



# CENTRAL REGION OFFICIALS COMMITTEE

## Return to Hockey for Officials – Frequently Asked Questions

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an extraordinary effect on all of us. The Central Region Executive is committed to providing you up-to-date information on what the upcoming season will look like so that you can make informed decisions for yourself and your family with regard to your own Return to Hockey.

### **A. CURRENT SITUATION**

Information in this section is meant to answer high level questions regarding the path forward as we move toward normal operations.

#### **Q: Where are we at with regard to the Return to Hockey?**

The Government of Alberta is currently in Phase 2 of the COVID-19 Recovery. Hockey Alberta has taken direction from Alberta Health Services which requires one of the following:

- Physical distancing; OR
- Cohort groups of no more than 50 participants (on ice players and officials).

Once part of a cohort, this group MUST remain together for the remainder of Phase 2. You can only join a new cohort if you have a two-week isolation.

#### **Q: What plan is in place with Hockey Calgary (and surrounding Local Minor Hockey Associations “LMHAs”) regarding Phase 2?**

Most local minor hockey associations are taking a 4-stage approach to the season. The table below describes the LMHA Return to Hockey Plan:

	Phase	Focus	Officials Required	Timelines
1	Off Season Skill Development & Training	Skill development and conditioning	No at all levels	August - September
2	Skill Development & Evaluations	Creation of cohort groups of less than 50 players	No at all levels	September
3	Development Season	Practice and compete in mini-games	Maybe, at some levels	October - ???
4	Regular Season	Return to normal games	Yes	Depends on start of Phase 3

Levels (i.e. U21, U18) requiring officials will be determined by the LMHA and the Central Region Executive.

#### **Q: What levels do you expect to require officials in Phase 2?**

We are currently expecting to require officials for “body-checking” levels of hockey only. This would include Elite Hockey (“A” program) as well as U21 (formerly Junior), U18 (formerly Midget), U15 (formerly Bantam). The U18 and U15 levels will likely require officials for body checking leagues only.

At this time, we will also be supporting SAWHA and Rec Hockey Calgary with officials for their cohorts as well.



**Q: Why won't other levels (i.e. non-body checking) be assigned officials?**

In order to reduce the likelihood of community spread, the LMHAs have determined it will proceed using coaches from inside their cohorts to manage players on the ice.

**Q: How will you determine who will be assigned hockey this season?**

If you choose to participate, you may be assigned to a cohort approximately at the same level you were skating last season. Example: If you were skating Midget "B" hockey last season, you will be eligible to be in a cohort for U18 B-level hockey.

**Q: If am assigned to a cohort, can I also be a player or coach in a different cohort?**

Once you are part of a cohort you must remain in that cohort. If you want to switch cohorts (i.e. move from being a coach to an official), Alberta Health Services requires that you have a two-week isolation period prior to joining a new cohort.

**Q: How many officials will be assigned to a cohort?**

We are still working through logistics with the LMHAs. We are looking to have as many officials as possible so we can spread the workload and increase our ability to fill games when they are scheduled. Until the evaluation process is completed, we will not know exactly how many officials will be required.

Cohorts may have a maximum of fifty (50) players, coaches and officials.

**It is important to reiterate that officials may only be part of one (1) cohort at a time.**

**Q: Will cohorts schedule games on the same day of the week so that I can plan my schedule?**

It is still too early to determine what each cohort will look like and when cohorts will schedule games. We have made the request to Hockey Calgary to schedule games on consistent nights to allow for planning of your schedule. We will also expect that you will work with other members of your cohort to fill as many games as possible.

If you commit to being part of a cohort, we are expecting you will attend as many games as possible. You will work with other officials in the cohort (2 – 5 officials) to ensure at least one official is there for games. If you cannot make this commitment or don't feel you can plan your schedule, we ask that you wait for Phase 3.

**Q: How will games be scheduled? Will it be done through goalline?**

This is being worked out. We expect to have more information the closer we get to assigning cohorts. We are exploring assigning through goalline (no changes), assigning as part of the cohort system (through TeamSnap) or being paid at the game.

**Q: How will I get paid?**

As with scheduling, payment will be determined based on the system we choose for assigning. We will look to have answers regarding payment before officials are assigned to a cohort. This will likely take several weeks to sort out.



**Q: When will we be moving to Phase 3 (a return to normal hockey)?**

At this point, we do not know. We will keep you up to date as best as possible. Based on where things are at today, our guess is that we won't know how quickly we can move to Phase 3 until we see how Phase 2 unfolds this fall.

Phase 2 this fall will include a return to school as well as a return of many children to sporting activities. Our estimate is that the Government of Alberta and Alberta Health Services will wait and see the impact these resumptions will have on COVID-19 infections before making any determinations on a move to Phase 3.

Based on current timing, we do not anticipate a move to Phase 3 until January 2021. We hope a return to normal hockey operations will occur sooner but we are not expecting them to.

**Q: Could the season get cancelled again?**

As with a move to Phase 3, we do not know. This will depend on factors entirely outside of our control. As the Central Region Executive, we are working with Hockey Alberta to plan for a number of scenarios.

**Q: What about the younger officials? How will we develop and retain officials if they cannot officiate games?**

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced us all to make hard decisions and sacrifices. Many of our younger officials also play hockey in addition to officiating. Due to the cohort restrictions, even if we wanted to allow them to officiate, they would then be unable to play hockey unless they had a two-week isolation period prior to either joining their officials cohort or rejoining their player cohort.

To minimize contacts, LMHAs are proceeding with coach-managed games for non-body checking leagues except as noted above.

We are looking for our community to pull together as best as possible to minimize the spread of COVID-19 and allow us to return to normal hockey operations as soon as possible.

**Q: I normally pick up exhibition/tryout/tournament games directly from an association. Can I still do that?**

**All assignments into a cohort MUST be done through Central Region.** This is to ensure we work with the LMHAs to keep their cohorts under 50 persons and that we don't have officials in multiple cohorts.

Do not accept any assignments unless they come from Central Region.

We are all trying to Return to Hockey together. For those who don't follow the rules, we risk an outbreak of COVID-19 as well as the potential cancellation of the season. Those officials who do not follow the rules will be subject to discipline.

**Q: When do you expect that assignments into a cohort will happen?**

Based on the timing of evaluations, physical distancing and setting players into cohorts, we expect that the process of assigning officials will not happen until sometime in October at the earliest.



## **B. CHANGES TO THE GAME**

### **Q: How will the game be different in a cohort?**

On the ice, the game will change depending on a number of factors, including the number of players who may attend an ice time. Games may be 5v5, 4v4 or 3v3. We ask that officials be flexible and remember that the point of the games is to provide a change of pace and excitement to the players

The role of the official will be to enforce the rules and keep players safe. We do not anticipate many problems as we expect cohorts will be comprised entirely of players from the same association or quadrant (i.e. McKnight, NW Warriors, Trails West, Buffaloes, Royals etc.)

There will be some other variations to the game that will be covered below. There are off-ice rules that you need to be aware of as well.

### **Q: How are the off-ice rules determined?**

Each facility (city owned or private owned) will have its own rules that you need to follow in order to reduce the chance of spreading the COVID-19 virus. Below are some general guidelines for you to follow. You will need to follow up with each facility you are skating at to understand the specific rules they may have.

#### **IN GENERAL:**

1. If you develop COVID-19 symptoms or are feeling ill. STAY HOME
2. Come to the rink dressed. Arrive 15 minutes prior to game
3. Wear a mask when entering the facility\*. Keep the mask on until you step onto the ice.
4. Bring hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes
5. Keep physical distance in the official's room.
  - a. In small rooms, rotate with other officials
  - b. Officials going onto the ice have priority to change
6. No hand shakes with coaches prior to the game
7. Don't share equipment

\*NOTE: In some municipalities and facilities this is mandatory. For other locations we strongly recommend a mask.

As mentioned above, check with the arena on their specific rules. Currently we are seeing that some arenas are NOT allowing spectators and are limiting 3 officials to a dressing room at a time.

### **Q: What is changing on-ice?**

Below are some general rules to help keep you safe while on the ice.

1. Do not use anyone else's water bottles
2. Bring your own water bottle for hydration
3. Check facility guidelines as some facilities have banned participants from spitting
4. Report penalties from a distance. Do not speak through the hole in the glass
5. If sneezing or coughing, do so into the bend of your elbow
6. Wash and sanitize hands immediately after leaving the ice

As mentioned above, games may be modified due to the number of players in attendance (i.e. 5v5, 4v4 or 3v3). Work with the LMHA and the cohort regarding any game-specific rules or modifications. We will provide you any updates we can as the situation continues to evolve.

Please be flexible and understand that this is new for everyone. We expect that you will assist in keeping the game safe and fair.



## **Q: Are there any other changes to what I am doing on ice as an official?**

Below are some additional guidelines for you to follow.

1. Face Offs
  - a. Handle pucks as little as possible. If you pick up the puck, you drop it
  - b. Discourage players and goalies from picking up the puck
  - c. For fast face offs blow your whistle so that you are physically distant from the players
2. Line Changes
  - a. Follow current line change procedures but avoid high traffic areas. Be aware of potential scrums
  - b. Use vocals to diffuse situations. Penalize if necessary.
3. Penalized players
  - a. Stay physically distant if possible
  - b. Make contact only as necessary and then observe physical distance
4. Scrums & Altercations
  - a. Awareness and hustle are key. Getting in early can prevent scrums
  - b. If required, disinfect following a scrum using sanitizer
  - c. Communicate with players and penalize scrums accordingly where unnecessary contact takes place
5. Players Benches
  - a. Try to maintain distance wherever possible
  - b. Communication with Benches
  - c. Stay physically distant
6. Broken sticks / Equipment
  - a. Officials should not pick up any equipment but direct the player or a teammate to retrieve any equipment.

## **Q: What do I need to do after the game is finished?**

1. No hand shakes
2. Put mask on immediately after leaving the ice surface
3. Do not shower at the facility
4. Use only your own towel
5. Maintain physical distance
6. Use your own pen to write game reports. If not available, sanitize pens before using
7. Must leave the facility 15-30 minutes after end of game
8. You may consider washing some or all of your equipment following each game to reduce the likelihood of transmission (jersey, pants). You may also wish to disinfect your helmet, visor and whistle.

## **Q: I am still interested in supervising hockey in Phase 2, is this possible?**

It may be possible depending on facility rules. However, Hockey Canada recommends all supervisions take place outside of the facility (virtual is preferred).

There is further discussion in the “Clinics” section but while in Phase 2, the Central Region Executive, Senior Hockey Committee and Development Committee do not expect to make any major changes to the roster except as necessary to fill the various cohorts.

Supervision, development, coaching and mentoring opportunities will resume once we return to Phase 3. The recommendations in this section were developed, in part, by Hockey Canada in their Officiating Guide

<https://www.hockeycanada.ca/en-ca/exclusive/return-to-hockey/plans/officiating>



## **C. HEALTH AND SAFETY**

### **Q: Do I need to wear a mask on the ice?**

The choice is yours as the official. In most facilities, mask wearing is mandatory when you enter the building until you go onto the ice. Wearing a mask alone will not prevent the spread of COVID-19. Hand washing and physical distancing are also important in limiting the spread. Wearing a mask on the ice may also make it very difficult to blow your whistle.

### **Q: Can I wear gloves on the ice?**

We do not recommend you wear gloves. Please refer to the Hockey Canada Return to Play Guide for Officials for more information.

### **Q: If a player or official in the cohort contracts COVID – 19, will I be required to isolate?**

The decision regarding isolation of the official or anyone else in the cohort will be at the discretion of Alberta Health Services.

Similar to other outbreaks in the Province, the decision to require isolation is reviewed on a case by case basis but can result in up to fourteen (14) days of self-isolation.

### **Q: If I am required to isolate and am unable to work, is there any compensation available from Hockey Canada's insurance?**

**There is no insurance policy under Hockey Canada to cover lost wages** in the event you are required to isolate as a result of being part of a cohort.

The decision on whether to participate in the Return to Hockey in Phase 2 is up to each individual.

### **Q: Can I catch COVID-19 while in a cohort?**

There currently is no vaccine for COVID-19. Social distancing, hand washing and face masks are some of the recommended methods to avoid spreading and catching COVID-19. However, no guarantees can be made that even if you follow all of the recommendations made by Hockey Canada and Alberta Health Services that you won't catch COVID-19.

Each official should consider their own personal circumstances before agreeing to participate in the Return to Hockey.

The recommendations in this section were developed, in part, by Hockey Canada in their Officiating Guide <https://www.hockeycanada.ca/en-ca/exclusive/return-to-hockey/plans/officiating>



## **D. CLINICS**

**Q: I am not interested in participating in Phase 2 but would skate again if we moved to Phase 3, should I still sign up for a clinic?**

Participating in Phase 2 may not be for everyone. We do not know when Phase 3 will come, if at all, this season. Hockey Canada is allowing your certification to remain current until January 31, 2021.

Hockey Alberta is planning on running an initial series of clinics in September in order to test its online clinic program. There will be additional clinics opened up to allow for officials to officiate in Phase 2 with the most current COVID-19 updates and the most recent Hockey Canada Rule Changes.

**Q: If I don't attend a clinic, will the information still be made available?**

Yes, we will post the COVID-19, Hockey Canada Rule Changes and the 2020 Rule Emphasis modules for all officials to review regardless of whether you have attended a clinic.

**Q: Will we be required to officiate according to the Hockey Canada Rule Changes?**

Yes, all officials will be required to officiate according to the Hockey Canada Rule Changes for the 2020 – 2021 season.

**Q: If clinics are moving virtual, how will I get my rule book?**

Hockey Canada has approved a full online rule book for download. A printed rule book will NOT be available this season. You are strongly encouraged to download the new rule book:

[https://cdn.hockeycanada.ca/hockey-canada/Hockey-Programs/Officiating/Downloads/rulebook\\_casebook\\_e.pdf](https://cdn.hockeycanada.ca/hockey-canada/Hockey-Programs/Officiating/Downloads/rulebook_casebook_e.pdf)

**Q: Will all clinics be virtual this season?**

The Hockey Alberta Officiating Committee has not yet determined this. At this point, the plan is for Level 3 – 5 to take an online clinic. Hockey Alberta is planning for additional clinics for Level 2s in mid-October. Depending on needs, there may be additional virtual clinics offered for Level 2s prior to this date. Because LMHAs will not require officials for lower age groups, a move to Phase 3 (return to normal), will allow us to host in person clinics for new and Level 1 officials.

**Q: How do I know that I will get assigned hockey if I sign up for a clinic?**

There are no guarantees. Your ability to be assigned hockey will depend on a number of factors (many have already been discussed earlier). We recommend that **unless you are interested and available** to be part of a cohort, that you **DO NOT** register for a clinic.

**Q: What if I sign up for a clinic but don't get assigned any hockey to officiate. Do I get a refund?**

A refund policy is currently being worked on at Hockey Alberta. The eligibility for a refund will likely depend on a few factors. Any refund will likely be less an administration fee. Details will be provided once they are made available to us.

If you do not have any intention of refereeing in Phase 2, we recommend not signing up for a clinic at this time.



## **E. OTHER QUESTIONS**

### **Q: What will happen to my ranking and my development if I don't sign up for a clinic and/or am unable to skate this season during Phase 2?**

As mentioned before, these are extraordinary times. The Central Region Executive, Senior Hockey Committee and Development Committee do not expect to make any major changes to the roster except as necessary to fill the various cohorts. Any changes to the roster for this season will be based on the 2019 – 2020 season.

Development, ranking, coaching and mentoring opportunities will resume once we return to Phase 3.

If we are unable to return to Phase 3 until next season, we expect that roster spots will generally not change from their current setup unless officials do not return to active skating.

**Your roster spot will not be affected if you do not officiate in Phase 2.**

### **Q: When will [INSERT LEAGUE] be back up and running?**

At this time, we don't have any more information on any particular leagues getting back to normal operations. Our understanding is that only when Alberta Health Services declares that we are in Phase 3 can we resume normal hockey operations.

### **Q: Will officials who are in a cohort still be subject to discipline for lates/no shows?**

We recognize the tight timelines involved in showing up at the rink dressed and being prepared to go on the ice in a 15-minute window. Accordingly, there will be no lates assessed during Phase 2 this season as long as you are on the ice for your scheduled ice time.

We expect that if you commit to a game that you will attend that game. No Show discipline will still apply.

It is important to note that when you are assigned to a cohort you must remain in that cohort. Similar to players and coaches, if officials are found to be in multiple cohorts you risk jeopardizing a return to hockey for everyone. **Any officials found to be in multiple cohorts will be subject to discipline.**

### **Q: What if I need to trade a game on short notice? How do we ensure the right official gets paid?**

You will be able to trade within your cohort. Trades outside of your cohort are NOT PERMITTED. Payment will depend on the system we use to track and pay officials. More information will be provided once we know more.

### **Q: I have a question that is not covered in this FAQ. Who should I speak to?**

Please review this FAQ to ensure your question has not been covered. The Central Region has appointed Chris Bruce to be the contact for Return to Play for Officials.

Please direct any inquiries not covered in this FAQ to [cbruce@czrc.ab.ca](mailto:cbruce@czrc.ab.ca)

**Thank you for reading and we look forward to a safe Return to Hockey.**

**Central Region Executive**