



# FEMALE HOCKEY MODEL

REVISED 2021



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## Introduction / Context:

The Female Model was introduced in December, 2018. After a full hockey season (2019/2020) of working within the model and volunteer structure, a Task Group was struck to essentially 'reboot' the intent of the model and to recommend enhancements.

## Approach

District presidents were asked to appoint a representative from their respective districts. The expectation was that each participant be required to spend significant time reviewing the model as it pertained to their regions as well as participate in focus sessions. Pre-meeting homework with thought probing questions would also form part of the focus. The work of the focus group and additional break out groups is classified as follows:

1. *Analysis and Findings*
2. *Recommendations*
3. *Evaluation*

## Analysis and Findings

The Task Group was asked to review various parts of the model and provide comment in the following areas:

1. *To determine how to make the Female Model work best in each region of the province.*
2. *To improve the Recommendations as currently indicated in the 2018 version of The Model*
3. *To identify the roadblocks or 'problems' with female hockey.*

After the second Task Group meeting, it was felt that the original idea of an in-depth province wide analysis would not be achieved by way of just having the Task Group meet. It was evident that each region of the province was in a different place when it came to development of the female game. With this insight it was determined that focused break-out topics with other hockey volunteers was needed. It was further determined that the execution of the model needed to be customized to each region with short term and long term goals and pathways to get to the goals.

Break out groups in the following areas occurred: Coaching, Officiating and FMA best practices. A player meeting was also facilitated so that we could hear the needs of the players directly from them. With the culmination of the findings from all the groups, Recruitment, or "Grassroots Hockey", was considered.

Historic approaches to 'fixing' the female game have incorporated focusing on the problem approaches. During a BC Board of Directors Meeting in spring, 2021, where a presentation of the issues found to date and an overview of areas to focus on was facilitated, a Director asked 'We have heard what the problems are. What do we do well?'. The response was that "*we network well. With our networks we have found temporary solutions which have provided opportunities for female players*". By using our networks we have been able to bring together various like-minded supporters of the female game to create recommendations.

The recommendations in this model are designed to launch over the next 3-5 years.







# RECOMMENDATIONS



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## Recruitment:

The 2018 Female Model referenced total female registration by MHA and region. Due to COVID, it was felt that rerunning the numbers on a year where hockey registration did not see growth overall, was not warranted. Using the data in the 2018 Model, it is sufficient to say that in most divisions in most Minor Hockey Associations, registration in the female game is 'weakly stable' or on a downward trend. The 2018 Model references a 3 year trend by MHA. When looking closer at each division, it is evident that there are not enough players starting hockey to replace the players who are aging out or who, by way of natural progression, find other interests. Therefore, it is critical that an annual focus on recruitment, supplemented by retention efforts, be the focus of the 'model reboot'. Without players, adding enhancements to the other areas is a moot point. However, without enhancements, it is difficult to retain players.

### Recruitment Strategies

Hockey Canada and its partnerships with Esso and Bauer, make try-it events affordable for families. Esso Fun Days provide funding for ice, advertising and some food. There are single events and a 6-session event. Players are required to find gear and show up. First Shift differs in that a financial investment is required however the player does receive 6 weeks of instruction along with a basic gear package to keep.

These recruitment programs are as successful as the volunteers supporting them and provide for a fantastic introduction to hockey. Minor Hockey Associations do not need to limit their recruitment efforts to these formal programs. As a case in point, Revelstoke volunteers Lauren Barras and Stephanie Miller created a program called "Stoked Cubs" which introduces females to hockey in an all-female environment ([www.womenshockeyrevy.wordpress.com](http://www.womenshockeyrevy.wordpress.com)). The selling points of this program diverge from classic MHA programming and scheduling. Ice times are the same every week and weekly off-ice fitness is an added component. The player investment is \$150 for 20 week, costs are minimal.. Players then develop their skills further in a 3-on-3 environment. One of the biggest barriers for female hockey is the classic thinking and approach as used in integrated hockey. The Stoked Cubs program not only takes recruitment ideas as noted with Esso Girls Fun Day and First Shift, but also considers retention with ensuring the environment supports the unique needs for female hockey. Every MHA should be encouraged to consider programs like Stoked Cubs as an alternative when recruiting female players.

Every region in the province must have a dedicated mandate to recruitment in order for the female game to continue. Population density, geographical considerations, volunteer base and socio-economic factors are a huge factor in determining where to start for recruitment. Outside of Pacific Coast Amateur Association and Capital Region, female programming loosely exists. Therefore recruitment is viewed with two lenses: Integrated Associations and Female Associations. The start point for recruitment programs are similar but the execution and retention of differ by MHA type.



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## **Integrated MHA Recruitment Strategies**

Integrated MHA's often do not have a Female Director position or if they do, it is vacant. Turn over is often high as the needs of a small group of registration is often high. Clarity in the role for Female Directors is often murky. While the main role should be recruitment of players, supplemented by retention, often the person in the role is left to figure things out on their own with little support or direction.

Many MHA's service small areas with low population density and potentially diverse geographical challenges, and female registration is reflective of this. Females may be reluctant to join hockey if there are no other females present. In addition, the lag in skill development often creates additional challenges with recruiting. In order to combat these ongoing challenges, a five year strategy is needed. A five year commitment to recruitment would provide for enough time to see if the numbers are improving, plus it would allow for best practices to be documented and achieved as well as attrition planning to occur.

The Zone Leads in East Kootenay's, West Kootenays, Okanagan and North work with large land masses and geographical challenges. Often the Zone Lead is the only point of contact for female programming or female opportunities. In order for these positions to best help with recruitment for MHA's, the following is recommended:

- Create a Female Director position in each district. This position would work closely with the Zone Lead.
- Obtain a complete list of female directors in each MHA in their region
- Create comprehensive data on female registration per division, per MHA. This would include reaching out to families when players leave the game and determine the factors that led to the player leaving (much like an exit interview)
- Review Regional birth stats by gender to determine reasonable opportunity for recruitment by age
- Use the Zone lead as a 'trainer' for the female director(s) to educate on recruitment opportunities (often new volunteers don't know what is available).
- Recommend regional options like jamborees or super weekends for these female players to attend. This gives further opportunity for increased networking.

## **Female MHA Recruitment Strategies**

In a Female MHA, the attraction is obvious. Players will always be in an all-female playing environment. It is easier to attract females because the association is for females. Further, the volunteers are volunteering for one gender as opposed to two. This eliminates many of the internal hurdles faced by integrated MHA's. However, both Capital Region and Pacific Coast Amateur have feeder MHA's that are integrated. There is a lost opportunity where females maintain registration in their integrated home association. Often there are not enough volunteers in the integrated MHA for the collective female voice. This makes recruiting for female registration difficult. Using the Zone Lead for the Vancouver Island Region and for the Lower Mainland Region is a logical choice when working with integrated MHA's in a region where female MHA's exist. Zone Leads have the ability to be well informed on programs available from both Hockey Canada and BC Hockey, as well as having current knowledge on what is happening in other zones in the province. Recommendations for these two regions include:





- Use of the Zone Leads as a liaison between Integrated MHA's and their female volunteers. The intent of the Zone Lead isn't to take over but it is to lend support and act as a reference point for new volunteers, or for volunteers who have new ideas and need support.
- Using the knowledge obtained from other Zone Leads, share what is working in other areas of the province and customize based on regional needs.
- Educate integrated MHA's on recruitment opportunities (often new volunteers don't know what is available).
- Recommend regional options like jamborees for these female players to attend. This gives further opportunity for increased networking.
- Act as a liaison between their MHA and the female committees in the FMHA

Recommendations for recruitment for all female MHA's have not been considered in this report given their unique composition and existing volunteer infrastructure.



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## Officiating

Officiating at the grassroots level is essential to the game and therefore officials, particularly young women and girls, must be recruited and treated as valued volunteers. It is the responsibility of Minor Hockey Associations (MHA) and BC Hockey to provide training and opportunities for officials to become the best they can be, both on and off the ice.

Currently, BC Hockey struggles to retain its female officials. Over the last decade, BC Hockey has consistently lost an average of 39% of its total female officials each year. While this loss is replaced by annual recruitment, officials continue to quit after an average of just 2.1 years. The long-term impact of this phenomenon disproportionately impacts BC Hockey's female officials. In 2019, a mere 12.5% of female officials were aged twenty-five or older, compared to 23% of male officials. This shows that BC Hockey not only loses female officials at an alarming rate but that this occurs before they have fully learned and become comfortable in the role of an official. Despite the promotion of officiating as a life-long activity, this is not often true for women. As this process continues to repeat itself, BC Hockey is not retaining its female officials long enough to reap the benefits of the resources that are invested into their training.

### Officiating Try It Events

While the financial barrier to entry into officiating is not as burdensome as it is to hockey, participants can expect to pay anywhere from \$100.00- \$400.00 before they ever officiate a game. This is a problem because officiating, while rewarding, is a demanding activity that is not for everyone. Adopting a similar model to “Try Hockey” events would help address these issues by allowing women and girls to attempt officiating in a low-pressure situation with mentorship from experienced female officials. This should lead to improved recruitment of individuals who are interested in officiating but are unwilling to pay the fee, certify, and purchase equipment without knowing if they will enjoy officiating. It would also improve retention because prospective officials would be better acquainted with the role of an official before they register and certify. While initial focus should be on women and girls who are registered with minor hockey associations, it can be expanded and advertised to people with no connection to minor hockey if this initiative is successful.

A starting point would be:

- a) Identify MHA's who would be willing to host such an event, with the requirement that one is hosted in each District.
  - a. Focus on U9/U11 divisions
  - b. Assessment skates or scrimmages for the U9/U11 divisions
- b) Assemble basic equipment that could be shared between participants; helmet with half-visor and jersey. These could be collected by donation or through purchase on the secondary market. Whistles will not be shared and will need to be purchased for each new event.
- c)



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## **Officiating the Female Game – Training Module**

While female and integrated hockey leagues use the same rules, the nuances of the game are different and require enhanced understanding of the rules. Many officials do not have the opportunity to regularly officiate female games and are thus unprepared for the nuances of female hockey. The result is often that either the rules are under-enforced, leading to injuries or that the rules are over-enforced, leading to frustration. Both outcomes create a reduced enjoyment of the game on the part of the players. Creating an officiating module specific to female hockey and promoting it to officials, as well as players and coaches, can address this issue. Over the next two years the goal is to integrate this into the officiating curriculum for all new and current officials.

For the 2021-2022 Season, there will be a series of webinars throughout the season for all officials which focusses on education points on addressing and officiating female hockey. These sessions will be available to all officials and will establish the differences in calling a female game vs. integrated game.

## **Development and Events**

Feedback from female officials in the Lower Mainland have indicated that officiating is both an athletic and a social activity. To that end, respondents indicated that an all-female environment increases feelings of comfort and enjoyment of officiating, making them more likely to continue officiating. This creates a challenge for most of the province, where female officials are part of local, integrated MHA programming. However, BC Hockey has the ability to fill this gap and address this need. A female officiating development camp, anchored by a large, female tournament would provide the following:

- Immersion of officials in an all-female environment.
- Socialization and connection with female officials from across the province
- In-game coaching and off-ice training.
- Mentorship and connection with experienced female mentors and officials with high performance experience.

Ultimately, there is the potential to run multiple camps. However, Surrey Female HA's Wickfest tournament is recommended as the starting point for this initiative. Wickfest is a large, female-only tournament that includes both recreational and competitive divisions at every age group from U9 to U18. Additionally, the tournament is located in the Lower Mainland, which makes it easy to draw mentors and support personnel from the surrounding area, rather than paying to travel staff into another area.

The following steps should be undertaken:

- Secure partnership with Surrey Female HA. BC Hockey will provide additional officials for the tournaments in exchange for collaboration between SFHA's Referee-in-Chief and BC hockey delivery staff in scheduling officials for games.
- Advertise camp to female officials via direct marketing
- Collect registration and application for travel bursary







It is recommended that a first year cap of sixteen (16) officials be enacted to ensure feasibility with the understanding that the goal is to expand capacity in subsequent years. This cap would apply only to officials from outside the Lower Mainland district. The camp could accommodate a greater number of officials from the Lower Mainland because they would not require logistical support to the same degree as officials from elsewhere in the province.

### **Championships**

Championships are the pinnacle of the hockey season. For players and coaches who do not progress to the High Performance level, a minor championship is often one of their fondest memories of sport. The same is true of officials.

The challenge is that officials are limited in terms of their championship opportunities and this burden falls disproportionately on female officials. Female officials are often excluded, whether intentionally or not, from consideration for integrated minor championships. Additionally, disparity in access to development opportunities means that female officials are not considered adequately qualified/trained for integrated championships. Therefore, female officials rely on female championships which, depending on an official's location, are only sporadically available.

The officials would benefit from having an all division, all female Championship again. The ability to have all officials in one area would increase mentorship.





## **Coaching**

### **Player Alumni Program**

Every year hundreds of female hockey players graduate the game, never to participate in the game again. BC Hockey and MHAs need to do a better job at retaining the players into other avenues in hockey whether it is officiating, administration or coaching.

A BC Hockey Alumni Program will be created to focus on bringing information to graduated female players on opportunities outside of playing. Alumni from the last five (5) years will be sent a survey to gather interest in an alumni program. When there is enough interest we will host “We Are Coaches” clinic free of charge to female coaches. Through interaction with the alumni group leadership opportunities, job opportunities and volunteer opportunities will be posted to gather interest.

### **Female Development Programs**

During recruitment initiatives and programs (ie. Jamborees and Esso Fun Days) the recommendation is to have one or two coach leads on the ice partnered with 3-5 brand new coaches or players. This gives new coaches the opportunity to be on the ice to get a feel for coaching without having to lead any sessions and just help. MHAs should focus on this a basic step in recruiting new female participants into coaching roles.

### **New Female Coaches – Participant Assessment**

For the 2021-2022 season BC Hockey will waive the Participant Assessment fee for all new female coaches. This will be reviewed at the completion to the season however this will be an initiative that will be continued for years to come.

### **Coach Education and Professional Development**

Throughout the season professional development/educational sessions will be set up for new and experienced coaches. These sessions will range from skill development sessions, season management, female leadership and female in sport (\*topics to change based on speakers).

### **Coach Contacts**

Beginning in the 2021-2022 season all Zone Leads in each district will have a list of all female coaches in their districts. New lists of female coaches will be distributed to all Zone Leads through the clinic season and they will be a liaison to MHAs and coaching rolls if they are new to areas.

### **AAA Female Players – Coach 1**

All Female AAA Players will have the chance to take Coach 1 this year. This will generate possibly up to 80-100 new female coaches with Coach 1 trained status. These athletes will be able to be rostered and assist with any U7 or U9 team.

### **Respect in Sport – Keeping Girls in the Game Certification**

Any coach for a female team will be offered the Keeping Girls in the Game Certification for free. This will be distributed to all those that are rostered to a female team for the 2021-2022 season.





## **Mentorship**

Mentorship is an opportunity that ties many parts of the Female Model together. This aspect of the female game is the most important for the players, coaches and officials and an area where MHAs and BC Hockey will need to spend the most time working through in Female Hockey.

### **Experienced Female Leaders Inventory**

To have a good mentorship program, an organization must have a solid base of female leaders to lean on as the mentor. These mentors need to have good communication skills, teamwork capabilities, brainstorming, leadership and adaptable skills to be successful. To build the mentorship program, an inventory of all female leaders, players, coaches and officials will be taken from all associations across the province. A survey will be sent out to MHA presidents to complete on behalf of their associations, indicating who they think are good female leaders within their organization and who would be able to act as a mentor for their association.

### **MHA Buddy Up Program**

When the Experienced Female Leaders Inventory is gathered, MHAs will have access to a number of people that have volunteered as mentors. With the MHA Buddy Up Program all new female coaches in an association will be matched up with an experienced coach within their MHA or a neighbouring MHA. This mentor/mentee relationship can help the new coach gain confidence to be on the ice, help plan out practice sessions, talk through any conflicts or situations that come up. More information on what this program will look like will be launched in the upcoming season.

### **Female Team Mentorship**

The AAA and CSSHL teams are committed to working with local MHA associations in many different ways to increase mentorship opportunities for players and coaches.

All CSSHL and AAA teams are available to MHAs to help facilitate any on ice skill sessions and coaching skill sessions that are needed. As well every 6-8 weeks a coach workshop will be set up with AAA and CSSHL coaches offering ideas behind practice plans, game strategy and working through different scenarios.

This mentorship doesn't just stop at the AAA/CSSHL levels. U18A teams will be encouraged to also work within their associations and neighbouring associations to support any female recruitment activities, volunteer time with lower division teams and speak to younger female players.

### **On Ice Helpers**

To give female players the opportunity to see what coaching looks like, on ice helper opportunities will be available in certain districts. Districts have the autonomy on how their on-ice-helper opportunities work thus it is important to clarify with the District prior to executing opportunities to ensure the proper rules are followed per district.

The idea of on ice helpers is to give players the ability to help on the ice and work with players without having to commit to coaching. This has been proven to be successful during female recruitment initiatives





such as jamborees, skill camps and Esso Fun Days. We encourage this to occur within MHA programming.

## **Female Event Hosting**

BC Hockey will continue to work at hosting multiple high level female events including exploring the idea of hosting an all-encompassing female championship in one location. This will need district support however experience shows that the last time this occurred in BC (Women's World Championship), it was a great success for all players, coaches, and officials.

In partnership with these events BC Hockey will continue to build female development opportunities alongside the host committees and Hockey Canada. A number of events have been hosted in the last 7 years in conjunction with major sporting events in BC such as the Women's World Championship in Kamloops and the World Juniors in Victoria and Vancouver. Female athletes around the province had the opportunity to attend these events and cheer on Team Canada, as well as participate in grassroots planning.

## **Female Hockey Associations**

One of the areas within our review that was discussed and brought up countless times was the need for Female Hockey Associations across the province. Currently in the present dynamic the support for female hockey is not there to give female hockey players equal programming across BC. With fewer and fewer female players playing each year. MHAs are having to create regional female teams to be able to compete in league play, championship and tournaments. This structure has little to no support from most MHAs and Districts across the province, and it is typically a few champions in MHAs trying to make this happen so their female players have a place to play.

BC Hockey will be looking to access funding for potential FMHA start-ups and provide a "How To" on the basics of creating a Female Hockey Association. The creation of Female Hockey Associations outside of the Lower Mainland will need to be a regional structure with boundaries that have some flexibility. The creation of Capital Region Female Hockey Association is a program that we are building the "How To" off of based on their best practices that they had to go through.

With the creation of FMHA's all of the above recommendations will become easy implementations as it is working to improve and support female hockey across the province. To create fun, safe and sustainable hockey in BC the Female Hockey Association structure will be a project that will be focused on moving forward.







## Conclusion

In conclusion, the revised recommendations in the female model focuses specifically on what impact is needed in certain areas of the province immediately to grow female hockey. These recommendations and changes will not work unless there is complete buy in from the MHAs and District Associations. Many of these recommendations can happen in the 2021-2022 season and will be either operated at the Branch level or the MHA level. MHA's have full access to the BC Hockey Female Zone Leads who will be the pinnacle to be successful with these enhanced recommendations.

To ensure these recommendations are successful, the following key performance indicators will occur throughout the season:

1. Monthly Zone Lead Meetings
2. Quarterly Female Task Group Meeting
  - Discussion to talk about the model in their areas
  - Assess if any aspects of the model need to be revised.
3. Survey the alumni and gauge responsiveness and interest levels 6 months and 12 months into the program
4. Survey the coach participants at the conclusion of professional development series
5. At the end of the season, create a report outlining what AAA and CSSHL teams did for mentorship with MHAs. This report will include the number of Female AAA players that were Coach 1 or 2 certified and what MHAs/teams they worked with through the season.
6. Once officiating is completed for the season, a report will be provided outlining the number of new female officials recruited and how many MHAs utilized the Try Officiating Grant.
7. Any MHA that puts in a proposal for District Recruitment Grant Funding will provide a report 30 days post event updating on the changes that they have seen within their MHA.
8. Any MHA that receives funding for FMHA funding will need to report every 6 months on how they are proceeding through their FMHA Start Up

The above KPIs will provide enough feedback to support planning for upcoming years and outline any changes that will need to occur. The all encompassing female model focuses on Female recruitment for players, coaches, and officials in the hope that we target new female participants into BC Hockey.



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