

NORTHWEST FLORIDA HOCKEY LEAGUE

PLAY-UP POLICY

1. It is the intention of NFHL that each registered player will play in his/her age group as established by USA Hockey. NFHL recognizes that in some cases it may be appropriate and even beneficial to a participant's development for him or her to play-up to the next age classification. However, a fine balance needs to be maintained to avoid placing the desire of a participant above the legitimate opportunity for that participant to be successful in an older age classification. In some cases, based on the skill, size and maturity of a player, it may be desirable to utilize this option; in other cases, it may be best for the player to remain in their appropriate age classification. In such instances, individual requests to play up shall be considered on a case by case basis by the Travel Committee (consisting of the Hockey Director, Coach-in-Chief and NFHL President) and an allowance for a player to participate in an older age classification may or may not be granted. At times when there is not a sitting Hockey Director or Coach-in-Chief, a minimum of 2 members of the Board of Directors will be assigned to the Travel Committee.
2. USA Hockey has mandated that the appropriate playing surface for 8 & Under players is cross-ice or half-ice. It is our Affiliate (SAHOF) policy that players 8 & Under should participate on teams registered at the 8 & Under age classifications. The Affiliate will not recognize any 10U roster that includes more than three (3) players in the 8 & Under age classification.
3. Except in rare and specific cases, a participant will not be permitted to move up more than one year in age. For example, a first year 10U player cannot be moved to the 12U level. A second year 10U player may advance to 12U.
4. Applicants shall comply with the following guidelines when submitting a request to move a participant into an older age classification.
 - a. Requests must be submitted in writing to the Travel Committee via email to the NFHL President, the Hockey Director or to the Coach-in-Chief by the participant's parents or legal guardians in order to be considered. This request must be submitted at least 14 days prior to the team try-out.
 - b. A player requesting an opportunity to play-up must also try-out for his/her actual age level team. For example, a 10U player who is granted a play-up request to 12U must register and try-out for both 10U and 12U level teams. In such cases, only a single try-out registration fee shall be required.
 - c. The participant's parent(s)/guardian must sign a specific Risk Acknowledgment and Liability Waiver, in the required form (attached below), acknowledging the risks associated with playing outside of a participant's proper age classification. This form must be returned with the submitted request.
5. Consideration should be given as to how the play up will impact the two teams involved. The number of players within each age classification should be considered. The request should be denied if the play up will displace an age appropriate player that would otherwise have played as determined by the team selection process.
6. The Travel Committee and the head coaches for the affected teams (collectively considered the evaluators) will evaluate each request. Criteria for allowing a person to play-up will be based on the evaluation of the participant's skill and ability to contribute to the older team and the number of players at each level. The move up participant should be projected to be among the top 25% of participants on the move up team. If the participant is not projected to be one of the top participants on the team, then it is highly questionable whether the move up is truly in the best interest of that participant.
7. The Travel Committee will make the final decision on allowing a participant to play-up based on the recommendations from the evaluators.

8. If a player is allowed to play-up that player may also be rostered on the age appropriate team based upon the recommendations of the evaluators with the approval of the head coach of the age appropriate team.
9. In small market youth associations where the number of registered players within the geography of the association at an age classification do not equal one team, it may be necessary to consolidate age classifications in order to create teams. If and when that occurs, upon notification to the NFHL Board of Directors, the team will carry the name of the oldest age classification and those players that are part of the younger age group will be required to fill out a Play-Up Request & Acknowledgement of Risk and Liability Form. This will be done solely to acknowledge the risk of playing with older players and the criteria for players to be “projected to be among the top players” will be excluded. Consolidation of teams excludes 12U/14U consolidated teams.
10. In some instances a participant may be accepted as a practice player on an older age group team. This opportunity may be extended to a lower age division participant at the discretion of the head coach of the older team and includes participation in practice sessions only. In this case, play up approval per this policy is not required. A signed Risk Acknowledgement and Liability Waiver is still required.
11. Any approval granted for play-up is valid only for a single season. Subsequent seasons will be evaluated per this policy upon receipt of a new request.
12. NFHL reserves the right to reverse any decision allowing a player to play up at any time. If a player that has moved up is experiencing difficulty, as determined by the association and/or the player’s coach, the association may reverse the decision allowing the participant to play up. In this case every attempt should be made to place the player on a similar team within the player’s proper age classification. Parents and players should carefully consider this outcome prior to making a request to play up.