon Hosking at [jhosking@maha.org](mailto:jhosking@maha.org).



# Michigan Amateur Hockey Association

October 14, 2024

To All Associations

## Re: Michigan 8U Hockey Plus Program – A Transition to 10U Full-Ice Hockey

Some of you may be aware that MAHA has received an exception from USA Hockey to create an 8U Hockey Plus program during the regular season that will offer full-ice hockey as a transition to 10U hockey the following season. We believe that by offering this program, which will consist of a limited number of regional games, and a season ending tournament, we will provide an additional development opportunity for 8-year-old players, and a smooth transition to 10U hockey.

We also feel that this program will help us attract, train, and retain level 1 officials. Using this program at the end of season will help provide better trained young officials for the next season.

### **Program Benefits**

- Provides a clear path from Learn to Skate to Cross-ice, and then a transition to full-ice during the proper development windows for those players moving on to 10U hockey the following season.
- More participation in ADM player development programs providing proper player development for more players at the 8U age level.
- Retain more 8-year-old players within MAHA / USAH Hockey for the full season.
- Provide training ground for new level 1 Officials.

This program is for all players, who are 8 years old (2016 Birth Year) who are currently participating in the same local association. Exceptions may be granted for a combined association program if two neighboring associations do not have enough players to field a team by themselves.

### **Program Details**

- Approximately an 8-10 week program with games beginning no sooner than January 13, 2025.

### **Player Eligibility**

- Program would be for players in the 8-year-old birth year only (2015 Birth Year)
- Players must be rostered participants within your association by October 31, 2024.
- Players would have to have participated in half-ice program between September 1 and December 31
- Players should continue to play and practice with half-ice teams in addition to this program. This is an additional opportunity for those 8-Year-old players.

### **Structure**

- The MAHA will organize and run the regional games and season ending tournament. Games schedules will be tracked and standing posted using Gamesheet.
- Program uses intermediate size nets.



# Michigan Amateur Hockey Association

- Teams would play a regional schedule of approximately 8-10 games (depending on numbers of teams in an area)
- The MAHA would provide a season ending tournament for all participating teams. The tournament would take place toward the end of March. There will be a cost for the end of season tournament.

## Key Dates

- October 14, 2024 – Informational Zoom Call for Associations
- By December 1, 2024 - Register the teams you plan to have participate on the [8U Hockey page](#) on the MAHA website.
- December 11, 2024 – Attend Zoom Call for Coaches and Managers Participating
- January 1, 2025 - Begin building team rosters.
- January 5, 2025 – Regional game schedules complete
- January 13, 2025 - Regional game play begins.
- March 2, 2025 - Regional games must be complete.
- March 7-9 - End of Season Tournament

MAHA will offer an informational zoom call on **Thursday, October 14, 2024 at 8:00 pm** for all organizations, coaches' and managers that are interested in participating. At that time, we can answer any additional questions that they may be. [Here is the link for the meeting.](#)

We are excited to be able to offer this additional development opportunity and look forward to having your teams participate. If you have questions, you need answers to prior to October 14, please reach out me or Jon Hosking.

## Frequently Asked Questions:

1. **Does an association have to participate in this program?** No, it is up to each association to decide if they want their players to participate. If they don't believe it's a fit for their players or for the program that they are running, they are in no way required to participate.
2. **Does this program replace our normal 8U program once January comes? What do the younger players in our associations do once this program starts?** No, this program is meant to supplement that program for 8-year-old players. Associations should still be running their normal 8U programming throughout the rest of the season, which would include any of the younger players that have been participating in this program. Players participating in the program should still be attending practices, jamborees and other 8U events to continue developing their skills.
3. **What if we have more than enough players for one team?** There is no limit to the number of players from an association that can participate. Associations can field multiple teams and should be including all players of the proper age that wish to participate.



## Michigan Amateur Hockey Association

4. **Can an association have tryouts for this program?** No, this program is designed to transition all players to the 10U level. This is not a program designed to determine whether players can play at the 10U travel level the following season. If an association has multiple teams, players should be divided evenly over those teams. Tryouts for the 10U travel level can begin the week following the conclusion of the 10U state tournaments in March.
5. **Can an association who has highly skilled 2017 birth year or younger players include them on these teams?** No, this program is strictly for players of the 2016 birth year only. Younger players should continue to participate in their normal association programming.
6. **Can we add players from other associations to our team?** Only if you don't have enough players within your association to form a team. Doing so would require district approval and would require you to only take players from the next closest association. The other association must also be participating and all those wishing to participate must be used between both groups. Cherry picking players from another association is not allowed.
7. **What would be the recommended team size for this program?** We would recommend between 9 and 12 players per team to provide maximum benefit and playing time.
8. **Will a separate team roster be required for this program?** Yes, each association will be required to provide separate team rosters for this program. You will not be able to use your regular 8U roster which provides for up to 50 players on a team. This roster must be specific to the players that will be participating on this team.
9. **What if our association does not have enough players to field the team but we still would like our players to participate?** If your association does not have enough players, you could be granted an exception to work with the next closest association to you to combine players to be able to make a team. Combined teams will require district approval.
10. **How will MAHA determine our regional games?** MAHA will group all the teams that sign up into regional groupings of approximately 8 to 10 teams. The goal is to provide limited travel to play games as part of this program.
11. **How much ice will our association need to provide for this program?** Each association will be responsible to provide ice for four to five home games as part of the regional game schedule.
12. **Can we schedule additional exhibition games for our team?** Yes, there is no game count limit. However, we hope that each association will be realistic in the number of games they established for their teams. This is meant to be a learning experience not a mini-season.



## Michigan Amateur Hockey Association

13. **Does a team have to participate in the season ending tournament?** No, there will be a separate sign up for the end of season tournament for those that wish to participate.
14. **Will there be a cost to the season ending tournament?** Yes, although it will be subsidized by MAHA there will be some cost for the season ending tournament.
15. **Will MAHA continue to run the 8U half-ice championship?** Yes, we will be continuing that very successful event. It should be the culmination of the year for 8U half-ice programs.