



WESTERN CANADIAN JUNIOR HOCKEY PILOT TO LAUNCH IN 2024-25 SEASON: Quick Notes

The Western Canadian Development Model (WCDM) project was submitted to the Hockey Canada Board of Directors for approval following extensive consultation and collaboration between the Members and Leagues, with the view to strengthen the delivery of sanctioned junior hockey to participants across Western Canada.

The WCDM working group consists of representatives from BC Hockey, the Kootenay International Junior Hockey League, the Pacific Junior Hockey League, Hockey Alberta, the Alberta Junior Hockey League, Hockey Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League, Hockey Manitoba, the Manitoba Junior Hockey League and the WHL.

The changes for the 2024-25 season focus on two pillars: standard of play and rules, and roster composition.

1. Standard of play and rules

By streamlining the application of Playing Rules for the same age group, athletes, coaches and officials participating in sanctioned Western Junior A leagues will gain experience and develop in a similar environment to the WHL.

- All participating Western Junior A leagues will adopt the WHL Rule Book, except for Section 1 – Playing Area, Section 3 – Equipment, Rule 34.6 – Television, Rule 38 – Video Goal Judge and Rule 46.14 – Major Penalty.
- Fighting in the Western Junior A leagues will continue to follow the existing Hockey Canada Rule 7.10.
- As part of the pilot, players 18 years of age or older as of December 31 of the current season may choose to wear half-face protection, while those under the age of 18 must continue to wear full-face protection, in line with the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) Rule 202.

2. Roster composition

To increase flexibility in the development pathway for 15- and 16-year-old players in Western Canada, a number of changes will be implemented, including:

- All 15-year-old affiliate players will be eligible to play up to 10 games with their WHL Club, the same as 16-year-old affiliate players.
- Instead of rostering a maximum of five 15-year-old affiliate players in a season, WHL Clubs will be allowed to name up to nine by January 10.
- If a WHL Club cannot dress a full roster of 20 players for a game, the team will now be eligible to dress two 15-year-old affiliate players.
- WHL Clubs will be able to designate one 16-year-old player, who upon being returned to a Junior A, Canadian Sport School Hockey League or U18 team, will be allowed to play up to 15 games in the WHL.
- If one of the four Members participating in the pilot has granted a 12-, 13- or 14-year-old player special status to play in an advanced age category, any such player must be evaluated to ensure they currently meet and are deemed to continue with special player status in their 15-year-old year to qualify and continue to be eligible to play up to 34 games in the WHL.