



USA Hockey Tier I and Tier II Recruiting Rule

Frequently Asked Questions for 2020-2021 (as of 4/7/20)

USA Hockey has instituted the following recruiting rule for Tier I and II sanctioned teams. There have been some questions about how to interpret the rule, including what is permitted and what is not permitted prior to the date/time that is 24 hours after nationals (the "Open Period"). The FAQ below is issued by USA Hockey and is intended to address those questions.

TEXT of the USA Hockey Tier I and II Tryout and Recruitment Rule:

Tryouts for Tier I teams must be published and advertised. No youth Tier I or II team may recruit or solicit players or offer hockey contracts to players for the following season, or hold development camps, tryouts, player selections or any activity that could be construed as a tryout/solicitation or recruitment for the following season, until 24 hours after the last game of Youth National Championships (both Tier I and Tier II Nationals must be completed). For example, if the National Tournament ends at 4:00 pm on Monday, tryouts can begin after 4:00 pm on Tuesday. Any violation of this prohibition may subject the coach, team, program and/or responsible administrators to appropriate discipline, or ineligibility of the team or coach, as determined by the Affiliate.

1. What is the general intent or purpose of the rule?

The primary intent and purpose of the rule is to prohibit teams from recruiting players from outside their organization to join their organization for the following season until after teams had completed their current season. Players should not be recruited to join another team for the next season while they are still rostered (and in many cases under contract) with a team for the current season. Even if a team has not progressed to the district or national championships, there shall be no recruiting or tryouts for any players prior to 24 hours after the last game of the Youth/Girls National Championships. Likewise, a program or team cannot avoid these restrictions by recruiting through the player's parents.

At the same time, programs and teams are encouraged to advertise their tryouts. Advertisements announce the date, time and location of the tryouts, as well as the organization, team and coaches for that team – they do not include a specific invitation or solicitation to a player to join the program or any team in the program. Advertisements are not directed to particular players.

2. For the 2020-21 season, when does the Open Period commence?

The Open Period for the 2020-21 playing season allows for tryouts for Tier I and II teams to begin no sooner than April 7, 2020 at 4:00 pm local time. This restriction applies to all Tier I and II teams at the 14U Youth and Girls classifications, 15 Only Youth classification, 16U Youth and Girls classifications, 18U Youth classification and 19U Girls classification.

3. May a program post advertisements on its webpage prior to the Open Period that advertise tryouts after the Open Period?

Yes. The rule encourages teams to advertise their tryouts, and such advertisements are not directed at particular players or recruiting any particular player(s). There is no prohibition on posting of such advertisements (on a webpage, digital displays in an arena, printed literature, etc.) prior to the Open Period, and doing so is encouraged.





4. May a program send generic/generalized emails to its customers prior to the Open Period that advertise tryouts after the Open Period?

Yes. Like advertisements on a program's webpage, an email advertisement containing the same information that would be found on the webpage advertisement, and sent to a group of individuals providing generic information, and which is not directed, addressed to or personalized to any particular player(s), is permitted.

5. For the emailed advertisements in the previous question, what constitutes a program's customers to whom it can send advertisements (i.e., who can the email be sent to)?

It is recognized that some programs may have a larger database than other programs. For example, while one program may have only a database of its current or current and former players, another program may have a database of customers that include those that have been a customer of the arena's/program's pro shop, and those customers from a pro shop may be playing hockey in a different hockey program. So long as the email contains only general advertising of the program's tryout dates, times, and location of the tryouts, as well as the organization, team and coaches for that team, and is not personalized to a recipient in any way, then the program may send that advertisement out to its full database of customers.

6. Can a program send an email prior to the Open Period inviting a player or players to join their program or a team for the next season?

No. An email directed to a particular player or player(s) and inviting them to join the program or a team for the next season, is recruiting and considered a solicitation to join a team for the following season. Such an email sent prior to the Open Period is prohibited.

7. Can a program hold a pre-tryout, identification camp/skate, or informational meeting prior to the Open Period for players from outside their program?

No. Any type of pre-tryout, or identification camp or skate, skills sessions or similar events for players or parents from outside of the program's current players, would allow the program to have contact with the program's coaches, etc., and would constitute improper recruiting of players from outside of the program prior to the Open Period. Pre-tryouts, identification camps, etc., prior to the Open Period, may only be held for the hockey players and/or their parents currently registered with the hockey program (i.e., a player, even if in the program's database of customers, may not be invited to a pre-tryout or similar event unless the player is currently on a team within that program).

8. Can a program recruit players from outside its program prior to the Open Period in order to join a Spring or Summer team?

Yes. USA Hockey permits spring and summer hockey teams. However, while this is not a recruitment for a Tier I or II team for the following season, spring and summer teams may not be used as a means of recruiting for a Tier I or II team the following season. If it is proven that recruitment of the player for the Tier I or II team actually occurred prior to the Open Date, the team and/or individuals may be subject to such appropriate sanctions or discipline as are described below in number 12.

9. How should the rule apply to programs or events that are operated outside of USA Hockey?

USA Hockey programs, coaches and administrators should not be permitted to operate a program outside of USA Hockey as a means of avoiding the prohibitions on tryouts or recruiting prior to the Open Period. While USA Hockey does not restrict a coach's private business, if a coach runs a private camp, meeting, event, skate, etc., outside of USA Hockey, for one or more players prior to the Open Period, then the Affiliate should prohibit any players attending that event from being rostered on any Tier I or II team or program for which that coach





is affiliated within USA Hockey. Likewise, some USA Hockey programs have affiliated junior programs that operate outside of USA Hockey; if a player attends a tryout prior to the Open Period for a program outside of USA Hockey, then the player should not be permitted to be rostered on a USA Hockey Tier I or II team that is affiliated with that non-USA Hockey program/team.

10. Does this rule prohibit a school from hosting non-hockey related school visits?

The rule is not intended to restrict schools from hosting school visits or recruiting students to attend the school, but there can be no recruiting for the hockey program, tryout, solicitation, offer of a contract to play hockey, etc., prior to the Open Period.

11. How do these rules change after the Open Period?

After the Open Period commences, teams, programs and coaches are not restricted from recruiting players for the following season, except that recruitment of a player that has already signed a contract or been added to a roster for a different team for the 2020-21 season would constitute tampering and/or improper participant communication, and be subject to the Affiliate's rules and any appropriate disciplinary or other action.

12. How do these rules apply to teams that are not Tier I or Tier II?

USA Hockey's rule only applies to teams at the Tier I and Tier II level at the following classifications:

- 14U Youth and Girls classifications
- 15 Only Youth classification
- 16U Youth and Girls classifications
- 18U Youth classification
- 19U Girls classification

Accordingly, the recruiting rule addressed herein only applies to teams in those classifications and does not apply to teams in 12U and below or for non-Tier I or II teams that are 14U and above. However, USA Hockey encourages Affiliates to adopt rules for tryout times and recruiting of players, including appropriate timelines to avoid tryouts and recruiting of players too far in advance of the following season.

13. What are the appropriate sanctions for violation of the recruiting rule for Tier I and II sanctioned teams?

For Tier I, the USA Hockey Youth Council has agreed that the violation of the recruiting and tryout rules by a Tier I team shall result in that team being ineligible to be recognized as a Tier I team and ineligible for National Championships for the season for which it was holding tryouts.

For Tier II, the USA Hockey Youth Council has agreed that the Affiliate has the authority to subject the coach, team, program and/or responsible administrators to appropriate discipline, or ineligibility of the team or coach for violation of the recruiting and tryout rules by a Tier II team. The Youth Council has strongly recommended that the appropriate discipline for a Tier II team's violation of the recruiting and tryout rules is to prohibit said team from being recognized as a Tier II team and making said team ineligible for the National Championships for the season for which it was holding tryouts.

For both Tier I and Tier II, if a team is determined to be ineligible for National Championships, the Youth Council further recommends that players that were not subject to improper recruiting or tryouts should be released and (subject to roster deadlines) free to join an eligible team.

If you have any questions regarding the USA Hockey recruiting and tryout rule for Tier I and II sanctioned teams, please contact your Affiliate President.

