



### Program Philosophy

The U13 level represents the first major divergence in the player pathway. While U11 is about "Learning to Play," U13 shifts toward "Training to Compete." This is the age where players begin to choose between the Elite Stream (High performance/High commitment) and the Community/Recreational Streams (Development/Balanced lifestyle).

### The Community Tiering & Elite Structure

Hockey Alberta and Hockey Calgary have revamped the U13 structure to bridge the gap to U15 Elite hockey. The program is now divided into three distinct levels:

- **Elite Stream (U13 AAA):** Designed for the top 6–9% of players in Calgary. These teams are hosted by Elite Associations (e.g., NWCAA, CNHA, CBHA, CRAA).
  - Elite Tryouts typically begin in late August, before Community evaluations in September.
  - SMHA players trying out are required to pre-register with SMHA as well
  - If a player is released from Tryouts, they are asked to return to their community club
- **Competitive Stream (U13 AA):** In Calgary, these teams are hosted by Community Clubs but operate with higher commitment levels. This stream falls under the AEHL program and features 2-hour game slots. Because of the increased practice allotment provided by the club, players who make these teams will incur an additional cost above the base U13 registration fee.
  - Visit the U13 AA info sheet on the website for more details
- **Community Stream (Tiers 1–6):** The traditional tiered program managed by local associations like SMHA, focusing on local play and balanced competition.

### Standard Hockey Canada rules apply

- While body checking is not permitted in U13 Community/AA leagues, "Physical Play" (body contact and angling) is a core part of the curriculum. Coaches begin teaching checking fundamentals (stick checks and body positioning) to prepare players for the introduction of body checking in U15.
- Coaches begin to implement more specific team tactics (power play and penalty kill units). While still keeping the Fair Play model in mind
- Hockey Alberta recommends a roster of 12 skaters and 2 goalies to ensure high engagement and puck touches during practices.

### Player position

- Position Specialization: Players are now permitted to designate either forward or defence.
- Goaltending players typically commit to being a full-time goaltender, and the hybrid program is no longer available.

### Player Pre-Skates (Aka Hockey Canada's Pathways Program)

- SMHA must offer open, no-cost pre-evaluation skates for all players as a part of Hockey Canada's Long-Term Player Development Model called Pathways.



## SMHA U13 PROGRAM INFORMATION

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- This program is designed to create a positive experience and to allow all players equal access to pre-evaluation ice times to prepare for SMHA's Player Placement Program (PPP) (evaluations).
- These pre-skates are optional, and all players are sorted into groups the week prior to PPP. These are planned sessions where the player will experience and practice the drills used at our PPPs
- At no time during these sessions will our players be evaluated.
- Please visit the Springbank Website under the Registration tab to see the program timeline
- Note: no ice times will be booked over the Labour Day long weekend (Friday to Monday)

### SMHA Player Placement Program: PPP (aka Evaluations) & TEAM FORMATION

- PPPs usually start after the Quadrant lease date published on Hockey Calgary's website (important dates)
- Please visit the Springbank Website under the Registration tab to see the program timeline and more information
- SMHA relies on volunteers to run our evaluations. We will be seeking many roles to be filled, and this is a great opportunity to meet people and get involved.
- Players must attend ALL evaluation skates they are assigned.
- The player will be assigned 5-6 sessions
- Players will be assigned a pinnie to wear and are required to check in at every session to receive it
- Players will now be evaluated in their designated position: goalie, forward and defence
- Focus will be on gameplay as the primary evaluation metric
- U13 teams are tiered, where players are assessed during the evaluation process, so players are grouped with similarly skilled players
- U13 teams are tiered AA through 6, with tier AA teams comprised of the most skilled players in the age division and tier 6 comprised of less proficient players
- U13 tiers usually have two teams per tier, "sister teams," with the exception of the AA team with only one team per association. The Hockey Calgary Grid dictates this tiering system in accordance with individual Association registration numbers, and a balancing game will be hosted prior to team announcements to ensure sister teams are balanced against each other
- As U13 teams are tiered based on skill, friend requests cannot be accommodated
- U13 teams begin practices within a few days after U13 PPPs have finished – usually mid/late-September

### PRACTICE SCHEDULE

- No set schedule – will vary week to week during the season, usually between 1.5 to 2 hours per week and take place on weekdays and weekends
- Weekday (Monday to Friday) times can start as early as 5:00 pm.
- Weekend (Saturday & Sunday) times, while on occasion starting as early as 7:00 am, are usually 9:00 am or later, typically in the late mornings or early afternoons.
- Curfew for this age group to be off the ice is 9:45 pm week and weekend nights
- The general ice scheduling rule is that the younger age groups receive the earlier ice times and the older age groups receive the later ice times. U13 falls in the middle of this spectrum.



- There are many factors involved in ice scheduling, and we do our best to release the team schedules as far out as possible during the season
- U13 teams will share the ice with one other U13 team, but full ice practices can occur; U15 and U18 take precedence first.
- The AA team has a program dedicated to them outside of the general scheduling of the Teirs 1 to 6, with this program comes a fee increase that is applied after the player is assigned to the AA team
- Practices are scheduled at Springbank Park for all Seasons primarily, but can also be scheduled at the Edge and surrounding City of Calgary arenas

### GAMES/TOURNAMENTS

#### Games

- All Hockey Calgary-sanctioned games are scheduled by Hockey Calgary in collaboration with SMHA Operations
- Details of the U13 Season Structure and Game Play are outlined in the annual [Hockey Calgary Season Structure and Game Play guidelines](#)
- Games are scheduled One for One: one game during the week, one game on the weekend, curfew to be off the ice on weekdays is 9:45 pm
- Home games are scheduled at Springbank Park for all Seasons primarily, but can also be scheduled at the Edge and surrounding City of Calgary arenas
- At the U13 level, a two-official system is standard for community play, while higher tiers may move toward a three-official system to prepare for U15.
- SMHA U13 teams are in the North quadrant, with the exception of the AA team. Hockey Calgary has divided its member clubs into two quadrants, North and South, this is to assist in travel time for their members.

#### Tournaments

- Springbank provides all U13 teams with a home tournament to host in the season break schedule, traditionally the last weekend of November first weekend of December, where there are sister teams they are to co-host together.
- The AA team is set to host over the Christmas break
- Away Tournaments are arranged and scheduled at the team level

### TEAM CASH CALLS

- Requested by the team on a team-by-team basis
- Usually at the beginning of the season
- Average ranges from \$200-\$350 per player (but not limited to)
- The purpose is to cover team-related expenses such as exhibition games, tournaments, dryland training, team social events, team apparel, additional coaching equipment, etc.
- If affordability is a concern, please talk directly, in confidence, with your coach/team manager to work through options and/or a payment plan

### COACHES



- Coaches are all Springbank volunteers, usually a parent of the players on the team, and we could not run our programs without them!
- Teams are permitted 5 coaches per team
- “On-ice help” is not allowed; only rostered coaches are permitted on the ice with the team
- Assistant Coaches must have at a minimum a valid Respect in Sport- Activity Leader certification and a valid Criminal Record Check (Police Information Check)
- Head Coaches are required to have the Hockey Alberta qualifications. These qualifications can be found on the [Hockey Alberta website under the Coach tab](#)
- All SMHA coaches must have the Hockey Alberta Safety qualifications, as per our internal policy
- All interested coaches must fill out an SMHA coach application form found on the Springbank website under the Coach tab.

### OTHER VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

- Volunteer roles are also available at the team level every season and can include manager, treasurer, tournament coordinator, jersey parent social coordinator, and official box coordinator, to name a few
- Note: “On-ice help” is not allowed; only rostered coaches to your player’s team are permitted on the ice with the team.

### PLAYER EQUIPMENT

- Hockey Calgary’s equipment & care information:  
<https://www.hockeycalgary.ca/resources/equipment-care>
- Used hockey equipment can be purchased at Play It Again Sports in West Hills
- New equipment can be purchased at various sports/athletic stores; however, Adrenalin Source for Sports, located at 9309 Macleod Trail South, is Springbank’s approved apparel provider and provides Springbank families with a discount

### TEAM EQUIPMENT

- Springbank will provide every player two game jerseys (Home and Away), and players will need to receive one set of SMHA matching socks each season – additional or replacement socks can be purchased if needed
- All SMHA jerseys
  - Are SMHA property, and no name bars are allowed
  - NOT to be worn at practices
  - Are for games only
  - The Jerseys are to be handled by a parent volunteer, “Jersey Parent,” where they are handed out at the beginning of each game and retrieved at the end of each game.
- Jersey replacement cost is \$125 per jersey
- Team puck bags and first aid kits are available as well