



COACH MANUAL

2025 -2026

The Head Coach is the cornerstone of a successful team experience, both on and off the ice. In this role, you are not only an instructor but also a mentor, role model, and leader during all team activities.

The Head Coach is ultimately responsible for on-ice instruction and overseeing all team operations. This doesn't mean the Head Coach must handle everything alone. Effective coaches delegate responsibilities and trust their Assistant Coaches, Team Manager, and volunteers.

Your primary goal should be to focus on player development and on-ice instruction, providing players with rewarding hockey experiences. This handbook offers guidance to help St. Albert Minor Hockey coaches ensure smooth team operations by addressing key topics the Head Coach may encounter throughout the season.

Thank you for your commitment to volunteer with St Albert Minor Hockey Association.



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1 Purpose of the handbook

1.1 Overview of the organization and its values

St. Albert Minor Hockey Association is comprised of approximately 1800 youth players and over 700 volunteers. Initially formed in 1980, St. Albert Minor Hockey Association has grown to be one of the largest minor hockey associations in Western Canada. Our program consists of a strong base of community hockey, supplemental development opportunities and participation in the highest level of elite programs through the St. Albert Raiders.

St. Albert Minor Hockey is dedicated to cultivating an environment where coaches feel empowered, supported, and inspired. Our coaching culture embraces innovative concepts, encourages coaches to challenge traditional thinking and promotes a sense of community. The primary goal is building an environment where coaches can do their best work.

We believe that investing in our coaches' growth and development provides our players with the best opportunity to develop their love for hockey and reach their full potential both on and off the ice. As a hockey program, we will be strong in our message and commitment to all stakeholders to live the program's core values daily but patient enough to see it grow.

1.2 Contact information for support

VP of Hockey Operations	Lisa Magera	lisa.magera@samha.ca
Executive Director	Jane Sedo	executivedirector@samha.ca
Director of Hockey Development	Umberto Fiorillo	umberto.fiorillo@stalbertraiders.ca
Director of Coach Mentorship	TBC	
Director of Managers	Rhetta Grant	rhetta.grant@samha.ca



2 Coaching Philosophy

2.1 Importance of a positive coaching philosophy

Love for the Game: By creating a fun and supportive atmosphere, players are more likely to develop a lifelong love for hockey.

Retention: Players who enjoy their experience are more likely to stay involved in the sport and other sports.

Team Cohesion: A positive coaching philosophy fosters a sense of belonging and teamwork, which is critical for team success.

Respect and Sportsmanship: Emphasizing respect for teammates, opponents, and officials helps build character and sportsmanship.

How to Implement a Positive Coaching Philosophy:

- 1) **Set Clear Expectations:** Clearly communicate the values and behaviors expected from players.
- 2) **Provide Constructive Feedback:** Focus on what players did well and provide specific suggestions for improvement.
- 3) **Celebrate Effort and Progress:** Recognize and celebrate hard work and improvement, not just outcomes.
- 4) **Model Positive Behavior:** Coaches should lead by example, demonstrating positivity, respect, and good sportsmanship.
- 5) **Create a Supportive Environment:** Foster an inclusive environment where every player feels valued and supported.

How does a positive coaching philosophy translate into improved player development on the ice:

- A positive approach focuses on teaching fundamental skills and techniques in an encouraging environment. This helps players improve without fear of making mistakes.



- Positive reinforcement boosts players' confidence, making them more willing to try new things and take risks, which is essential for development.

2.2 Developing a coaching style

What style are you?

Self-Assessment

- **Reflect on Your Values:** Consider what values are most important to you as a coach (e.g., teamwork, discipline, fun, respect).
- **Identify Strengths and Weaknesses:** Understand your strengths as a coach and areas where you may need improvement.
- **Past Experiences:** Reflect on your past experiences, both positive and negative, as a player and a coach.

Coaching Philosophy

- **Player-Centered:** Focus on individual player development, including their skills, confidence, and enjoyment.
- **Team-Centered:** Emphasize teamwork, cohesion, and collective success.
- **Winning-Centered:** Prioritize competitive success and achieving the best possible results.

Communication Style

- **Authoritative:** Clear, firm direction with high expectations.
- **Democratic:** Involves players in decision-making and values their input.
- **Supportive:** Focuses on encouragement, motivation, and building confidence.

Training Approach

- **Structured:** Well-planned, organized practices with a focus on discipline and routine.
- **Flexible:** Adaptive to the needs of the players and the situation, allowing for creativity and spontaneity.
- **Innovative:** Emphasizes new techniques, drills, and strategies to keep practices engaging and effective.



Game Management

- **Strategic:** Focus on tactics, strategies, and game plans.
- **Reactive:** Adaptive to in-game situations, making adjustments as needed.
- **Inspirational:** Motivates and inspires players to perform at their best during games.

Player Development Focus

- **Skill Development:** Emphasize improving technical skills and fundamental abilities.
- **Mental Toughness:** Focus on developing resilience, focus, and mental strength.
- **Holistic Development:** Look at the overall growth of the player, including physical, mental, and emotional aspects.

Feedback and Evaluation

- **Constructive Feedback:** Provide specific, actionable feedback that helps players improve.
- **Positive Reinforcement:** Emphasize what players are doing well to build confidence.
- **Balanced Approach:** Mix of positive reinforcement and constructive criticism.

2.3 Setting goals for the season

Types of Goals

- **Outcome Goals:** Goals that focus on the results (e.g., winning a championship).
- **Performance Goals:** Focus on individual and team performance metrics (e.g., improving shooting accuracy).
- **Process Goals:** Focus on the steps necessary to achieve performance and outcome goals

Goals in Action

- Involve players in the goal-setting process to ensure buy-in and commitment
- Speak with players to brainstorm goals, ensuring everyone has a voice.



- Be specific and clearly define what you want to achieve (e.g., 30 completed passes per game)
- Set realistic goals that challenge but don't overwhelm the team.
- Monitor goals and provide continuous feedback to players on their contribution towards these goals.
- Be flexible and prepared to adjust goals when necessary.

3 Understanding Minor Hockey

3.1 Overview of minor hockey structure and levels

Minor hockey in Alberta is governed by Hockey Alberta, which is a member branch of Hockey Canada.

Hockey Alberta delivers the sport through a network of clubs and associations across the province.

St. Albert Minor Hockey Association hosts three streams of hockey:

1. High Performance Stream Hockey
2. Community Stream Hockey
3. Recreation Stream Hockey

The association also provides access to various introductory programs and supplemental development programs for players and community members.

DIVISION		High Performance Hockey	Community Hockey	Recreation Hockey
Intro to Hockey	U5		✓	
	U7		✓	
	U9	Jr Raiders (T1)	✓	
	U11	Jr Raiders (AA + T1)	✓	
	U13	Raiders (AAA, AA)	✓	✓
	U15	Raiders (AAA, AA)	✓	✓
	U16	Raiders (AA)		
	U17	Raiders (AAA)		
	U18	Raiders (AAA)	✓	✓
	U21	Junior C		



4 Safety and wellness guidelines

All teams within Hockey Alberta require one member of your team to hold Safety Certification. In addition to this the Association has various policies and best practices to ensure that hockey remains a safe and inclusive space for all players, parents, referees and coaches.

4.1 At the Rink

Safe Playing Environment: Ensuring the rink and facilities are safe, with properly maintained ice and safe bench areas.

Injury Prevention: Warm-up and cool-down routines, proper stretching, and conditioning exercises.

Emergency Procedures: Clear instructions on what to do in case of an injury or emergency, including having a first aid kit available, knowing the emergency contact information.

Physical Safety of Players: Hockey is a fast-paced sport played with a rubber puck and sticks. To keep every player safe, all players must always wear proper equipment while on the ice. This includes practices and games.

PLAYER EQUIPMENT	GOALIE EQUIPMENT
Helmet	Helmet
Neck guard	Neck guard
Shoulder pads	Shoulder pads
Elbow pads	Elbow pads
Gloves	Glove
Jock strap/Jill strap	Blocker
Pants	Jock strap/ Jill strap
Knee pads	Pants
Socks	Goalie pads
Skates	Socks
Stick	Skates
Jersey	Stick
	Jersey

**If players on your team do not have properly fitting equipment or do not meet the Hockey Canada equipment requirements, please discuss this with their families and direct them to the resources available on the Hockey Canada website.*



4.2 Physical Safety of Coaches:

Effective January 1, 2009, all Hockey Alberta coaches are required to wear a CSA approved helmet with the strap securely fastened while on the ice.

Always be aware of your position on the ice.

4.3 Emotional and Mental Well-being

Creating a Positive Environment: Develop strategies for fostering a supportive, inclusive, and positive team culture. Emphasis on respect, teamwork, and sportsmanship.

Handling Stress and Pressure: Use techniques to help players manage the pressures of competition, including relaxation techniques and promoting a balanced perspective on winning and losing.

Bullying and Harassment: Zero-tolerance policies for bullying and harassment. Follow process for reporting and addressing any incidents.

4.4 Nutrition and Hydration

Healthy Eating Guidelines: Recommend a balanced diet that supports athletic performance, including pre- and post-game nutrition.

Hydration: Stress the importance of staying hydrated and support fluid intake before, during, and after games and practices.

4.5 Safety Policies and Process

Dressing Room Safety: A minimum of two of the following shall be present in the dressing room(s) or immediately outside the dressing room(s) with the door ajar: two team or club/association officials, properly screened or one such official and an adult person associated with the team.

Cell Phone Use: The use of cameras, video equipment, audio equipment, camera phones and other cellular phones is strictly prohibited in the team dressing rooms



at any time. A violation of the cell phone policy may result in disciplinary action by the board which may include suspension from hockey activities.

4.6 Resources and Contacts

Association Director of Player Safety and Wellbeing - Michelle Reid
(michelle.reid@samha.ca)

Hockey Alberta Concussion Protocol

<https://www.hockeyalberta.ca/members/safety-management/concussions/>

Emergency Action Plan

<https://www.hockeyalberta.ca/members/safety-management/safety-general/emergency-action-plan-eap/>

https://www.hockeyalberta.ca/uploads/source/game%26conduct/Emergency_Action_Plan_Organization_Form.pdf

St Albert Minor Hockey Policy and Process

<https://www.samha.ca/policy-process-2024/>

5 Coaching Responsibilities

5.1 Role and responsibilities of a coach

Coaches are expected to:

- i. Head Coaches shall be solely accountable for all activities of their team.
- ii. Attend mandatory Association meeting(s).
- iii. All coaches shall hold a meeting of parents of players prior to the first league game.
- iv. Assist with operating the team within established policy, guidelines and regulations of the applicable league, SAMHA, Hockey Alberta and Hockey Canada.
- v. Uphold the standard of conduct outlined in the Coach Code of Conduct Code of conduct



(St. Albert Minor Hockey Association - 3.6 Team Operations, 3.6.1 Roles and Responsibilities)

5.2 Communicating with players, parents, and officials

- i. Coaches will communicate with players, coaches, officials, volunteers, parents, and spectators honestly, fairly, and respectfully.
- ii. Parents and coaches are required to observe the “24-hour” rule when providing communication to the coach, families or the association(s).

Effective communication with players:

- Use age-appropriate language and be concise and direct in your instructions
- Pay attention to players' concerns and questions; show empathy and understanding.
- Be consistent in your messages and expectations; ensure all players receive the same information.
- Use diagrams, videos, and demonstrations to explain concepts.

Effective communication with parents:

- Keep parents informed about team schedules, expectations, and goals.
- Hold parent meetings to discuss important topics and provide updates.
- Maintain a professional tone in all communications, address concerns promptly and respectfully.

Effective communication with referees:

- Always show respect towards the referees and teach the players to do the same.
- Communicate calmly and clearly; do not raise your voice to express frustration
- In games, step down from the bench to speak with referees at eye level.
- Thank the referee at the end of the game.



5.3 Selecting and Working with Bench Personnel

As the Head Coach it is important to surround yourself with the right people. Selecting qualified bench staff who align with your coaching philosophies will set you up for a successful season. You are not obligated to take on an Assistant Coach simply because they have volunteered.

Recommendations:

- Communicate your expectations early in the season
- Ensure you maximize their contributions; assign specific duties to your assistant coaches during practice and delegate game-day responsibilities.
- Unify your coaching staff by setting shared goals and using consistent messaging throughout the season.

BEST PRACTICE: After you have assembled a group of coaches host a coach meeting to share your coaching philosophy, roles and responsibilities and outline your goals.

5.4 Selecting Captains and Assistant Captains

Selecting captains and assistant captains for a minor hockey team is a critical decision that can significantly impact team dynamics, leadership, and overall performance. These are some guidelines to help you choose the right individuals for these roles:

- Look for players with a strong work ethic who lead by example in practices and games.
- Choose players who demonstrate responsibility on and off the ice.
- Select individuals who show respect for coaches, teammates, officials, and opponents.
- Choose players who consistently attend practices, games, and team events.
- Watch how players behave during games and practices. Do they encourage teammates, stay focused, and handle pressure well?
- Discuss potential candidates with your assistant coaches to get their insights.
- Consider getting input from players through anonymous surveys or discussions to see whom they respect and view as leaders.



This process should be fair and impartial. To ensure that we maintain the highest standards of integrity and avoid any potential conflicts of interest, it is advisable that head coaches or assistant coaches do not select their own children for these leadership roles.

5.5 Fair Play Policy

Coaches will provide fair play opportunities for all players, regardless of ability.

Please note however that fair play is NOT equal ice. Equal ice is defined as equal ice-time every game to the best ability of the coach. Throughout the course of a game, situations will arise which may result in the coach choosing to support line consistency and a specific line of players may have to be adjusted.

It is expected that by the end of the year, every player will have played in all situations (such as power play and penalty kill) and ice time would be fair in comparison to their peers. There may be variations on the implementation of this depending on factors including discipline issues, player health issues and/or suspensions.

Fair Play and Goaltending

A) No player shall be refused to play goalie should they request an opportunity; timing of this opportunity will be at the coach's discretion

B) Goalies are to be assured equal ice time

Any violation of this policy by a head coach or assistant coach will follow the process outlined in the SAMHA Conduct Management Policy

(St. Albert Minor Hockey Association - 3.0 Team Operations, 3.13 PLAYER ICE TIME SAMHA TIERED/COMMUNITY HOCKEY)

6 Coach Development and Education

6.1 Coach Certification

Coaches in Alberta have access to a wide variety of clinics and training opportunities to help develop their skills as teachers and instructors.

Below are the minimum required certifications required for team approval. Use the chart below to determine what additional certifications your team will need. A reminder that



ST.ALBERT MINOR HOCKEY ASSOCIATION

some certifications expire after a certain number of years. Be sure to check your current qualifications under your Hockey Canada eHockey Account.

Note that St. Albert Minor Hockey covers the cost of all required coach clinic.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION	
Respect in Sport – Activity Leader	Must be completed prior to registration to a team (cannot be on ice without valid RIS). Must renew every 4 years.
November 15th	Deadline for coaches to have qualifications complete (except Respect in Sport – please see above). The team is ineligible to compete after this date if Coach requirements are not fulfilled.
Assistant Coaches	Highly recommended to obtain training of what is required for Head Coaches at the applicable level.
Checking Skills	Highly recommended training for U9 coaches.
Development 1 & High Performance 1	Coaches must be “ trained ” by November 15 th of the current season, by the following seasons November 15 th must be “ certified ” to remain eligible. Example – Coach takes HP1 in 2023 they have until Nov 15 th 2024 to complete Certification. Trained = attended classroom session Certified = passed all post-task evaluations

		Coach 1	Coach 2	Development 1	High Performance 1	Checking Skills	Respect in Sport Activity Leader (completed prior to being on ice)	Safety
ALL	U7	1 Coach per 10 players					All Team Officials	One Coach per 10 players
	U9							
TIERS 1 - 6 (incl. female)	U11		Head Coach			Head Coach	All Team Officials	One Team Official
	U13							
	U15							
	U18							
ELITE FEMALE	U13*			Head Coach		Head Coach	All Team Officials	One Team Official
	U15*							
	U18*							
AA	U13*			Head Coach		Head Coach	All Team Officials	One Team Official
	U15*							
	U16*							
	U18*							
AAA	U15				Head Coach	Head Coach	All Team Officials	One Team Official
	U17							
	U18 Female							
	U18							
ACCREDITED SCHOOLS	All							
JUNIOR	A				Head Coach		All Team Officials**	One Team Official
	B, C, Female							
SENIOR	Female						All Team Officials**	One Team Official
	Male							

*For all AA and Elite Female teams, where D1 is required, any Head Coach that possesses HP1 will also be eligible. Coaches are to be either CERTIFIED or be within their one-year TRAINING period. **Only required if a Minor-aged athlete is registered and/or affiliated with the team.

6.2 Vulnerable Sector Check

All St. Albert Minor Hockey coaches are required to submit a Vulnerable Sector Check (VSC) every three years.



How to obtain a VSC

1. All VSC must be obtained in person from the RCMP within the last 12 months.
2. To waive the processing fee, SAMHA must verify your volunteer commitment. Please fill out the **Volunteer Commitment Form** to receive your letter. You must circle the appropriate age division before you take it to the RCMP office.
3. Please take a picture or scan of your completed document and EMAIL your completed VSC to registrar@samha.ca.

6.3 Coach Development & Resources

St. Albert Minor Hockey is dedicated to cultivating an environment where coaches feel empowered, supported, and inspired to be part of our hockey community. Our staff and leadership group continuously evaluate resources and strategies to uphold our commitments.

The Coaches Site: 12-month subscription that unlocks access to 100's of videos, podcasts, articles, practice plans, and more.

Coach Education Series: Our coach education series centers around new ideas, education, and inspiration. Held in person and online two to three times a year.

Instructional Goaltending Clinic: Dave Rathjen (High Performance Goalie Coach) spends 1 hour on the ice introducing coaches to techniques and drills that support the ongoing development of goaltenders.

Equipment: Access to equipment such as pucks, pylons, on ice assist tools.

Director of Hockey Development: Umberto Fiorillo

6.4 Coach Mentorship Program

Coach Mentorship Program will provide guidance, education, and ongoing support to coaches, helping them enhance their coaching skills, improve player development strategies, and foster a positive and inclusive team culture.



All coaches will have access to a designated Coach Mentor capable of providing the skills, knowledge, and support that may be required to help improve their coaching performance, support their volunteer experience, and build the best possible environment for our players.

Coaches are encouraged to contact the Director of Coach Mentorship for more information.

7 Team Management

7.1 First Parent Coach Meeting

Team meetings are essential in the development of formal communication amongst a team, and they establish the with the expectations are of everyone involved for the season.

Your team meeting should be set up shortly following the formation of the team – for families this will be the first time they meet other players, parents, and coaching staff.

Ideally, your Team Manager in place before the initial team meeting. The Team Manager and the Head Coach should work together to develop a meeting agenda which includes the following items:

- seasonal plans
- parent volunteer expectations and designations
- coaches/player/parent conduct
- conflict resolution process
- safety procedures
- tournaments
- preliminary budget

This helps to ensure that all parents understand the time and financial commitment up-front before the season starts. We recommend having an initial Team Budget discussion with your selected Team Manager. This will help guide your initial meeting and ensures that all components of your seasonal plan are considered in the budget discussions.



7.2 Building team cohesion

Building team chemistry is often a critical step in creating positive experiences for your players. We encourage all teams to engage in team-building activities whenever possible to enhance team cohesiveness and identity. Look for opportunities to recognize different strengths among teammates. Leadership can develop from various personalities.

7.3 Conflict resolution

Hockey is a game that evokes passion in all of us. The key is to channel these emotions positively. When emotions turn negative and lead to conflict, it's crucial to know how to manage the situation

Hockey Alberta - [Conflict Management](#)

Conflict will occur: for all the good sport brings it can also be stressful - the pressure to perform, the challenges in learning, and even differences in personalities act as multipliers that can create conflict, now add in the additional factor of being a team environment and it becomes clear why conflict will inevitably occur.

Conflict is not always bad: if managed correctly conflict can have positive results such as providing clarity in roles, expectations or values, strengthening commitments, and providing new ways to look at and manage situations.

Conflict is not a contest: the attitude when facing conflict should not be focused on winners and losers but rather the focus must be on solving the issue in a mutually beneficial way.

Confronted with Conflict

Listening Effectively

Speaking Effectively

Dealing with Difficult People

If you need guidance in navigating team conflicts, please contact the association staff or leadership for support.



*No player, coach or parent shall be suspended from team activities without first notifying the association's Hockey Operations VP and Executive Director.

7.4 Setting Reasonable Expectations

Most conflicts can be avoided by setting reasonable expectations at the start of the season. This involves outlining expectations of players, parents, and coaches. Setting expectations is a crucial step in ensuring your team has a successful season.

Appendix A - Sample Reasonable Expectations U13 Tier 4

7.5 Dressing Rooms and Arenas

Head coaches and/or designates must be onsite to supervise teams from arrival to departure. Do not arrive at the rink more than 1 hour before the scheduled ice time and ensure you vacate the dressing room within 30 minutes after the ice time is over or when directed to do so by the arena operator. If you request players arrive earlier, they **MUST** be always supervised by two adults (team staff) members.

St. Albert Minor Hockey will proactively work to ensure that all dressing room spaces and procedures are safe, inclusive, and equitable by anticipating and removing barriers that prohibit the inclusive participation of all players.

All players will have access to dressing room facilities that most appropriately meet their individual needs, which may or may not include accommodations with respect to gender identity and gender expression;

All participants must wear a Base Layer in the dressing room 30 minutes before and 15 minutes after the scheduled ice time.

We encourage coaches to read the Association's full dressing room policy.

When hosting a meeting with a parent on the team in the dressing room always ensure more than one coach is present. Do not meet with parents one-on-one.



7.6 Coach Supervision

Any player under the age of 18 is in the team dressing room(s) before, during and after a game or practice, a minimum of two of the following shall be present in the dressing room(s) or immediately outside the dressing room(s) with the door ajar: two team or club/association officials, properly screened or one such official and an adult person associated with the team.

A lone personnel member should never be in the dressing room with players at any time.

- In no circumstance is a parent or fan to enter the opposing team's dressing room.
- No member of St. Albert Minor Hockey is permitted to enter the officials dressing room or speak with officials about the game.
- A lone team official should never be in the dressing room with players at any time.
- If an injury occurs and player leaves the ice, two adults must accompany the player to the dressing room.

Association head coaches in the hockey program, act as chief team officials, are fully responsible for all on-ice activities and team organized off-ice activities of their team.

The Head Coach shall at all times be responsible for the conduct of their team, including fans and players. Any coach found to be in violation of this policy will be subject to disciplinary action.

Damage to Dressing Rooms

St. Albert Minor Hockey teams are expected to behave appropriately while at any arena, and to leave dressing rooms clean and without damage.



Any damage proven to be caused to dressing rooms or arena facilities caused by a St. Albert Minor Hockey member is the responsibility of the team. Should a facility contact the Association to report a damaged dressing room/facility, St. Albert Minor Hockey will forward an invoice for cleaning and/or repair directly to the liable team for payment.

7.7 Electronic recording devices and Cell Phone Use

The use of cameras, video equipment, audio equipment, camera phones and other cellular phones is strictly prohibited in the team dressing rooms at any time. Teams may have music in the dressing room. Use of a cell phone is permitted for this purpose ONLY, and its use must be clearly articulated to the team and monitored

7.8 Team Equipment

Jerseys

The provided jerseys are an official uniform of St. Albert Minor Hockey and must be worn for all sanctioned games. No individual designs are allowed.

Teams must have a dedicated jersey parent(s) volunteer. Please ensure that they understand the steps for proper care and washing of the jerseys. Jerseys are NOT to go home with players.

When assigning jersey numbers assist your coaches by familiarizing yourself with the jersey numbers and the size of the jerseys ahead of time, as each jersey set has several different sizes.

Do your best to make sure all players have a jersey that fits appropriately.

Goalie Equipment

St. Albert Minor Hockey provides all U9 team with 2 sets of pads, chest/arm protectors, gloves and sticks to share among the team. Parents and coaches can also access goalie equipment for individual players at any level.



First Aid Kit

Note each team must have a first aid kit on the bench. This is supplied by St. Albert Minor Hockey at the start of the season.

7.9 Information Management/Team Snap

Communication

The Association recommends only using Team Snap to communicate with parents. The Team Snap platform provides you with the option to share information via email or in a chat.

TeamSnap

After the team has been formed, players will be assigned to your team in TeamSnap.

The Head Coach is required to communicate with the Association Administrator the name and email of the Manager; following this Manager permissions are granted.

The Association uses TeamSnap for scheduling and all teams are required to use this platform.

For insurance purposes and consistency team activities, games, practices and tournaments must be recorded in the schedule