

# Guidelines: Team Formation

VERSION: 1

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## Rep and House Team Formation Guidelines:

### 1. Objectives and Overview

#### Purpose Statement:

This document is intended to support the standardization of the annual team formation process by the Vancouver Minor Hockey Association (VMHA), to ensure that key considerations are well understood and there is a level of consistency and transparency that is achieved year after year.

Key attributes of this document include:

- Formalizing and defining VMHA team formation considerations and process
- Identifying overall objectives and guidelines, relating to number of rep and recreational teams
- Identifying key timelines and milestones, and
- Determining “safety valve” options that could be leveraged if rep tryout numbers or registrations are greater than expected.

#### Vision Statement:

It is VMHA’s mission to be the “Best Little Minor Hockey Association in Canada” by promoting healthy competition, developing positive life skills, and providing equitable opportunities for all to optimize their hockey skill development and enjoyment. Fundamentally, VMHA is continuously striving to grow the game of hockey in East Vancouver in a safe, fun, positive, and inclusive environment for all.

#### Guidance Document Content:

- Main Considerations and Process
- Key Milestones and Timelines
- Target Roster Sizes
- Recreational Team Formation Considerations
- Rep Team Formation Considerations
- Rep and House Coach Considerations
- “Safety Valve” Options to Support Maximizing Registered players.

### 2. Team Formation Principles, Main Considerations, and Process

There are a number of considerations that need to be evaluated as part of the recommendations and decisions that determine the number of house and rep teams that VMHA can support each year.

Ultimately, the number of registered players and VMHA’s ability to secure sufficient ice, along with available coaches are the main drivers in determining the number of teams that VMHA can sustain for the upcoming year.

## **Principles:**

- **Player and coach experience and player retention are the priority.**

The number of house and rep teams VMHA supports each year is driven by some hard constraints, including ice availability. No matter how many registered players VMHA could have, ensuring opportunities for development and a positive playing experience for the players the Association can sustain, is paramount.

- **Ensure team formation decisions follow a clear and consistent order that supports transparency.**

Final team formation determinations need to follow a consistent decision-making process, which includes rep team numbers driven by tryout numbers and real depth, house team numbers driven by capacity, and allowing for flexibility if and when challenges arise.

- **Use “Safety Valve” options transparently when needed.**

Exceptions to guidelines and targets can be made, but these must be done for explicit and transparent reasons that support beneficial outcomes for VMHA and players and coaches, including but not limited to reducing the number of players on given waitlists.

## **Key Considerations:**

1. Number of registered players from the previous season
2. Ice availability and allocation from the Vancouver Parks Board/City of Vancouver
3. Number of house and rep teams in each division from the previous season
4. Likely ice availability from other facilities
5. Rep tryout registrants from previous season (skaters and goalies)
6. Early season returning registrants numbers and target roster sizes
7. Rep team division placements and overall competitiveness of lower-level rep teams from the previous season
8. Spring rep ID clinic participation and early season rep tryout registrants

## **Process:**

On an annual basis, the Hockey Operations Committee will review these considerations and develop recommendations for the Board to consider as part of season planning activities. Further review and confirmation will be conducted during the off-season, with final recommendations to be provided to the board prior to the August board meeting. The Board will make final determination on the number of recreational and rep teams that the Association can sustain annually.

## **3. Milestones and Timelines**

As part of the team formation review process, there are important milestones and timelines that the Hockey Operations Committee must keep in mind as they develop their recommendations including the following:

Planning Milestone	Timeline
Next season's financial review and fees development and approval	March
Next season Rep tryout participation ID skates	End of March
Opening of early bird returning player and rep tryout registration	April 1st
Opening of team officials registration	April 1st
Closing of early bird returning player registration discount	April 15th
Closing of returning player registration priority window	May 15th
Opening of new player registration window	May 16th
Final rep tryout registration deadline (refunds issued prior to)	July 1st
Ice allocation from the City listing the facilities and times	Mid July
Securing additional ice from other facilities (e.g. Richmond Ice Centre, Richmond Oval, UBC, Canlan North Shore)	End of July to Mid August
Ice allocation confirmation from Scotia Barn	Mid August
Ice allocation confirmation for Agrodome	Late August
Team number declaration	September 15th
Team rosters and placement in league games	Early October
Adding players to existing rosters	Early January

#### 4. Target Roster Sizes

To support standardization and consistency year over year with the number of teams and their sizes, see below for the target roster sizes that are recommended for rep and recreational teams depending on age and division. Ultimately, maximum roster sizes are governed by BC Hockey, and is something that can be leveraged by the Board to maximize participation if needed:

##### House Teams:

- U7 (15-18 skaters, including rotating goalies)
- U9 (16-18 skaters, including rotating goalies)
- U11 (13-16 skaters, 1 or 2 goalies)
- U13 (14-16 skaters, 1 or 2 goalies)
- U15 (15-17 skaters, 1 or 2 goalies)
- U18 (15-18 skaters, 1 or 2 goalies)
- U21 (18-23 skaters, 2 goalies)

### **Rep Teams:**

- U11 (15-16 skaters, 2 goalies)
- U13 (15-16 skaters, 2 goalies)
- U15 (15-17 skaters, 2 goalies)
- U18 (15-18 skaters, 2 goalies)

## **5. C Level “House” Team Formation Considerations**

Part of our core mandate as a Minor Hockey Association is to support the accessibility and opportunities for youth in our community to play hockey. Providing our members with a well-supported and lower cost recreational hockey program is a fundamental component to VMHA’s ability to fulfill this mandate.

A large part of ensuring that our recreational hockey program is well supported overall, is by supporting our coaches, through on-going support and development, training and mentorship opportunities, along with having knowledgeable and qualified Division Manager volunteers in place early on during the team formation process.

Through a strong and well-organized player evaluation process, with coach involvement, VMHA will strive to balance its house teams in each division as best it can. This balancing includes taking into account the players that are released from rep tryouts closer to the start of the season.

Beyond balancing teams, other house team formation considerations include the following:

- Ensuring there is a rotation of goalies at the Initiation level, helping to expose more players to the position in support of having enough goalies in the Association at older levels.
- Balancing the U9 players that are most interested in playing goalie between teams if possible.
- Having smaller rosters for younger (U11 and U13 teams) than for older teams (U15 and U18 teams).
- Allowing team rosters to have the space for C level goalies to play as a skater at times, if possible.
- Affiliating younger C level goalies to teams early in the season, to allow for development opportunities through practices on teams with only one rostered goalie.
- Enabling released Phase 2 rep tryout goalie(s) the opportunity to be the only rostered goalie on a house team, if possible.

## **6. A Level “Rep” Team Formation Considerations**

To ensure VMHA also supports maximizing the development opportunities for players and families that want a higher level of competition, VMHA strives to provide a strong rep level program as part of its overall commitment to excellence. Rep level teams require a higher time commitment from players and families and involve more costs due to the increased ice/training times and paid coaches. There is a rigorous evaluation and selection process that is used to select rep teams, guided by our rep policy and guidelines. Ultimately, VMHA strives to make rep level teams self-sufficient in terms of costs, with no recreational registration funding allocated for rep tryouts or for the rep season.

Historically, VMHA has typically had sufficient interest and players each year for two teams in each of the younger divisions (U11, U13, and U15), while supporting one rep team for our older U18 division.

As part of pre-season preparations and rep team formation guidance for an upcoming season, VMHA will review past rep tryout and registration numbers overall, leverage rep ID clinic participation numbers, and past season rep team division placement levels in deciding the likely number of rep teams that VMHA can support each year.

Overall, it is important to note that the formation of additional Rep teams (e.g., U11 and U13 A3, U18 A2, etc) should only occur when appropriate interest and depth exist. General consideration points for rep team formation include, tryout participation numbers (including sufficient numbers of goaltenders), the likely competitive viability of the teams and demonstrated skill and skating proficiency across the player pool.

Further detailed considerations and areas that need to be reviewed as part of rep team formation recommendations include the following:

- **Goaltender availability and interest:**

A sufficient number of rep level goalies (minimum one, but preferably two per team) need to register to support the planned number of rep teams.

- **Skater availability and interest, and skill level:**

In addition to goalies, a sufficient number of rep level skaters with the appropriate skating ability and foundational skills are needed to register and play for the planned number of rep teams. As the overall skill level of an age group can vary year over year, identifying a specific number of skaters required for a specific number of teams can be challenging.

As a general guide for the U11 and U13 age groups, it would be expected that at a minimum between 8 to 15 skaters would need to be released from the rep tryouts at the end of the process to justify having more than one team - e.g. ~40-45 skaters trying out to have two teams, ~55-60 skaters trying out to have 3 teams.

The rep ID skates in March will provide an important baseline assessment of the expected rep player pool and will help determine whether sufficient depth exists to warrant the formation of additional teams.

- **U15 rep level consideration:**

It is crucial for the development of rep level players in the U15 and U18 age groups and for VMHA's rep program overall, that we consistently support two U15 rep teams each year, if possible. For a variety of reasons, including the introduction of bodychecking at the U15 rep level, there has typically not been many more than 30 skaters that register for rep tryouts at the U15 level on an annual basis.

Acknowledging the general guidance of releasing approximately 8 to 15 skaters, it is understood that there may be instances where none or very few players will be released at the U15 level (both goalies and skaters) when striving to have more than one team. To help ensure the viability of two rep teams at U15, it is recommended that rep teams maximize their number of affiliated players.

- **U18 rep level considerations:**

Given the larger age group at the U18 (covering three years) and the discrepancy in size and skill levels that this can entail, a greater number of rep level players are usually needed for U18 rep teams. Typically, rostering a larger number of skaters (17-18) and two goalies at this level supports the viability of teams. For this reason, it is recommended that between 10 and 15 more skaters register for tryouts than the maximum roster size for two teams, e.g. between 44 and 51, before a second rep team at this level be considered.

In addition, it is recommended that special attention and evaluation of the skill and size of the players that would play on the lower team be taken to ensure the overall safety of an additional team.

Similarly to U15 rep, if a second team is supported it is recommended that the number of affiliated players is maximized early on in the season.

- **Additional Teams - Flight placement review:**

As part of determining the potential for additional rep teams to be supported each year, it is important to review the flight placement of the lower rep team for the previous season and to project where the current lower rep team could be placed. If the lower rep team, i.e. the A2 team has typically been in or very near the bottom flight of their age group, then it will likely not be possible for VMHA to have another rep team regardless of how many skaters register to try out.

## **7. “Safety Valve” Considerations**

Each season there are unexpected challenges that strain VMHA’s ability to support the number of teams it would like to have, including ice availability, coach and team officials’ registration, rep registration timing, and recreational registration timing, which can lead to players being on waitlists and potentially not being able to play at VMHA. To support opportunities for as many players as reasonably possible to play minor hockey in our community, there are various options that the Board should consider leveraging depending on what challenges are present for any given season to maximize the number of teams and reduce the number of players on waitlists.

Listed below are some examples of actions that the Board could leverage if challenges arise.

- Purchase additional ice where available in the region (focusing specifically on game ice slots), to increase the number of teams that VMHA can support.
- Increasing roster sizes beyond the target range for a given division.
- Offering an intro to hockey program alternative for new players through a pilot program at the U11 and/or U13 levels if there is family interest and a significant number of first year skaters register at those age levels.
- Utilizing qualified parent coaches for an U11 or U13 A3 team, or an U18 A2 team.
- Sharing of rep practice ice by younger division teams (i.e. U11 and U13 A2) with their respective A3 team, to allow for an A3 team to be formed.