



Introduction to U9 Hockey

Metro East Inferno Female Hockey Association (MEIFHA) is very pleased to once again offer U9 hockey to our members. As this may be new to members, we anticipate a number of questions. This brief memo is going to address some of the common questions that come up.

Regionalization: What rinks will be used for U9 hockey?

This is dependent on the number of registrants. If numbers are strong enough, we will be having an Intermediate team and 2-3 Development teams. The objective of our 3 Female Hockey Associations (Metro East Inferno, Metro West Force and Valley Wild), numbers permitting, is to have an all-female U9 Intermediate circuit and all-female U9 Development circuit. We will be making every effort to regionalize our development teams, which means your child will most likely be playing with her friends and former teammates. Again, this depends on our numbers. Most of our ice times will be at the RBC 4pad in Dartmouth; however, to support regionalization, if we have enough players to roster a team with players from one specific region, then we will make every effort to secure ice in the rinks in those communities. For example, if we are able to have a team made up of all Eastern Shore players, then we will try to book ice for them at the Eastern Shore Community Center.

Evaluations: Are there evaluations for U9 and what is the associated cost?

When registering your daughter you do not have to select a player evaluation fee. There is no fee for this in U9. We will be holding evaluation sessions, which will be normal U9 ice sessions, where players will be evaluated (by a non-biased, neutral third party) and placed on either an Intermediate Team or Development Team.

Programming: What does the hockey program for U9 look like with MEIFHA?

We share the same philosophy and goal as Hockey Canada and Hockey Nova Scotia where the first few years of hockey must be a positive experience full of fun and excitement. If your daughter has fun, develops basic skills and builds confidence, there is a better chance she will go on to enjoy hockey for a lifetime. But if she has an unhappy, unrewarding experience, she may quit at an early age and never discover the real joy of Canada's game. Every young player should have the opportunity to enjoy hockey for life!

Our U9 level programming will serve as the foundation upon which Metro East Inferno Female Hockey Association is built. Girls at every level in our Association will benefit from getting the 'right start' in the game. Programming at the U9 level is a crucial piece in building the skills of

recreational and competitive team players alike. More than 30 years ago, Hockey Canada developed the Initiation Program to ensure a fun, safe and positive hockey experience. MEIFHA will be following this program as well. Here are the highlights of the program as published by Hockey Canada:

Games: Are there games at the U9 level?

One of the key features of the U9 program is half-ice games. We will be following this structure as well, as it allows players to have more touches with the puck and much more engagement in the play. Offence is increased as there is often up to six times more shots in a half ice game. Players are usually close to the puck which allows them to feel part of the game.

About the Initiation and Novice Program

- Programming should be delivered through a progressive learn-to-play teaching curriculum that spans the five- to eight-year-old age group.
- Children learn best through participating in practice drills and sessions as well as informal and modified games such as shinny, freeze tag and obstacle courses.
- The program consists of two levels of instruction, designed specifically for young hockey players. Each level consists of a series of practice plans (lesson plans) that follow a defined path of progressions.
- The skills of skating, puck control, passing and shooting are introduced and refined in a progressive 'one step at a time' manner.
- Although the emphasis is on fun and skill development, hockey at these ages should also allow youngsters to experience fitness, fair play and cooperation.
- To ensure a positive experience for the children, a coaching clinic has been designed for the on-ice coaches that focuses on communication, teaching skills, leadership, skill analysis, lesson organization, and safety and risk management.