



INFORMATION BULLETIN 21-07

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Changes for male AAA and AA hockey

AEHL transitioning U16 AAA to U17 AAA

The Alberta Elite Hockey League and the Elite Male Committee will replace the U16 AAA category with a U17 AAA category of play for the 2022-23 hockey season. All U16 AAA teams from 2021-22 will transition to offer U17 AAA teams in 2022-23. U18 AAA will continue to be a three-year age category of play unimpacted by this change.

The Elite Male Committee determined that the previous structure with U16 AAA was not conducive to deliver continuous development opportunities for AAA-calibre players across the province from U15 AAA through U18 AAA. Based on historical data, it was determined that approximately 40 per cent of the total AEHL player population consists of 15-year-old players (U16 AAA age) – the highest percentage for any of the five birth years in the AAA stream. Of the 380 15-year-old players playing U16 AAA, over two-thirds do not go on to play U18 AAA the next season; approximately 50 per cent of U16 AAA players end up playing U18 AA in their 16-year-old season.

The data suggests that 16-year-old players are still interested in competitive, regional systems of hockey following their U16 AAA season, but the former AAA structure resulted in an oversaturation of 15-year-old players in the AAA structure and a bottleneck leading into U18 AAA that creates a lack of opportunities for 16-year-old players in AAA hockey.

By eliminating U16 AAA (a single birth year age category) and replacing it with U17 AAA (a dual birth year age category), there will be more opportunities at AAA for 16-year-old players and fewer opportunities for 15-year-old players, creating the potential for most AAA players to remain in the model from U15 AAA through U18 AAA. This continuity affords AAA associations improved opportunities to develop players over a greater time and helps ensure that AAA-calibre players select the AEHL as their Elite league of choice for the continuity it affords to play elite hockey over a prolonged period of time, at a reasonable price and within a reasonable distance of their resident minor hockey association.

Affiliation: For the purposes of affiliation, U17 AAA teams will be eligible to affiliate any 15-or-16-year-old players not playing U18 AAA. Players on U17 AAA teams will be eligible to affiliate to U18 AAA, but not U18 AA or U16 AA.

U16 AA expanding to provincial pilot project

To align with the change to U17 AAA, the AA Hockey Committee will continue to operate U16 AA for the 2022-2023 season as a pilot project, expanding from a pilot with Hockey Calgary and the South Central Alberta Hockey League (SCAHL) to a province-wide pilot project.

U16 AA was created to ensure 15-year-old players can access a level of hockey suitable for their skill level. With AAA restructuring to reduce the number of 15-year-olds in the AAA model, the AA Committee determined that the 2022-23 season would be crucial to determine the viability of U16 AA while continuing to ensure there is an equitable opportunity for all AA calibre players in the AA model.

U13 AA structure changes

Following a review by a Member *Ad-Hoc* Committee of the U13 AA model, the AA Hockey Committee has introduced U13 AA structure changes for the 2022-23 hockey season. The changes include new criteria on the minimum number of U13 players in a recruitment area required to host one U13 AA team, as well as amending the numbers at which more than one team is required.

Starting in the 2022-23 season, a recruitment area will be required to have a minimum of 125 total U13 registered players to host a U13 AA team and be permitted to host an additional U13 AA team for every additional 125 total U13 players registered in that recruitment area (ie: 2 teams at 250+ players, 3 teams at 375+ players, etc.).

In the past, the percentage of U13 players selected from each AA Recruitment Area varied between 8% and 23% of U13 registration in a Recruitment Area. This means that AA teams in some Recruitment Areas represent nearly three times more of their total U13 registrants than teams from other Recruitment Areas.

The Committee determined this gap was too wide and criteria needed to be implemented to ensure recruitment areas operate with and select a more similar percentage of their top players for the highest category of U13 hockey. The updated structure will ensure U13 AA teams are comprised of between 7.6- 15% of total U13 registration, a significant improvement.

The updated U13 AA model is as follows:

Host Minor Hockey Association Recruitment Area	Number of Teams
Hockey Calgary	12
Hockey Edmonton	8
St. Albert, Grande Prairie	2
Okotoks, Foothills, Lethbridge, Taber, Medicine Hat, Strathmore, Airdrie, Cochrane, Red Deer, Sylvan Lake, Lacombe, Olds, Sherwood Park, Strathcona, Spruce Grove, Fort Saskatchewan, Camrose, Leduc, Beaumont, Fort McMurray, Bonnyville, Lloydminster, Wainwright, Peace River, Whitecourt, Sturgeon	1
TOTAL	50

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact our office.

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