

Proposal for Approval of Modified Sports Programs in Arenas for Stage 2 of Alberta's Relaunch Strategy.

Submitted by the:

United Hockey Alliance of Alberta.



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1. Purpose / Objective

The intent of this proposal is to request the Government of Alberta to reconsider reopening Ice Arenas for modified sports programs in the category of small group gatherings in stage 2 of Alberta's relaunch strategy. Ensuring a safe and healthy environment for children, families and rink attendants is the priority and with adherence to physical distancing and risk reduction recommendations we believe facilities can be a safe environment for athletes, their fans, and the arena staff alike. Our objective is to commit to safe standards and restrictions associated with the reopening of Ice Arenas so that Dr. Hinshaw and the Alberta Government will support Arena openings to Stage 2.

2. Philosophy / Mission

To promote and enhance healthy and safe reintegration for children into hockey programs supporting their emotional, social, physical, and mental health during the COVID 19 crisis. Edmonton Ice Crusher Hockey is a community-based Spring / Summer Hockey Club. We provide an all-inclusive sport environment that engages young athletes to enhance their skills, knowledge, confidence, and love of our great game. Our model is team centered and coach inspired, integrating, community, and scholastic sport to engage players in fun, fitness, social interaction, and self-fulfillment.

3. Player Safety / Health

Our goal is for the Alberta Government to approve modified hockey programs that align with the guidelines and reduce the risk of small group gathering. The COVID 19 virus has an emotional, social, physical and a developmental impact on our young and impressionable children. They have been restricted from environments that offer positive feedback, skill and knowledge development, and socialization. Extracurricular environments support children in developing diverse skill sets, resilience, and confidence. Many families want their children reengaging in these positive developmental programs and are concerned about the long-term consequences of continued isolation and restrictions.

Positive outcomes for re-engaging children in sports

For enhanced development in early childhood, children need a balanced diet, plenty of sleep and exercise each day. Physical activity promotes; *Stronger muscles, bones & joints, Stronger heart, Controlled body fat, Decreased risk of type 2 diabetes, Improved fitness.* Along with the plethora of physical benefits, the mental benefits are equally as impressive. When we are physically active our body releases serotonin which directly contributes to our feelings of well-being.

Exercise has also been found to relieve stress, depression and anxiety. Although often overlooked, children experience these emotions just as adults do and exercise is a great way to help combat these feelings. Sport increases the likelihood of children staying active, allowing them to sleep better and keeps them mentally sharp. Recent studies have found that increased physical activity levels directly relate to school performance, particularly in the areas of math, reading and retention of information. This would also support parents that are struggling to balance work and new homeschooling responsibilities.

Sport can not only help encourage children to be more physically active but also helps teach them valuable skills and life lessons that they can carry with them through to adulthood. Not only does sport increase their individual confidence but it also helps keep children social. Social skills that are learned or enhanced through sport while assisting children in growing into successful adults include, *Teamwork, Fair play, Communication, Respect for others, Ability to follow rules, Independence, Leadership.*

4. Impact on Municipalities

The economic impact of COVID 19 has reached far and wide. Offering modified sports programs that meet risk reduction guidelines would support and maintain future programs for children and families to engage in healthy physical activity and decrease the financial impacts on facilities and municipalities.

5. Program modifications and risk reduction strategies

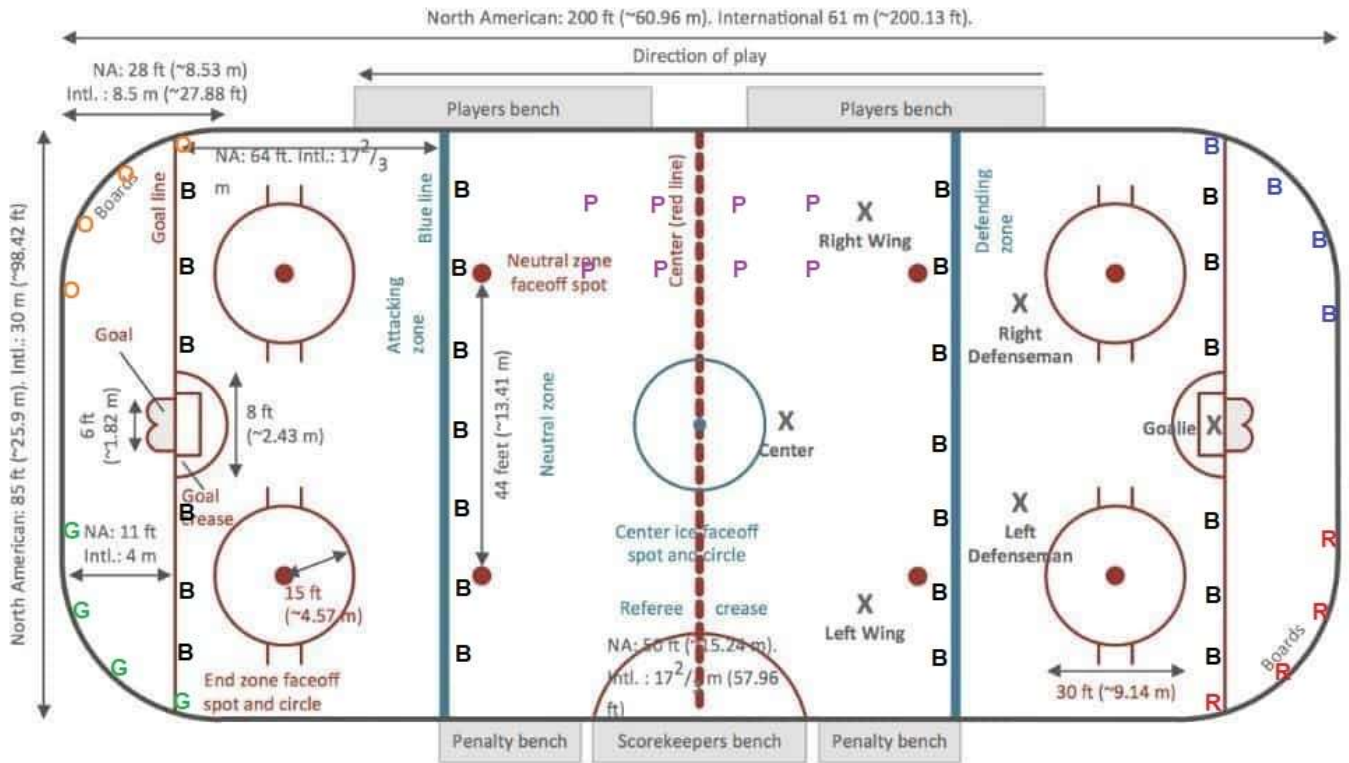
We are proposing the following plan that includes safe standards and restrictions associated with the opening of Arena facilities in Stage 2 of Alberta's Relaunch Strategy.

- A. Attendance:** Individual ice surfaces should be restricted to a maximum of seventeen participants and four coaches.
- B. Dressing Rooms:** Dressing rooms remain closed for Stage 2 of Alberta's Relaunch Strategy. All players arrive to the arena facility fully dressed in CSA approved hockey gear, excluding skates, gloves and helmet which should be accompanied by the player in a small bag that includes the player name so that it can be easily identifiable after practice.
- C. Arrival:** Players should be instructed by their team to arrive at the Arena five minutes prior to their practice time. Player arrival should be staggered in groups of five players (Clusters) and in intervals of five minutes to ensure that there is no congregation of people in the common arena. For example, if a practice is scheduled to start at 5PM, the coach or manager should designate five players to arrive at 4:55 PM, another five players to arrive at 5PM and so on. A reverse of this process should also occur at the end of practice where players would exit the ice in groups of five.
- D. Practice Only / No Game Play:** All ice slots should only be used for player development. At no point should games or scrimmages be organized as part of Stage 2 of Alberta's Relaunch Strategy. This will allow for coaches to run drills that allow for participants to maintain 2-meter physical distancing guidelines.
- E. Practice Clusters ****New****:** Players MUST be in a 'Cluster' for the initial 2-3 week of commencing practice. Meaning they must be in the same group each time. Therefore, should one player in that group test positive, the entire group must stay at home until tested or medically approved to return.
- F. Water Bottles ****New****:** Designated water bottle placement areas (stickers) would be placed on top of dashboard edge at benches so that players could place their water bottle in a safe area to ensure effective distancing during water breaks.
- G. Common Arenas:** Seating should be provided for players and coaches in common areas for lacing up skates and this set-up should honor proper social distancing guidelines of at least two meters. Arena bathroom should remain open (excluding change rooms) and arena staff should be required to maintain the cleanliness of these facilities on a regular basis. All common areas should be properly sanitized by arena staff between usage.
- H. Proper Hygiene Standards:** Caution should be taken around common touch points and proper hand hygiene should be practiced. Arena facilities should be required to supply adequate access to hand sanitizers off-ice for

participants, coaches, and fans. Communal water fountains should be turned off, and all water bottles will be filled at home and properly labeled.

- I. **Participation:** Contracts will be signed with participants and family members agreeing that if you are sick or symptomatic you will stay home. Players or coaches showing signs of any symptoms will be asked to leave the facility immediately and they will be encouraged to take the online self-assessment that is available on the Alberta Health Services website at: <https://myhealth.alberta.ca/journey/covid-19/Pages/COVID-Self-Assessment.aspx>
- J. **Accompanied Parent / Arena Seating:** Players can be accompanied in the arena by two household members so long as social distancing guidelines can be achieved and obeyed. Arena seating will need to be marked off using masking tape so that fans can enjoy watching their player develop in a safe, social distancing manner.
- K. **Water Bottles / Helmet Identification:** Water bottles will be filled at home and be properly marked with the player's name so that they are easily identifiable. At no point will water bottles be shared between players. Player's helmets should include the name of the player on the front and back so that coaches can easily identify them. This increases the ability to communicate with the players all while maintaining proper social distancing standards of two meters. Players will handle only their own equipment and water bottles; coaches and other players will not touch other players' belongings.
- L. **Whistles ****New****:** Consideration should be made to either abolish the use of whistles for this Stage or implement the use of electric whistles.
- M. **Ice Identification Standards:** All ice surfaces will need to be updated to include extra identifying features for player placement during instruction and skill development. These identifying features should include coloured markings on the ice surface that are at a minimum, two meters apart. These markings should consist of multiple colours to assist with communication to players and to reduce confusion during instruction (see Exhibit A below). In this illustration, the individual letters exhibit different coloured markings on the ice (for example G = Green and O = Orange). Ice markings should be indelible and not impacted by arena resurfacing equipment.
- N. **Coaching Instruction / Practice Plans:** Coaches are required to follow proper social distancing guidelines of two meters at all times. If social distancing guidelines cannot be met, then the use of masks will be required. Practice plans should be created that leverage the extra identifying features and markings. Practice Plans should be distributed to the coaching staff in advance in order to gain understanding and to reduce confusion during practice.
- O. **AHS ABTraceTogether mobile app ****New****:** Players (parents) will only be permitted to participate provided they have downloaded and activated the AHS ABTraceTogether mobile app to ensure groups are full participating in contact tracing measures. Any participant or parent must report a positive test immediately to the facility manager and their user-group leader.
- P. **Player / Family Understanding and Acceptance:** A short instructional video will need to be prepared for parents and participants to reinforce all standards and expectations identified in this plan. This would be similar to the "Respect in Sport" videos that parents are required to review prior to player participation in organized hockey with Hockey Canada. Parent review and acceptance of these new standards as well as the implied safety risks will be a requirement prior to any player's participation. Hockey Clubs that meet these standards of education and acceptance should only be considered for arena access in Phase 2 of the Alberta Government Relaunch Strategy. Similar considerations should also be made for other sporting clubs that enjoy access to arena ice like Ice Dance, Sledge Hockey and Learn to Skate Programs. Careful consideration should be made by participating hockey clubs for age groups that are unable to follow direction and proper social distancing standards.
- Q. **Discipline:** Failure for any participant, coach, or fan to meet the standards as outlined in this plan, will be excused from the arena facility. Self-discipline by the participating sporting clubs is key here to ensure that all individuals can enjoy this experience and while ensuring public safety.

Exhibit A.



6. Evaluation

This plan should be evaluated every four weeks to assess needs for enhanced safety and to meet dynamic government recommendations.