

NORFOLK GIRLS HOCKEY ASSOCIATION
(NGHA)

Return to Play Plan
Fall 2020

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Introduction

The Norfolk Girls Hockey Association (NGHA) is committed to providing a safe hockey experience for its members commencing September 2020. The NGHA's Return to Play Plan was developed to satisfy facility and programming safety protocols put forward by the Province of Ontario, the Ontario Women's Hockey Association, Norfolk County and the Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit.

The NGHA recognizes that the safety protocols and programming recommendations of the above organizations are subject to change as the Covid-19 situation in Ontario evolves. As such, the NGHA's Return to Play Plan may be adjusted at any time to accommodate the requirements of these parties. Robert Bonin, Vice President will monitor updates to ensure the NGHA's Return to Play Plan remains compliant.

Facility Protocols

Norfolk County's arena protocols were updated for Ontario's Emergency Order and "A Framework for Re-opening our Province" compliance for all summer ice activities. These protocols will be extended for Fall 2020 ice rentals and include the following:

- 1) Upon arrival at the arena facilities it is the responsibility of the NGHHA to ensure a Session Participation Tracking sheet is completed. All coaches, instructors and participants are required to be named.
- 2) Also upon arrival at the arena facilities it is the responsibility of the NGHHA to ensure all participants/coaches/instructors complete a Health Screening prior to each participation in on-ice activity.
- 3) Upon entry to the facility and at all times while at the facility, unless engaged in approved activity which has been modified to avoid physical contact between players, all individuals are to maintain physical distancing.
- 4) Masks must be worn inside the building, pursuant to Norfolk County By-Law 2020-66. Further to this bylaw, masks may be temporarily removed while engaging in athletic activity.
- 5) Players and spectators will be directed to their respective areas by facility signs and floor arrows.
- 6) Players are to enter the facility already dressed in their equipment. Chairs will be made available to all participants for final preparation for on-ice activity (i.e. put on skates or remove guards, put on helmet, etc). The chairs will be placed in common areas and will be in marked physically-distanced sections.
- 7) Once ready for on-ice activity participants/parents will re-locate their masks/skate guards etc to a separate chair area located at a separate door of the ice surface, where they will exit at the end of their on-ice activity.
- 8) Players may not spit, blow their nose freely, or release any bodily fluid.
- 9) Upon completion of on-ice activity all participants and spectators will exit the facility through secondary doors, as marked.
- 10) One spectator is allowed per participant under the age of 16. Spectators must stay in a marked section of the stands. These spectators sections will be changed and cleaned with each ice rental. At no time can the number of people in the facility exceed 50.
- 11) Dressing rooms will not be available.
- 12) A washroom will available for use at each facility on an emergency-use basis only.

Participant Meetings

NGHA Executives will conduct meetings with coaches/instructors to review the safety protocols and programming requirements of all NGHA activity. Topics to be covered include, but are not limited to, the following:

- 1) A review of the relevant sections of OWHA Guidelines and corresponding FAQ's.
- 2) Full review of facility protocols, Session 1 Programming and modified game play rules.
- 3) Review of their responsibility to ensure completion by each participant of the OWHA Health Screening Questionnaire (as attached), either in writing or verbally.
- 4) Review of their responsibility for the completion and retention of the OWHA Tracking Sheet for each ice session.
- 5) Review of on-ice safety protocol requirements, including maximum number of participants and physical distancing requirements during all practices.
- 6) Importance of players arriving dressed in their equipment.
- 7) The importance of emphasizing to participants the importance of strict hand hygiene before and after training. If possible, players should be encouraged to carry hand sanitizer.
- 8) Players should have a labelled water bottles. Players should only use that water bottle when participating in the activity. Parents/players should wash water bottles after each session.
- 9) Players should be instructed to leave their hockey bags in their cars.
- 10) Pre-game and post-game handshakes are to be eliminated.
- 11) Directions on what to do if a player is not feeling well and what steps are to be taken by the team. Specific reference will be made to OWHA Safety Protocols. In addition, the following guidance and requirements will be reviewed:
 - a. If a player exhibits signs of Covid-19 but has not been tested, they should remain out of the hockey environment and contact their physician or the public health unit for required steps to be taken. The player will require a note from their physician or public health authority to return to play.
 - b. If a player is sick but was tested by Covid-19 and did not test positive, the player should follow up with their physician and the public health authority. They will require a note from their physician to return to play.
 - c. If a player on a team tests positive for Covid-19, the coach and NGHA executive must be immediately informed. The NGHA will consult with the public health authority with regards to the impact on NGHA programming. The public health authority will determine contact tracing and isolation requirements. It is possible, therefore, that one diagnosis on a team could lead to that team being required to pause hockey activities until the public health authority determines it is safe to return.
 - d. If a parent/family member of a player tests positive for Covid-19, the player and their family will need to stay out of the hockey environment. They should contact their physician and public health authority for instructions. The player will need a note from their physician or public health authority to return to play.

The NGHA will communicate directly with parents/participants to ensure they have an overview of what to expect with regards to Session 1 programming and facility protocols, the safety steps put in place by the relevant parties, and to ensure they are aware of their specific role in creating a safe and healthy environment. In addition, coaches will meet with their respective teams to review these, to answer specific questions, and to ensure open and necessary communication is maintained throughout Session 1 with all parents/participants.

Should safety protocol adjustments be required, the NGHA will communicate those changes directly with participants and also through each team's coaches.

Session 1 Programming

Registration

Session 1 programming will be an 8-week period, targeted to run from September 15 through November 09, 2020.

Registration will open on September 1st, or as soon as possible thereafter, and players will register for Session 1 ONLY. Players will also only pay Session 1 registration fees.

Should a family choose not to engage in hockey at this time, they will have the opportunity to register for Session 2 at a later date. Session 2 is targeted to begin November 10, 2020.

Programming

All programming is being structured to strictly adhere to the OWHA “Return to Hockey Framework”.

As of September 1, 2020, the OWHA will move to Stage 3B of their Return to Hockey Framework. Stage 3B provides for programming that will include modified game play with rules that focus on removing deliberate and prolonged contact.

Players will register for Session 1 Hockey

There will be no tryouts in Session 1 Hockey. Players will be ‘tiered’ so that they are skating with players of similar skill level. Tiering will be completed as follows:

- 1) Players will be placed in a tier based on their category of participation in the 2019-2020 season.
- 2) Players will be moved between tiers for the primary purpose of balancing team numbers.
- 3) Players will be moved between tiers for the secondary purpose of ensuring players are placed in the tier most appropriate for their ability, based on executive evaluation completed during an initial development period.

The first two weeks of Session 1 Hockey will be dedicated to player development, with no game play. Following this development period, modified game play will begin.

Teams will be rostered with 9 players and 1 goalie. There will be a maximum of 5 team officials rostered to each team, however only 2 Coaches and 1 Trainer can be on the bench during game play activities. Physical distancing must be adhered to throughout all team practices. Team officials must assign to individual coaches the specific responsibility of ensuring physical distancing is maintained by players/coaches/instructor at all times. Players/teams will be grouped to a maximum of 50 for game play purposes. As of October 1 (or completion of 2 weeks development) we will move to internal 3on3 modified game play. After October 19 we are anticipating a move to 4on4 modified game play with external groups. These grouped “leagues” may include teams from Brantford and Haldimand. Game play will allow for players to engage within the 2-meter physical distancing, while adhering to modified No Physical Contact rules.

Game play structure will be as follows:

- U11,U13,U15– 4on4 full ice, using benches
- U18,U22– 3on3 or 4on4 full ice, using benches

Session 1 Game Play – Rules of Play

The following rules of play will be adhered to for all NGHA Session 1 game play activities;

RULES FOR 3on3, 4on4 - U11 TO U22

Game Play

- 5 min warm up
- 2 x 22 min period run time
- 1 min intermission between 1st and 2nd period
- No overtime / no shootout for tied games
- No faceoffs
 - Period 1 visiting team has first possession
 - Period 2 home team has first possession
- No Physical Contact
 - Players must remain one stick length apart
 - Accidental/incidental contact may occur
 - No body checking
 - When a scrum or gathering occurs the puck will be given to the defending team and the attacking team must retreat. A whistle will be blown to separate the players and another whistle to signal the resumption of play once the official is satisfied the attacking team has retreated and the defending team has gained puck possession
- A player that loses a glove must immediately retrieve the glove or leave the ice

Line Changes

- Teams will change on the fly

Goals

- Goals result in a change of possession. The team that scores the goal must allow the other team to advance the puck past centre ice before applying pressure. If the puck has not advanced past centre ice within 10 seconds of the whistle the official will signal the team that scored to proceed with the attack.

Icing

- Icing the puck results in a change of possession. The team that iced the puck must allow the other team to advance the puck past center ice before applying pressure. If the puck has not advanced past center ice within 10 seconds of the whistle the official will signal the attacking team to proceed with the attack.

Offsides

- Offsides will result in a change of possession. The team that was called for offside must exit their attacking zone (all players simultaneously in neutral zone) before re-entering their attacking zone and applying pressure.

Goaltender Freezes the Puck

When the goaltender freezes the puck, the attacking team must exit their attacking zone (all players simultaneously in neutral zone) before re-entering their attacking zone and applying pressure).

Penalties

- Penalty shots will be awarded for penalties as per:
 - 2 min penalties = 1 penalty shot
 - 4+ min penalties = 2 penalty shots
 - All major penalties will result in 2 penalty shots and an ejection from the game
 - Intentional body contact or body checking = 2 penalty shots and may result in removal from the game at the discretion of the referee
 - Intentionally entering the goaltenders crease = 1 penalty shot
 - Co-incident penalties will result in NO penalty shot being awarded
- The penalty shot must be taken by the individual the infraction was committed against unless they are unable to do so because of injury.
- The time clock will continue to run during the penalty shot. If the buzzer sounds while the penalty shot is in process, the shot will be allowed to be completed and then the player change will occur.
- If a delayed penalty is called near the end of the game and the clock runs out, and where the result of the penalty shot(s) could change the outcome of the game, the penalty shot(s) will be taken. If the outcome of the penalty shot(s) would have no impact on the outcome of the game, the penalty shot(s) will not be taken.

Penalty Shot Procedure

- When a penalty is called, the clock will not stop (all divisions)
- Penalty shot must be taken by the player infringed upon (if applicable) and all players on the ice must remain there until the shot is taken
- The player taking the penalty shot will line up at center ice
- All other players from both teams will line up by the far blue line
- All players will start from a standing position
- Referee will blow the whistle to start play
- All players may begin skating on the whistle; players on the non-penalized team may "chase" the player taking the shot and can prevent it if able to do so.
- Penalties can still be called on penalty shots.
- Should the player miss the penalty shot, play will continue.
- If a goal is scored, the team that scores the goal must allow the other team to advance the puck past center ice before applying pressure. If the puck has not proceeded past the hashmarks within 10 seconds of the whistle the official will signal the attacking team to proceed with the attack.

Roster

- 9 players plus 1 goaltender (per team)
- Both teams must start the game with a minimum of 5 players plus 1 goaltender