

## **EDMONTON MINOR HOCKEY ASSOCIATION FOR THE GOOD OF THE GAME**

**AN INDIVIDUAL IS CONSIDERED TO BE DISPLAYING UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOR IF THEY ARE VERBALLY OR PHYSICALLY HARASSING AND/OR ABUSING A GAME PARTICIPANT (PLAYER, COACH OR OFFICIAL).**

The member associations of the EMHA have directed the EMHA to develop a program that recommits us to promote and honor the values of fun, respect and positive development in the game of hockey for our children. This program is to be implemented immediately.

The principal phase of this program is directed to parents/spectators. This program will be asking you to consider carefully your behavior at the rink and how this behavior impacts on the participants of the game. The above definition of unacceptable behavior will be used by parents, coaches and administrators in this program. The most common example of this type of behavior would be the spectator who shouts or gestures to harass or abuse a participant (player, coach, official) in a way that the participant becomes aware of the intent of the activity. This is unacceptable behavior and the program will be used to help this spectator understand the effects of his/her action.

An undesirable but necessary component of this program will be its enforcement. The EMHA has expanded its' Bylaws to allow for strong and effective support of the Associations as they administer this program.

### ***FOR THE GOOD OF THE GAME***

The Edmonton Minor Hockey Association (EMHA) administers a minor hockey program for thousands boys and girls who participate in the six Districts of the Federation Hockey Council, four Athletic Clubs under the AA Council and ten teams under its Junior Council, within the boundaries of the City of Edmonton. The Association, one of the largest in North America, covers players from 5 years to 20 years of age, (both male and female).

The EMHA, operating under the terms of its Aims and Objectives, By-laws and Operating Directives adopted by its various Councils, is the sole governing administrative and policy making body and rule enforcer within the City of Edmonton. A part of its function is to formulate suspensions and to conduct hearings on specific rule contravention to determine suspensions and formulate policy directions and guidelines for its members. The EMHA, through its development committee, provides leadership and custom designed programs, specialty clinics and monitoring, to meet the specific needs of individual players, coaches, teams and associations. Its goal is to have Edmonton's hockey community at the forefront of hockey development.

The EMHA has seen a need to address the fundamental value of fun, respect and development of the Game both generally and within the Edmonton context. These values manifest themselves into the general area of athletic and hockey development, on-ice activity and off-ice activity. The EMHA sees the Game having arrived at a critical point requiring it to focus on and re-emphasize *values, fun respect, and positive development*. Thus the program, "**FOR THE GOOD OF THE GAME**" has been created.

The EMHA has and will continue to embark upon specific initiatives within all elements of the Game to establish and maintain the basic principles of the Game and its values of fun, respect and positive development. Although this basic principle has been influential in the past in the development of Edmonton's minor hockey program, the EMHA now views the Game at a point whereby the values of fun, respect and positive development must be even more of a priority in discharging its mandate and guiding its members. Further, the EMHA does not see this as a short-term objective, but rather a permanent, on-going and over riding principle of the minor hockey program in Edmonton. The EMHA views the "**FOR THE GOOD OF THE GAME**" program and initiatives flowing therefrom, as one of the most important it has ever engaged in. It clearly reflects upon the purpose and mission of the EMHA "to improve minor hockey in the City of Edmonton" and increase interest in the game of hockey in the City.

There are several specific initiatives which are on-going, planned or will be planned in order to achieve the objectives and principles of the "**FOR THE GOOD OF THE GAME**" program. As indicated, these values manifest themselves into three general areas of the Game. Each of these inter-relate in varying degrees; however, the activities associated with each must meet and continually reflect upon the basic values of fun, respect and positive development. The following pages sets out the Game, its critical elements and initiatives of the program relating to these elements.

Specific elements of the "**FOR THE GOOD OF THE GAME**" program will be working in parallel and at different levels of progression. Through its Development Committee, the EMHA has expended considerable effort in the Game and hockey development. The EMHA is presently and will continue to expend considerable effort in this area. It is widely recognized that the development of hockey players generally and within our community requires a significant overhaul. We must focus energy away from developing only aggressive hockey players with professional and junior objectives to making the Game fun for all participants and spectators. We see the on-ice zero tolerance initiative as only the starting point in eliminating the violence and unnecessary aggression in the Game to foster true creative hockey development and sportsmanship. Most recently, the EMHA has initiated efforts with others to address behavior on and off the ice. Incredible energy and focus has been given in the last year to these behavioral and value oriented matters. The EMHA plans to extend efforts on all elements of the Game by way of this program and its on-going initiatives with emphasis on fun, respect and positive development of the Game and its people. Much of this document focuses on the matters of values, behavior and social development, both on and off the ice with emphasis on off-ice conduct and the elements of the program associated with addressing this matter. Further information and documentation will be formulated as other elements of the program are developed. We plan to supplement this initial information package as more initiatives unfold.

#### FOR THE GOOD OF THE GAME

Over the past several years it has become increasingly apparent that participating in the Game, whether as a player, coach or spectator, has become less and less enjoyable. People are leaving the Game for the wrong reasons and with bad memories. Conduct of spectators, parents, coaches and players amongst themselves is increasingly more unacceptable, both on and off the ice.

Some hockey administrators either have been a part of, not appreciated or have ignored this problem, thus it has continued, creating a micro-culture which is unacceptable. Those many administrators who truly have attempted change have had their efforts frustrated. The clear majority of people, whether directly or indirectly impacted by the Game, emphasized the need to play with more respect and for fun. The volume and intensity of support and the momentum gained by our general program, initiatives and principles in a very short period of time are nothing short of "unbelievable".

The EMHA views **"FOR THE GOOD OF THE GAME"** program as support and confirmation to the many excellent volunteers, coaches and parents who are in the majority and who have always practiced and subscribed to these fundamental principles. We see this program as a vehicle to assist them to further these values and make the Game even better and more enjoyable. One could view **"FOR THE GOOD OF THE GAME"** program as a celebration of the positive elements of the Game that will overwhelm those negative elements that have unfortunately tainted the reputation of the Game today. Those few who may question the program are the very ones that many of the elements of the program are aimed at and are indicative of a problem and not a solution. It is not a time to be defensive, but rather offensive and proactive in advocating a program that is totally positive. We encourage the majority to confidently come forward with energy and support **"FOR THE GOOD OF THE GAME"** program to make our Game even better.

### **BEHAVIOUR MODIFICATION - CULTURAL CHANGE**

The EMHA has specifically noted an increased lack of respect amongst some constituents of the game. Players, coaches, officials, spectators and administrators must revisit civility and truly evaluate the reason for having the Game. We must focus the attention of participants to fun, fair play, respect, player and social development, as well as building rather than destroying self-esteem. It is about time something is done and the EMHA is prepared to do what it takes to impact in all these directions.

We must also focus on the concept of impartiality in the Game. It is an important element in the development of a young person's self-esteem to avoid preferential treatment either by coaches or administrators. Whether the term "equal" or "equality" is used, the concepts are the same. Although clearly a matter of context, the implementation of the concept must always have regard for respect, honesty and openness. Impartiality is consistent with respectful conduct and is applicable whether administering elite or recreational programs. Participants should have the confidence that disclosure of preferential treatment will not result in negative consequences for them. Administrators must act quickly and effectively when such consequences become known. Any unfair treatment must be dealt with and corrected quickly and effectively.

Although the EMHA views its programs broadly, it clearly recognizes that sexual, physical and physiological abuse are very serious societal problems and supports all on-going initiatives directed at eliminating these problems in sport. Recent public scrutiny and revelations have only given the EMHA more momentum with its already on-going program and initiatives. The EMHA particularly sees the need to completely eliminate all abuse from the Game whether or not in the guise of motivational tactics.

We see the game of hockey playing a much more significant role in the development of young people in their values, morals, social maturity and physical and mental fitness. We want to focus even more on this development with emphasis on, as the Canadian Center of Ethics in Sport points out "a morally acceptable mode of conduct" and which promotes acceptable conduct as:

- respect for persons
- protection from harm
- development of ethical conduct towards others -notions of justice, fairness, equity
- ethic of care - the ethics of relationships (not just ethics of individual conduct)
- freedom to enjoy, to flourish
- respect for the game

The Canadian Center for Ethics in Sport (CCES) is a newly formed organization arising out of a merger between the Canadian Center for Drug-free Sport and Fair Play Canada. In combining the previous mandates and accomplishments of these two organizations, the CCES represents an internationally recognized leader in the field of ethics in sport, particularly with respect to the development of effective interventions for the promotion of fair play and drug-free sport. The CCES uses a comprehensive approach involving research, prevention, advocacy detection and deterrence for the promotion of ethical conduct in

all aspects of sport in Canada.

These values should be demonstrated comfortably and advocated by all elements of the Game including administrators, players, coaches, parents and spectators. Parents and players should not feel intimidated at raising concerns nor fear negative consequences in coaches' and administrators' decisions. Administrators must step up when made aware of such tactics by decision makers and take remedial action. It is a win-win scenario whereby all participants are winners in socially positive and healthy development while enjoying a great game. Further, such allows for the achievement of athletic excellence. We see, as well, this objective complimenting the zero tolerance and non-violence on-ice initiatives that the EMHA fully supports. In fact, the EMHA sees its program very much a part of and related to inappropriate on-ice activity by players and officials. As illustrated earlier, on and off-ice conduct cannot be separated as they are very much interrelated. Ultimately, peer pressure and scrutiny will be the best enforcement tool.

The EMHA emphasizes its program is complimentary and consistent with those put forth by other organizations and as a positive force to make the participation in the Game better.

### **RECENT BACKGROUND WORK**

The EMHA formulated a committee made up of EMHA Directors and some member districts/clubs to generally review the matter of on and off-ice abuse in hockey and the implications of such abuse within the EMHA. The committee recommended the establishment of a policy that *"will return a level of respect to the game which allows the players to enjoy playing hockey without the stress or abuse which currently exists"*. (The Committee's decision was "that the philosophy will be utilized in any way to ensure a quick and effective education process). To further this end, it was recommended that every player, parent, coach and official sign a Fair Play Pledge as a prerequisite to participating in the Game.

A further recommendation has been made to add to the Rules and Regulations, the following:

*"Minor Hockey is provided to further and encourage the sport of amateur hockey, for the enjoyment of players, to teach sportsmanship and to help players form good character. The player and his welfare must be paramount. In the interests of sportsmanship and fair play, all those involved in minor hockey shall observe the tenets of fair play as identified in the C.H.A. Fair Play Code and toward that end, all players, coaches, parents and officials are required to sign a pledge to that effect before being allowed to participate in the minor hockey program in Edmonton".*

The Committee recommended amendments to the EMHA By-laws giving the EMHA the authority to summarily eject and suspend spectators for conduct unbecoming. This request has been actioned and reads:

#### **By-law # 51**

The President shall have the power to suspend summarily any player, coach, trainer, manager or official of any team under the auspices of the EMHA for any conduct on or off the ice which in the sole discretion of the President is deemed to be unbecoming or detrimental to the game. Such suspension to be effective until dealt with by the Special Committee.

This authority may be delegated to such EMHA directors and officials as the President may determine.

#### **By-law #52**

The President shall have the power to prevent summarily any spectator from viewing any game or other activity or entering a facility to view such game or activity under the auspices of EMHA for any conduct which in the sole discretion of the President is deemed to be unbecoming or detrimental to the game. Further, the President shall have the power to suspend summarily the player, coach, team official or the team to which the spectator is attached. Such action to be effective until dealt with by the Special Committee.

This authority may be delegated to such EMHA directors and officials as the President may determine. The power and delegation granted to the President is significant in that it allows for effective and quick

action against conduct unbecoming or detrimental to the Game and its participants, as well action against the team of the contravening spectator. The EMHA is prepared to enforce these provisions as required and are an integral part of the reporting and enforcement protocol initiatives.

The EMHA addressed a major concern of parents when they caused a motion to be passed by Federation Hockey Council limiting the number of games member teams (excluding AA Council member teams) are allowed to participate in during a season. The maximum number of games allowed in the Federation Hockey Council program is:

- Initiation 40 games
- Pre-Novice 40 games
- Novice 50 games
- Atom 60 games
- PeeWee 60 games
- Bantam 60 games
- Midget 60 games

These maximums include all league, exhibition and tournament games; with tournaments counting as 3 games. Games played during Minor Hockey Week and in playoffs are not included in the limitations. The EMHA adopted the "Stop Sign" program this season and will continue to carry on this mandatory program in an effort to eliminate the practice of checking from behind.

Another program proposed by the EMHA this year was to facilitate the ease of handling the resolution of disputes and to streamline the appeal process. The EMHA actively encourages all parties to attempt to mediate and attempt to resolve any matters amicably. The following is proposed:

#### **Statement of Principal**

The EMHA appreciates that disputes and disagreements concerning issues relating to hockey may occur. It is, however, expected that all parties attempt mediation, alternate dispute resolution methods or use reasonable efforts to resolve such issues prior to the commencement of an appeal to the Special Committee of the EMHA.

The EMHA further requests all appeals to the Club or Association level be attempted prior to the commencement of the appeal herein.

#### **DISPUTES AND ARBITRATION COMMITTEES**

The EMHA further requires that all member clubs and associations set up and maintain a disputes and arbitration committee or similar committee to attempt to mediate any disputes prior to the issues being heard by the Special Committee.

Other projects will be undertaken and/or supported when it is felt that such actions will build a safer climate for the game and/or will further enhance the fun, respect and /or development of hockey within the boundaries of the EMHA.

## **FOR THE GOOD OF THE GAME EDMONTON MINOR HOCKEY ASSOCIATION - FAIR PLAY PLEDGE**

It is the intention of this pledge to promote fair play and respect for all participants within the Edmonton Minor Hockey Association. A pledge form is given to each team at the start of the season for all parents, players, coaches, and officials to sign.

All parents must sign this pledge before being allowed to participate in hockey in the Edmonton Minor Hockey system and must continue to observe the principles of Fair Play.

### **FAIR PLAY CODE FOR PARENTS**

1. I will not force my child to participate in hockey.
2. I will remember that my child plays hockey for his or her enjoyment, not mine.
3. I will encourage my child to play by the rules and to resolve conflict without resorting to hostility or violence.
4. I will teach my child that doing one's best is as important as winning so that my child will never feel defeated by the outcome of the game.
5. I will make my child feel like a winner every time by offering praise for competing fairly and hard.
6. I will never ridicule or yell at my child for making a mistake or losing a game.
7. I will remember that children learn by example. I will applaud good plays and performances by both my child's team and their opponents.
8. I will never question the official's judgment or honesty in public.
9. I will support all efforts to remove verbal and physical abuse from children's hockey games.
10. I will respect and show appreciation for the volunteers who give their time to hockey for my child.

All players must sign this pledge stating that they will observe the principles of the Fair Play Code before being allowed to participate in hockey in the Edmonton Minor Hockey system.

### **FAIR PLAY CODE FOR PLAYERS**

1. I will play hockey because I want to, not because others or coaches want me to.
2. I will play by the rules of hockey and in the spirit of the Game.
3. I will control my temper -fighting or "mouthing-off" can spoil the activity of everyone.
4. I will respect my opponents.
5. I will do my best to be a true team player.
6. I will remember that winning isn't everything - that having fun, improving skills, making friends and doing my best are also important.
7. I will acknowledge all good plays and performances - those of my team and my opponents.
8. I will remember that coaches and officials are there to help me. I will accept their decisions and show them respect.

All coaches must sign this pledge before being allowed to participate in hockey in the Edmonton Minor Hockey system and must continue to observe the principles of Fair Play.

### **FAIR PLAY CODE FOR COACHES**

1. I will be reasonable when scheduling games and practices remembering that young athletes have other interests and obligations.
2. I will teach my athletes to play fairly and to respect the rules, officials, opponents and teammates.
3. I will ensure *all* athletes receive equal instruction, support and appropriate, fair playing time.
4. I will not ridicule or yell at my athletes for making mistakes or for performing poorly. I will remember that children play to have fun and must be encouraged to have confidence in themselves.
5. I will make sure that equipment and facilities are safe and match the athlete's ages and ability.
6. I will remember that children need a coach they can respect. I will be generous with praise and set a good example.
7. I will obtain proper training and continue to upgrade my coaching skills.
8. I agree to abide by the principles of the FAIR PLAY CODE as set by the Canadian Hockey Association and supported by the Edmonton Minor Hockey Association.
9. I also agree to abide by the rules, regulations and decisions as set by the Edmonton Minor Hockey Association.

All officials must sign this pledge before being allowed to participate in hockey in the Edmonton Minor Hockey system and must continue to observe the principles of Fair Play.

**FAIR PLAY CODE FOR OFFICIALS**

1. I will make sure that every player has a reasonable opportunity to perform to the best of his or her ability, within the rules.
2. I will avoid or remedy any situation that threatens the safety of the players.
3. I will maintain a healthy atmosphere and environment for competition.
4. I will not permit the intimidation of any player either by word or action. I will not tolerate unacceptable conduct towards myself, other officials, players or spectators.
5. I will be consistent and objective in calling all infractions, regardless of my personal feelings towards a team or individual player.
6. I will handle all conflicts firmly but with dignity.
7. I will accept my role as teacher and role model for fair play, especially with young participants.
8. I will be open to discussion and contact with players before and after the game.
9. I will remain open to constructive criticism and show respect and consideration for different points of view.
10. I will obtain proper training to upgrade my officiating skills.
11. I will work in co-operation with coaches for the benefit of the game.