



**New Hamburg Hockey Association  
Small Ice Hockey Program**

***Working Draft Document***

# Table of Contents

1.	Introduction .....	3
2.	Rationale .....	4
3.	Mission Statement .....	5
4.	Small Ice Program Groups.....	5
4.1.	Initiation Fundamentals (4 year olds).....	5
4.2.	Initiation Learn-To-Play (5 year olds).....	5
4.3.	Initiation Pre-Novice (6 year olds).....	5
4.4.	Novice Local League (7 and 8 year olds) .....	6
5.	Initiation Coordinator and Novice Local League Convenor Roles .....	6
6.	Player Evaluations and Division Between Teams.....	7
7.	Goaltender Development .....	7
8.	Ice Surface Layout .....	8
8.1.	Small Ice Game Zone .....	8
8.2.	Skill Development Zone.....	9
8.3.	Buffer Zone .....	9
9.	Scheduling Ice Time, Practices and Games .....	9
10.	Practices .....	10
11.	Roster Size.....	10
12.	Equipment & Set Up .....	10
13.	Small Ice Game Zone Game Format.....	11
14.	Skill Development Zone Format .....	12
15.	Rotation of Players.....	12
16.	Officials .....	13
17.	Increased Ice Time & Development .....	13
18.	Growth & Development FAQs .....	14
19.	Rink Divider Purchase Information.....	16
20.	Conclusion.....	16
21.	Support for the Initiative.....	16
22.	Myths About Small Ice Hockey .....	17
23.	Revision History .....	18

# 1. Introduction

Hockey Canada wants all of Canada on the same page when it comes to the delivery of its Initiation Program, traditionally a player's first brush with organized hockey at the ages of five and six.

Although the Initiation Program, originally developed more than 35 years ago, always recommended cross-ice, half-ice, or small-area games, its delivery has varied from community to community. Beginning in the 2017-18 season, a new Hockey Canada policy mandates that Initiation-aged players receive age-appropriate programming on cross-ice, half-ice, or small-ice surfaces.

"The Initiation Program was developed to allow kids to have fun, learn skills, and develop confidence," said Paul Carson, vice-president of membership development for Hockey Canada. "Re-sizing the playing surface to cross-ice, half-ice, or small-ice means more puck touches, which result in more chances to practice puck control and shooting, as well as overall more movement and motor skill development – twisting, turning, balance, coordination, and agility. Their field-of-play matches their size, and these players hone in on their skill-development in a way that larger ice surfaces just aren't conducive to."

New Hamburg Hockey Association (NHHA) has decided that not only players in the Initiation Program (ages 6 and under), but also Novice Local League (ages 7 & 8), also known as House League, will play games on a modified ice surface. This change falls in line with Long Term Player Development principles, the progression of our Initiation Program category and cross ice initiatives, and it is NHHA's intent that as players grow, the rink size expands as they learn the basic skills and concepts of hockey.

Hockey in Canada is a passion. Simply put. Every person has a view and an opinion on our game. We all want our sons, daughters, grandkids and anyone playing hockey to enjoy the experience. NHHA certainly respects that and shares in the sentiment. Our goal is to make the experience positive for all members in our organization. It is also our responsibility to stay current with any changes and improvements and bring those changes to our programs. We want our sport to stay on the front edge of change and a modified ice surface that is appropriate for young players is the right thing to introduce.

Hockey Canada is amongst the last organizations to look at field of play modifications. With Sport Canada's focus on the long term development of athletes, other major sports in Canada have already been exposed to the modification of the physical environment in which their athletes develop. As an example, please envision:

- An eight year old baseball player standing at home plate with a pitcher 60 feet, 6 inches away.
- A seven year old soccer player playing on a World Cup soccer field.
- A six year old basketball player attempting to make free-throws on 10 foot basketball nets.
- A five year old on the goal line looking to the other end at football field.

Putting our youngest and newest hockey players on an ice surface similar or equivalent to what players in the National Hockey League play on is a disadvantage to our athletes. It is our responsibility and our mandate to provide our athletes with a positive hockey experience. Developing skills, having success and fun as they grow in hockey is the primary goal of NHHA.

The belief is that these modifications will benefit every player as they grow as hockey players, and NHHA will do everything we can to support our players, coaches and administrators with a well-structured

program. We ask our hockey community to approach this change with an open mind and support our direction in a positive manner to allow our players to learn the game in this exciting progressive direction.

The following information has been developed to assist our hockey community in the implementation of small ice hockey within NHHA's Initiation Program and Novice Local League. This will ensure a consistent, organized delivery model across the association, and address many of the questions or concerns that our supportive members may have expressed.

## 2. Rationale

To continue positive changes implemented in the Initiation Program into Novice Local League with the long term player development model and philosophy as the fundamental basis for change. Players at the Novice Local League level require a continued focus on physical literacy while also beginning to develop some of the more advanced individual skills inherent in the game. By moving from cross-ice to half-ice to small-ice to full-ice, we increase the size of the ice surface in accordance with the increase in the size of player. This modified ice will continue to provide players with an environment that is more inclusive, competitive and conducive to skill development through puck touches and puck control, shots, passes completed, transitions, decision making, puck support, overall involvement...and FUN! In addition, with the creation of the new Skill Development Zone, our young hockey players will have up to 33% more ice time during games.

Cross-ice hockey, half-ice hockey, small-ice hockey, or simply hockey on a smaller surface, is an important part of age-appropriate training for Initiation and Novice players. Using a smaller surface in Initiation and Novice hockey offers several benefits, including increased puck battles, increased puck touches for all players, puck carriers will have to avoid more players in the small areas, etc. All of these benefits are extremely important in the long-term development of each player.

This practicing and playing model has been used in many leading hockey nations around the world for a number of years and has stood the test of time. It has been tested and proven that kids who begin their hockey training in this environment have an outstanding hockey experience. Parents may ask the question why should my child play cross-ice, half-ice, or small-ice hockey? What benefits will this bring? And they may believe that they want their child playing like the professionals do, on full ice, because they want their child to experience "real hockey".

To help address these questions, let's think about a child trying to skate with a puck while performing a drill the entire 200 feet from one end of the rink to the other. How long will this take? How much energy will this require? Will the player's decision-making skills be enhanced more in the close action of the smaller cross-ice, half-ice, or small-ice surface, or in the wide open area of the full ice surface? In which situation will the child be more involved in the action?

### 3. Mission Statement

To build a strong foundation of hockey skills with a focus on all players having fun, in order to develop a lifelong love for the game of hockey.

The goals and objectives of this program are to build the basic hockey skills for each player with a keen focus on skating followed by passing, shooting and puck skills. Further goals to develop team work through participation installing the principles of respect and fair play towards all parties within the game (teammates, opponents, coaches, trainers, officials, spectators, administrators, media, etc...).

### 4. Small Ice Program Groups

The NHHA Small Ice Program will cover games for the Initiation Program and Novice Local League Program at NHHA. There are four (4) levels totaling these programs. These programs typically consist of kids playing in the following groups by age. Slight variations and exceptions can be made depending on individual player skills.

#### 4.1. Initiation Fundamentals (4 year olds)

The first step for kids after attending a learn-to-skate program (Generally 4 year olds or first year hockey players), with progression to skating skills related to hockey (i.e. with a puck, stick-handling, shooting, passing). The rational during the season is to practice and develop skills before playing any games.

As the season progresses scrimmage or exhibition games would be planned on a smaller ice surface with other NHHA teams or other local centres of the same age and caliber to a maximum of 6 games after January 1<sup>st</sup> each season.

#### 4.2. Initiation Learn-To-Play (5 year olds)

The second step for kids continues to focus on skating skills in combination with puck handling, shooting and passing (generally 2nd year players that have been in NHHA Fundamentals program the previous season). Introduction of rules and positional play are developed.

As the season progresses scrimmage or exhibition games with a maximum of 2 tournaments (after December 1<sup>st</sup> each season) would be planned on a smaller ice with other NHHA teams or other local centres of the same age and caliber to a maximum of 10 games (5 home and 5 away) after January 1<sup>st</sup> each season.

### 4.3. Initiation Pre-Novice (6 year olds)

The third step for kids continues to focus on skating skills in combination with puck handling and shooting and passing (generally 3rd year players that have been in NHA Fundamentals or Learn-To-Play and are 7 year olds). Further development on game situations and puck battles with faceoffs and positional play are developed.

As the season progresses scrimmage or exhibition games with a maximum of 3 tournaments (after December 1<sup>st</sup> each season) would be planned on a smaller ice with other NHA teams or other local centres of the same age and caliber to a maximum of 12 games (6 home and 6 away) after December 1<sup>st</sup> each season.

### 4.4. Novice Local League (7 and 8 year olds)

The fourth step for kids continues to focus on skating skills in combination with puck handling and shooting and passing (7 and 8 year old in birth year). Further development on game situations and puck battles with faceoffs, off-sides, icing, penalties, passing, scoring, defensive/offensive zone and positional play are developed on both small ice and full ice game surfaces.

Inter League games would commence about one per week starting in mid-to-end October and would be planned on a smaller ice against other NHA teams. Referees, scorekeepers and official score cards completed. After December 1<sup>st</sup> each season, games would switch to full ice surface.

## 5. Initiation Coordinator and Novice Local League Convenor Roles

In order to continue to grow and develop as an association NHA believes that the leadership of its board is required to take a lead role with the entry level grass roots program.

The Coach Selection Committee with assistance of the President and Vice President recruits and appoints the Initiation Program Coordinator and Novice Local League Convenor. The Coordinators is subject to credential and police check criteria. The position is reviewed annually.

These individuals' roles are to lead the programs for 2 years. They will recruit from a pool of coaches that have been involved in the program for at least 1 year.

Coaches/Trainers/Managers/On Ice helpers can apply or be recruited to apply for positions in the programs. These individuals are then approved with the regular coach selection process pending verification of all necessary credentials and police check as specified by the OMHA. For the Initiation Program it is preferred to have an on ice instructor to player ratio is 4-1 and should not be below 5-1. For Novice Local League it is recommended to have four on ice instructors per practice session but is not required.

The top down reporting structure hierarchy of these roles are:

- 1) Association President or Vice President
- 2) Coach Selection Committee
- 3) Initiation Coordinator or Novice Local League Convenor
- 4) Coaches/Trainers/Managers/On Ice Helpers

## 6. Player Evaluations and Division Between Teams

Players are evaluated at the beginning of each year for dividing children by age and group. Best efforts are done to have teams be equal and similar player skills and abilities. This is done under the direction of the Initiation Program and Novice Local League Coordinator and/or Convenors to ensure players are placed within the proper skill level.

For the three Initiation Program groups, the IP Coordinator with help of the coaches can move players between these three levels during the year as they develop.

Within each stream the players can be further broken down into teams of 10-15 players with each team having an assigned coaching staff including head coach, trainer, assistant coach, manager and on ice helpers. OMHA roster rules apply.

Hockey Canada does not allow the movement of 6 year old kids from Initiation Programs to into our Novice Local League Program. However, individual cases have been brought to the board for review and exception. Typically the IP Coordinator would initiate this scenario. Decision of the board on player movement is final.

## 7. Goaltender Development

NHHA promotes the development of kids being goaltenders. However, prior to becoming a “full time” goalie players need to develop basic skating skills.

Therefore in all Initiation Program levels there are to be no fulltime goalies. Players should be allowed to rotate through the position and determine who has an aptitude for the position.

Pre-Novice and Novice Local League full time goalies may start to be identified and dress as such for ice times. It should be noted that other kids should still be permitted to take turns in goal and that having two goaltenders on some teams could be the situation.

NHHA will supply dedicated goalie equipment to each level for this purpose, this equipment is property of NHHA on loan and must be maintained and returned to NHHA.

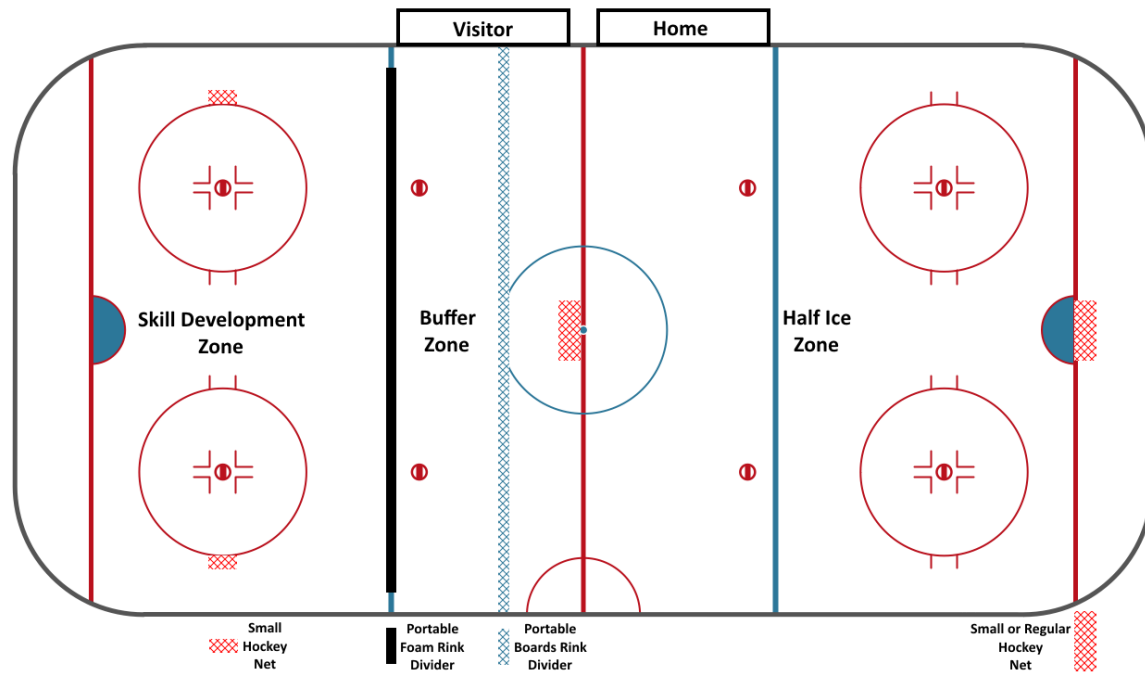
All teams should receive one set of goaltender equipment from the NHHA Equipment Chair who will issue the equipment at start of season and collect it at the end of the season.

## 8. Ice Surface Layout

For Fundamentals, Learn-To-Play, Pre-Novice, and Novice Local League small ice games the ice surface will be separated into three zones for two on ice teams to utilize.

One set of portable rink dividers boards (mandatory) must be placed across the entire width of the ice, approximately 10 feet behind the centre ice red line. The divider MUST NOT be placed past the top of the centre face-off circle. The intent is to have an equal space behind both nets.

The three zones are defined as:



### 8.1. Small Ice Game Zone

The Small Ice Game Zone will have players from the two opposing teams playing a hockey game against each other. The Home and Visitor player benches for each team will be in use for each team for the game. This zone will be monitored by two referees and utilize the scoreboard and time clock.

Standard sized (6' x 4') nets will be used. One net is to be placed on the goal line (using the crease and markings) and a second net is to be placed on the centre ice red line (goal posts closer to the Skill Development Zone side of ice), using the face off dot as a guide for placement. A crease will be drawn on the ice before each game for the center ice net using a template and a marker device.



## 8.2. Skill Development Zone

The Skill Development Zone is to maximize ice usage, while providing additional ice time and development opportunities for players. On ice coaches (at least one from each team) will also be able to coach and encourage players, providing additional teaching and instructional opportunities.

In this area players from the same two opposing teams can play a cross ice hockey scrimmage against each other or other skill developing activities. This zone will be monitored by one on ice coach from each team. Coaches can utilize this area to develop players' skills in various forms as they see fit.

This area should always be in use (mandatory) and strongly encouraged over having extra players wait on the bench for their next shift in the Small Ice Game Zone.

For cross ice scrimmages, two smaller (3' x 2') sized nets should be placed on either side of the ice surface, approximately 4 feet from the boards. Alternatively, full sized nets or pylons can be used.

## 8.3. Buffer Zone

The Buffer Zone will be located between the Small Ice Game Zone boards setup past the red line and the blue line located on the Skill Development Zone side.

Two sets of portable foam rink dividers (recommended) can be placed along the blue line of each cross ice scrimmage or activities to create an obstruction for pucks. A space should be left open between the dividers on the blue line and the side boards to allow for easier movement of players during rotations.

The Buffer Zone can also be used by on ice coaches for one-on-one instruction with individual players to teach and help players develop their skills. Extra players not playing on either the Small Ice Game Zone or the player development zone must wait on their teams Home or Visitor bench.

## 9. Scheduling Ice Time, Practices and Games

The goal is for all levels to have about two ice times per week on average in a regular time slot as available and assigned by NHHA Ice Scheduler. These times can consist of one week day and one weekend ice times and can start as early as 4:30pm during the week and 7:00am on Saturdays. For Novice Local League, practice times would typically be 6:30m on a weekday. Extra ice could be assigned as available by NHHA Ice Scheduler.

Practice plans are responsibility of the coaches under the guidance of the Initiation Program Coordinator. Novice Local League coaches will be responsible for their practices. Coaches are encouraged to utilize Hockey Canada Initiation Program for practice plans and drill set ups with focus on use of stations.

Initiation Program games can be run as either an unofficial scrimmage game (inter-squad teams with no referees, time keepers or game sheet, using coaches to guide and assist players- shifts can be by coaches whistle or automatic buzzer) or as per standard OMHA game with referee, time keeper and proper game sheet (note all coaches on the bench must have proper credentials and be on an OMHA roster). Coaches are to ensure players receive as best as possible equal ice time for all players.

NHHA will strongly encourage scheduling small ice games in succession whenever possible to allow for fluid transition between games. Ideally, Initiation Program small ice games would also follow a group of Novice Local League small ice games to limit the movement of rink dividers. Depending on the age group and ice conditions, a Zamboni flood between ice sessions may not be required.

All games in the Fundamentals, Learn-To-Play, and Pre-Novice category teams must be played using small ice sections (as outlined below) for the entire minor hockey season.

All exhibition and regular season games for Novice Local League teams must be played using small ice surface (as outlined below) until December 31<sup>st</sup> of each minor hockey season. Beginning January 1<sup>st</sup> of each season, all exhibition, regular season and tournament games in Novice Local League may be played on full-ice.

## 10. Practices

To maintain the concepts of long term player development and modified ice, drills and scrimmages in practices for the Initiation and Novice Local League level should be on cross-ice, half-ice or small-ice whenever possible. This allows for the focus to be on skill development and competitive games in small, modified spaces rather than full-ice flow drills or team tactics. NHHA will not require small ice boards to be setup for any practices but will allow the coaching staff of each team to use and setup as needed.

## 11. Roster Size

NHHA understands there are challenges in having consistent roster sizes across the branch, it is recommended that whenever possible team rosters should consist of approximately 13 to 15 skaters plus one (1) rotating goalie. This provides the opportunity to increase ice time while utilizing the Development Zone and ensuring equal and adequate rest time for all players. However, this format will work for any size team. All skaters should be trying different positions as well.

## 12. Equipment & Set Up

NHHA recommends that for the best possible results for games, two rink dividers are utilized in this format, as illustrated above. However, only one rink divider is mandatory. Full sized nets can be used in the Small Ice Game Zone, however smaller nets are recommended in the Skill Development Zone (pylons or additional full size nets can be used in the Skill Development Zone if smaller nets are not available).

Approximately two on ice volunteers from each team are responsible for assisting one facility staff member in setting up the nets and rink dividers for each small ice game. In addition, they must assist in

removing the rink dividers and the nets from the immediately following the game if required. Trials have proven this takes a maximum of 3 minutes before and after each game. Additionally if volunteers are not available, NHA will provide personal to conduct the setup and takedown.

If there is another small ice game after their game, on ice coaches should rotate and move the rink dividers into the middle section of the ice surface to allow for flooding around the boards, and then move them parallel to the boards so the remainder of the ice surface can be flooded. NHA has developed a safe and easy installation and disassembly instruction. Wilmot Recreational Staff along with NHA coaches are to be trained yearly in the specific protocol in regards to the most efficient and safe movement of equipment.

All players and goalies are required to wear full CSA approved equipment. (mouth guards are mandatory). See website for further details.

All games in the Fundamentals, Learn-To-Play, and Pre-Novice category teams are to use a lightweight (4 oz.) blue puck will be used for Fundamentals, Learn-To-Play and Pre-Novice. Standard (6 oz.) black puck will be used for Novice Local League.

Standard size 6" x 4" nets will be used for games.

### 13. Small Ice Game Format

Prior to the start of the small ice game, coaches from both teams will meet briefly to split their roster game line ups into 3 equally skilled groups for both teams (Groups 1, 2 and 3). This is to ensure lineups of approximate equal ability are developed, utilized and complete against each other for the duration of the game.

Games will be completed within the allotted 50 or 80 minute time slot with two competing teams and start with a three-minute warm up prior to each game. The game will commence after the warm up and once the ice surface has been set up for the small ice game. Both teams will warm up on the Small Ice Game Zone surface.

Game length will be 2 x 22 minute run time periods for one hour ice slots. Game length will be 2 x 36 minute run time periods for one and a half hour times slots.

Games will be played 5-on-5 (skaters) and with one fully equipped goalie from each team. The Home Team defends the net closest to the score clock for the first period. Teams switch ends after the first period.

Shift lengths will be 2 minutes in length, with shift changes identified by a buzzer. The clock will continue to run at the end of each shift. Changing on "the fly" is prohibited. Shifts will begin with a faceoff taking place at one of the four available faceoff dots in the Small Ice Game Zone.

Faceoff locations at the beginning of the game, each shift and after goals will rotate between the available faceoff dots (as determined by the official) to provide players with a variety of different faceoff setups.

Faceoff locations within each shift for stoppages in play (after penalty, goalie covers puck, puck shot out of play, etc.) will be at the closest faceoff dot to the play, as determined by the official.

There are no icing or offside calls in the small ice game. Any player called for a penalty will be taken off for the remainder of their shift (placed in the player's bench). The offending player's team will play the remainder of the shift shorthanded. Once their shift has ended the player will be deemed to have served their penalty and will proceed into their next Zone in the rotation.

Score will be kept for the small ice game (not in Skill Development Zone), by the timekeeper using the main score clock. A game sheet will be submitted by each team for each game. The timekeeper will record goals, assists, penalties, etc and stop/start as in standard game procedures (with game sheets).

Upon completion of the game, all players are to line up in the Small Ice Game Zone to shake hands immediately following the game.

## 14. Skill Development Zone Format

The Skill Development Zone will consist of a cross-ice section of the ice that extends from the end boards to the nearest blue line opposite that of the Small Ice Game Zone. A small area, cross ice scrimmage or skill development drills or activities will be played in this area with smaller (2' x 2') nets (recommended) placed approximately 4 feet from the boards. Alternatively, full sized nets or pylons can be used.

One or two coaches from each opposing team are required to be on the ice to oversee the players. On ice coaches should also assist officials in moving the small ice boards back into its proper position if moved significantly during the course of the small ice game. NHHA will support and provide personal to help assist coaches in initially developing drills and running the Skill Development Zone area.

There will be no goaltenders and no score will be kept. There will be no faceoffs, icing, off sides, or penalties called. Play will be continuous for the duration of the two minute stop time shift. If a player infraction is deemed offensive, the on ice coach of that player will remove the player if necessary.

The number of players in the Skill Development Zone can vary, depending on each team's player numbers. Typically these cross ice scrimmages could match the small ice games of 5-on-5 without a goalie.

Despite being from opposing teams, on ice coaches should work together to provide the most benefit for the players, while also learning from each other. Each team is encouraged to rotate coaches that will go on the ice from game to game.

## 15. Rotation of Players

A critical component to the success of the small ice structure is the organized rotation of players between shifts. Each coaching staff should have a full understanding of how players rotate within the zones throughout the course of the game to avoid delays. It is recommended coaching staff from each

team briefly discuss number of players, etc. prior to each game to determine use of the Skill Development Zone.

At the beginning of each game coaches will assign 5 players and a goalie for the Small Ice Game Zone, 2 to 5 players on the Skill Development Zone, 1 to 2 players in the Buffer Zone and the remaining players on their bench.

At the end of each shift, players rotate from the Small Ice Game Zone to the Skills Development Zone or Buffer Zone and then to the bench. At the end of each shift, coaches will identify and assist players in moving. The number of players that participate in the Skill Development Zone or Buffer Zone during each shift will depend on the total number of players on each team. Coaches will ensure different players have the opportunity to remain in the Skill Development Zone or Buffer Zone throughout the game. The small ice game resumes once all players have moved into their new zones.

This rotation will continue throughout the duration of the game, with coaches from each team ensuring equal amounts of rest and play for all players. Coaches should instruct players to calmly step over/around the Small Ice Game Zone rink divider door when moving to and from the Skill Development Zone. On ice coaches should also assist in monitoring the safe and timely movement of players at all times.

Teams will often have a different number of players at each game (we'll use an example of one team with 13 skaters, and one team has 14 skaters). In this case, coaches can utilize the Buffer Zone to help develop players skills instead of waiting.

As an alternative option, coaches could send an additional player(s) to the Skill Development Zone to balance things out, always focusing on that all the kids should get equal ice time and adequate rest.

## 16. Officials

The Small Ice Game Zone will be run by two (2) official who will be responsible for faceoffs, goal determination, penalties, etc. NHHA will include applicable officials' cross-ice, half-ice, or small-ice protocol at all Level 1 officiating clinics. Officials will continue to learn about offside, icing and other full ice rules at their clinics.

The Skills Development Zone will not have an official but will be monitored by on ice coaches from each team.

## 17. Increased Ice Time & Development

With the creation of the Skill Development Zone, skaters will receive additional ice time and skill development opportunities compared to a traditional full ice game. For example, if we compare ice time of a team with 12 skaters in both scenarios for a game in a one hour ice slot we see the following:

### **Traditional Format**

- 30 minutes of Three 10 minute stop time periods.
- Each player receives about 10 to 15 minutes of total ice time.

- Each player rests on the bench for about 15 to 20 minutes.

### ***Small-Ice Format***

- 36 minutes of Two 18 minute stop time periods.
- Each player receives about 12 minutes in the Small Ice Game Zone.
- Each player receives about 12 minutes in the Skill Development Zone.
- Players have additional one-on-one coaching in the Buffer Zone.
- Each player rests on the bench for about 6 minutes.
- Each player receives about 24 minutes of total ice time.

That's 9 to 14 minutes of additional ice time per player. An increase of about 40% of game ice time and skill development compared to the traditional full ice game format.

## 18. Growth & Development FAQs

### ***Does my player regress by having to play small-ice again at 8 years old?***

- No, 8 year old players need to have this significant portion of the season played small-ice in order to continue to reach their hockey potential. All the benefits of development in small-ice hockey are very important for an 8 year old player.

### ***Does my "advanced" player regress by having to play small-ice at 7 or 8 years old?***

- No, advanced players benefit even more by playing on a smaller ice. All players benefit from increased puck touches, scoring chances, quick transitions, read & react situations, puck support, passing plays in small-ice hockey. However, research shows that advanced players benefit twice as much as the average player.

### ***What about the offside and icings learned in the second half of the 7 year old season?***

- View the first half of both 7 and 8 year old seasons as the "accelerated development season" where players get to only worry about skills. Learning and mastering rules of the game are not important for a 7 or 8 year old player. Growth and development principles tell us that this age is very important to maximize their long term development potential, so try not to focus on game rules during this part of the season. Although we all respect the rules of the game, these specific rules can be learned or remembered as the second half of the season progresses.

### ***Some 8 year old players are very big; what about incidental contact and collisions?***

- Incidental contact and collisions will always be part of the game and are unavoidable anytime you have players around the puck, however the reduction in the playing area from full ice to small ice will force players to accelerate their thought process and reaction times. It should also be noted that Junior/NHL players, all of whom are much larger than Initiation Program and Novice Local League players, spend the majority of their time in either the defensive or offensive zones (smaller areas than that of our Small Ice Game Zone), so to think 4-8 year old player development is going to be stunted rather than accelerated by playing on a reduced ice surface is inaccurate.

***With the reduction in ice surface, won't this have a negative impact on skating development?***

- Quite the opposite. Hockey is no longer a linear game and skating is much more than simply moving in a straight line. The reduction of the ice surface will again help to develop players' complete skating skills which include stops and starts, transitions, turning, pivots, agility, edge work and balance. Good skaters will always be good skaters but playing in a small ice concept will assist in the development of every player's skating acumen rather than primarily relying on or limiting their skating arsenal to full acceleration. In addition, a study conducted by Hockey Alberta found that young players can reach top speeds in a distance less than half of the ice, therefore we are confident that small ice games will improve rather than handicap players' skating skills.

***Won't there be increased whistles with the reduction of the ice surface, and pucks shot over the divider(s)?***

- No, there will be less whistles and stoppages in play. Without off-sides and icing the game plays more continuously developing each player's skills. It is possible that pucks will be shot over the small ice movable boards, but rare and unlikely. Most players at this age group cannot shoot a puck over four feet high. The buffer zone also allows for space in case pucks are shot over top of the small ice movable boards.

***What about other centres that are not doing small ice for 7 or 8 year olds? Won't they know off sides and icing better than our kids?***

- Other countries like USA hockey and in Finland are and have already been doing small ice hockey for many years with kids up to the age of 8 years old. The main focus outside of having fun is player development. Rules such as off-sides and icing are taught later in a player's age and development. Learning these rules secondary to developing player's skills will not diminish their enjoyment or skill sets in the game.

***What about in January when novice local league switches to full ice. Will team more than 14 kids on a team be too much where each kid plays 1/3 of the game?***

- Full ice surface will reduce the amount of ice time for players from half ice games. However, more than 14 players are not considered as being too many players for one team. Remember, kids need breaks and time to rest as well as hockey is a fast game. Most teams carry upwards of 16 to 17 kids per team roster. This will prepare kids for the transition from novice to atom.

***Why is novice local league doing half ice but not novice rep? If skilled players are better playing full ice why are less skilled players not better playing full ice?***

- NHHA must follow the rules and playing standards the same as other members of rep hockey leagues as part of the Grand Valley, Southern County or Tri-Country Hockey Leagues. NHHA is trying to be ahead of the curve and develop players now. NHHA Novice Local League is not part of an outside OMHA League and can utilize the half ice game for better player development to improve skills of Local League players the same way that rep players do in practices with small ice drills and scrimmages.

***What about goalie creases for the center ice goalie?***

- Similar to off sides and icings, goalie creases are not a necessity to play the game of hockey. Goalies, much like that of skaters at a young age focus on skill development first and tracking the puck. NHHA has the option to use a template and marking device to draw a temporary crease for games.

## 19. Rink Divider Purchase Information

With the implementation of cross ice hockey at the Initiation Program age category, and now small ice hockey at the Novice Local League age category, rink dividers have become a key piece of equipment for all facilities.

## 20. Conclusion

NHHA sincerely appreciates the efforts of our volunteers across the association who dedicate their valuable time to our great game. We understand that change can sometimes be difficult, however we are confident that these modifications will benefit all participating players as they grow and develop.

This information has been created to assist all volunteers and inform parents of NHHA in the consistent delivery of the new small ice format, and ultimately ensure that we work together to provide a positive hockey experience for our players in a safe, sportsmanlike environment.

## 21. Support for the Initiative

Downloads - Hockey Canada

<https://www.hockeycanada.ca/en-ca/Hockey-Programs/Players/Essentials/Downloads>

Scaling Down The Game in Initiation Video From Hockey Canada

<https://www.hockeycanada.ca/en-ca/?video=5371882011001>

Hockey Manitoba Novice Half-Ice

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CRekOWhz6EQ&feature=youtu.be>

Hockey Manitoba Novice Half-Ice Program

<http://www.hockeymanitoba.ca/players/novice>

Saskatchewan Hockey - Stony Plain Initiation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9MmDRp6o43w>

SHA Cross Ice Video

[https://youtube.com/watch?v=KrQ\\_rYQNXPQ](https://youtube.com/watch?v=KrQ_rYQNXPQ)

Hockey USA Analytics Video

[https://youtu.be/CB\\_Ygapyl7c](https://youtu.be/CB_Ygapyl7c)

A Childs View Video

<https://youtu.be/cXhxNq59pWg>



## 22. Myths About Small Ice Hockey

### Myth #1:

- To develop understanding of positional play and off-sides, 8-year-olds should play full ice hockey.

### Truth:

- Not only can positional play and off-sides be taught with cross-ice, half-ice, or small-ice hockey, it can be taught more efficiently than in a full-ice environment.
- When the puck is dropped, positional play becomes a player's relationship to the puck, the opponent and the net. All of these elements are key components of the small-area games. By teaching these concepts in the context of small-area games (spacing, gap control, angles, support, body positioning), players not only learn the concepts, but also learn them more efficiently thanks to increased repetitions.
- Regarding off-sides, it can be easily taught by using a marker and drawing a line across the middle of a cross-ice, half-ice, or small-ice environment. This line represents the offensive blue line. And, much like positional play, it can be taught more efficiently through cross-ice, half-ice, or small-ice play, since the number of zone entries (and especially non-breakaway zone entries) is dramatically increased in a cross-ice, half-ice, or small-ice scenario.

### Myth #2:

- Long Term Player Development (LTPD) fails in youth goalie development. Kids need to be identified as goaltenders and taught goaltending specific skills at young ages.

### Truth:

- Almost none of the NHL's top goaltenders began playing between the pipes until they were at least 9 years old. Finland, which is viewed as a model for producing great goaltenders, doesn't let kids play full-time in goal until age 10. Goaltending experts worldwide state that, at 8U, it's more important to develop overall athleticism and skating ability than goaltending technique.
- As Kevin Woodley wrote in InGoal Magazine, "Most NHL goaltending coaches will tell you they would rather add some structure to a skilled athletic goalie than try to add athleticism to a technician." Thus, the LTPD emphasis on development of athleticism at young ages is ideal for skaters and future goalies alike.

### Myth #3:

- Cross-ice, half-ice, or small-ice practices don't provide enough skating, especially long skates.

### Truth:

- Forty to fifty percent of every practice plan is skating-focused.
- The cross-ice, half-ice or small-ice environments require kids to take an equivalent number of strides to what an adult takes when covering the full ice. It's simply scaled for a child's leg length.
- Skating form deteriorates over long distances. Age appropriate skill development emphasizes development of proper skating form and an increase in quality strides. But most importantly, what separates players at advancing levels of hockey is their ability to turn, stop, start and change direction. These are the skating skills that are vital to becoming a successful hockey player, and these are the skating skills emphasized with small area games using cross-ice, half-ice and small-ice hockey.

## 23. Revision History

0.00	2017.07.01	Initial draft developed from template
0.01	2017.09.21	Updated to present format with final plan
0.02	2017.09.28	Combined previous initiation program plan together
0.03	2017.10.05	Working draft released to organization as per Oct 4 executive board meeting.

DRAFT