

OWHA U7 (Novice) Player Pathway Implementation for 2020-2021

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Player Pathways, as we have seen with U7 (Initiation) and U9 (Novice) Programming are progressive, learn to play development guides that support the player development continuum from U7 (Initiation) through to U11 (Atom). The Pathways outline optimal seasonal structures and age appropriate development guidelines.

U7 (Tyke) Player Pathway

1. No tiering or evaluations from March through August. Preparation phase can begin the Tuesday following Labour Day.

Rationale: Give female hockey associations and parents back the summer - the season does not need to start this early only to be finished at the end of January or early in February (start later and end later). The start of school year can be very stressful for young players, and they do not need to add hockey tryouts starting at the same time as the school year. Give female hockey associations a chance to get organized and begin planning.

2. No tiering or evaluations the first week of school where school starts the week after Labour Day.
3. Must offer a minimum of 4 practices / skill sessions prior to formal tiering or evaluations beginning.

Rationale: A player's first experience in the new hockey season should not be a formal tryout - this gives all players the opportunity to get back on the ice in a more 'player-friendly' scenario. Help level the playing field; not all players have a chance to go to hockey schools or prep camps prior to the start of the season. Provide female hockey associations the opportunity to run their own prep camp instead of members spending money outside the association.

4. Must have a minimum of 3 formal evaluation/tiering sessions - Recommended - 1 skills session, 1 small area games session, 1 game.

Rationale: Players need a fair chance to be evaluated - a standardized process will show transparency, fairness and consistency. Provide coaches with the foundation for a development play based on a solid and quantifiable evaluation.

5. Must have a period of development time following team selection and prior to the start of the regular season.

Rationale: It is very important to provide coaches with the opportunity to develop and improve their players skills prior to getting into organized games. The progression should be skills before tactics and tactics before systems. This will eliminate or reduce pressure and or focus on winning.

6. All U7 (Initiation) will be played at cross-ice or a maximum size of 100 x 60.

Rationale: Allowing players to play cross-ice hockey in U7 (Initiation) provides the base for a clear progression in the programming allowing for players to then transition to half-ice at U9 (Novice).

7. U7 (Initiation) game play will be 4 on 4

8. Fair/Equal Ice-Time in U7 (Initiation) game play

Rationale: Fair and equal ice time is designed to ensure that all players get the same opportunity to contribute to the outcome of games, regardless of skill or ability. A coach's responsibility is to develop all players to contribute. All players should receive fair and as close to equal as possible ice time.

The Policy and Recommendations for the U7 (Initiation), U9 (Novice) and U11 (Atom) Pathways have been identified with the parent and player in mind; allowing families to have their summer break back while still providing on ice opportunities ahead of evaluations, giving players key seasonal breaks to allow for holidays and the chance to play other sports throughout the year and establishing consistent age appropriate programming that is in line with the Long-Term Player Development.

Furthermore, moving from Spring to Fall evaluations at these age groups, allows the opportunity for Female hockey associations to provide Member sanctioned non-traditional hockey programs, 3 on 3, 4 on 4, or skills clinics beginning any time after the conclusion of the OWHA Provincial Championships and completing no later than June 30.

The OWHA and female hockey associations will work together to ensure that the policy outlined throughout this new programming are administered to provide players with the best possible experience within hockey. As such, please find attached the Player Pathway Policy and Rationale for U7 (Initiation), U9 (Novice) and U11 (Atom) divisions. Please review these sections of the Player Pathway for clarity and consistency in the documents and return any feedback or questions to the OWHA office.