



## **TAHA – TIER I ANNOUNCEMENT**

**Upon TAHA's request, the USAH Tier I Moratorium Subcommittee granted TAHA the option to award Tier I designation to a second Youth association.**

**TAHA will, thereby, formally accept applications from Tier I Applicant Associations for the 2026-27 season pursuant to the below requirements, specifications, and application process.**

**Applications are due to the Tier I Chairperson by the end of business (5:00pm CST) on February 15, 2026.**

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### **TAHA 2026-27 TIER I APPLICATION**

A. **Purpose:** Tier I hockey in the TAHA Affiliate provides an opportunity for TAHA's best players to develop and compete at the highest level of Youth hockey available in North America at their respective age divisions.

B. **Tiered Age Divisions:** For point of reference and for purposes of this Application, as at 2025-26, USAH recognizes the following tiered and non-tiered Youth age divisions:

- Tier I: 18U, 16U, 15O, 14U, 13O (Tier I Teams)
- Tier II: 18U, 16U, 14U (Tier II Teams)
- House/Rec: 12U, 11U, 10U, 9U (AAA House/Rec Teams)

C. **Tier I Committee:** The TAHA President shall establish and appoint a Youth Tier I Committee and Chairperson (Tier I Committee or Tier I Chairperson, as the case may be). The Tier I Committee shall include the TAHA:

- President
- Vice President
- Travel Section President
- Immediate Past President

with additional Tier I Committee members being appointed at the discretion of the TAHA President.

D. **Authority:** The Tier I Committee shall be responsible for all matters pertaining to recommendations to the TAHA Board of Directors regarding Tier I Member Associations, Tier I Teams, AAA House/Rec Teams, and Tier I hockey, including, but not limited to, the following:

- granting or terminating authority to organize and/or operate a Tier I Member Association (Tier I Association) and/or field a Tier I Team or AAA House/Rec Team
- determining the number of Tier I Associations within the Affiliate
- determining the total number, within the Affiliate, of authorized Tier I Teams and/or AAA House/Rec Teams, at any given age division
- specifying which Tier I and/or AAA House/Rec Teams any Tier I Association may field; provided, however, that such approval shall be for no more than one (1) such team per USAH age division (Tier I) or birth year (House/Rec), as the case may be
- establishing guidelines used to carry out the purpose of the Tier I Committee.

Pursuant to TAHA's Bylaws, the TAHA Board of Directors, upon review of the aforesaid recommendations and in its sole discretion, may:

- accept or reject the recommendations
- send any matter at hand back to the Tier I Committee for further consideration
- make the final determination regarding Tier I Associations and/or Tier I, Tier II and/or AAA House/Rec Teams.

E. Guidelines to Determine Number of Tier I Associations and Tier I Teams: Guidelines for determining the number of Tier I Associations and Tier I and/or AAA House/Rec Teams shall include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. The number of players rostered within TAHA in any applicable age division and level of play.
2. The number of Tier I and Tier II teams fielded at any given age division the previous two (2) seasons.
3. The competitiveness of said Tier I and Tier II teams fielded the previous two (2) seasons.
4. Not more than two (2) Tier I Associations fielding Tier I Teams in age divisions in which USAH conducts a National Championship.

F. Tier I Associations:

1. Responsibility –

A Tier I Association must be a TAHA Member Association that is in good standing, duly organized and operated in accordance with TAHA's Bylaws and Rules, and authorized by TAHA to field, govern, and control Tier I Teams in the Affiliate each season.

Upon TAHA's acceptance, the Tier I Applicant Association agrees to the terms and conditions of the within Application and will commit to the growth and sustainability of a second Tier I association in a continuous partnership with other TAHA Member Associations.

Pursuant to Article D. a Tier I Association is eligible to field only Tier I Teams and/or AAA House/Rec Teams as may be appointed by the Tier I Committee from time to time. Such Tier I Association will not be permitted to field Tier II or non-AAA House/Rec Teams at any age division or birth year.

Such Tier I Association shall govern, control, and be fully responsible for its organization and the actions, inactions, and/or infractions of its teams, players, coaches, managers, parents, and personnel. Such responsibility shall include debts incurred by players, coaches, managers, or personnel on behalf of, in the name of, and specific to the Tier I Association or any of its teams.

The President (or his/her designee), coaches, team managers, and team officials of such Tier I Association shall be responsible for making sure each of its teams meets all the requirements for its classification and meets all the criteria for eligibility for State, District, and National Championships. USAH Registrars, TAHA Associate Registrars, and the TAHA Board of Directors will review team rosters upon registration to make this determination.

## 2. Authorization –

Tier I authorization for the newly appointed Tier I Association is granted for a period of two (2) years, plus a one-year option, at TAHA's discretion (Authorization Period); provided, however, that the designated Tier I Association maintains compliance with all established or subsequently modified requirements. A Tier I Association will be advised ninety (90) days prior to the expiration of the two-year designation whether the one-year option will be awarded by TAHA.

For purposes of the within Application, TAHA may, in its discretion, grant as few as two (2) or three (3) – but, in any case, a limited number of – **only Tier I teams** the initial year of operation; **no AAA House/Rec Teams will be awarded**. Upon the conclusion of such initial year, TAHA will, in collaboration with the newly appointed Tier I Association and in the best interests of the TAHA membership, re-evaluate the need for additional Tier I Teams and/or AAA House/Rec Teams.

For purposes of this Article, the Tier I season begins the day after the conclusion of the USAH Youth National Championships and concludes on the last day of the USAH Youth National Championships the following season.

Tier I authorization can be withdrawn at any time during the Authorization Period should a Tier I Association fail to comply with all Tier I requirements or TAHA Rules or experience financial instability or if representatives of the Tier I Association (Board, coaching staff, etc.) demonstrate conduct detrimental to amateur youth hockey, TAHA, or USAH.

TAHA reserves the right to replace an existing Tier I Association should circumstance warrant and will, in which case, provide notice of any vacancy of Tier I Association, together with the application process and deadline.

TAHA reserves the right to increase the number of Tier I Associations and/or Tier I and/or AAA House/Rec Teams should it determine that same can be supported by the player number and talent pool.

G. Tier I Team Application & Authorization Procedure:

1. Application –

An existing Tier I Association, or any prospective Tier I Association, including any Tier II Member Associations (Tier I Applicant Association), shall complete and deliver a Tier I Application (Application) to the Tier I Chairperson no later than February 15 of this application year. Such Application shall comply with the requirements set forth herein.

The Tier I Committee, subject to review by the TAHA Board of Directors, may waive any particular requirement it deems immaterial to the Application.

No Tier I Applicant Association shall have authority to operate or otherwise participate in Tier I hockey in any capacity unless and until it has received written authorization from TAHA to do so. The Tier I Chairperson, with support from the Tier I Committee, shall recommend to the TAHA Board of Directors the acceptance or denial of each Application. The TAHA Board of Directors shall have final approval of the Tier I Associations based on information provided by each Tier I Association Applicant and other pertinent information assembled by the Tier I Committee.

2. Minimum Requirements –

Each Tier I Applicant Association shall comply with the minimum requirements set forth in this Article, as well as all TAHA and USAH Bylaws and Rules, which include, but are not limited to, the following:

- a. Number of Teams: Pursuant to Article F.2., the Tier I Association Applicant may apply for no more than one (1) Tier I Team per age division (18U, 16U, 15O, 14U and 13O).
- b. Coaches: The names of the coaches for each Proposed Team, together written proof that each such coach has completed the appropriate USAH coaching certification and modules and has complied with TAHA's background screening and SafeSport requirements.
- c. Ice: Ice contract(s) that demonstrate the time slots and days of the week upon which the Proposed Teams shall practice or play games for the upcoming season. It is imperative that the Tier I Applicant Association provide sufficient ice to support an appropriate number of home games and practices consistent with the size of its program, the length of its season, and all other determinations in this Article.
- d. Off-Ice: Provision for an off-ice development program for each Proposed Team, including, but not limited to frequency, location, provider, etc.).
- e. Billet Program: Details of the Tier I Association's billet program and resources as well as a designated billet coordinator who is responsible for providing support to and overseeing the placement of Billet Players (as hereinafter defined) and ensuring that all parties involved are in compliance with TAHA's Billet Guidelines, which may, from time to time, be required and determined by TAHA to govern billet arrangements.
- f. Financial & Program Disclosure: A Fact Sheet, as hereinafter defined, for each Proposed Team.

- g. Organization: The Tier I Applicant Association's Bylaws, rules, regulations, policies, and guidelines, together with a list of Officers, Directors, and the Member Association Registrar.
- h. Financials: Proof of the ability to finance the following season such as historical financial information that demonstrates the Tier I Applicant Association has been financially stable the prior three (3) consecutive seasons or, in the case of a new Member Association, proof of a one hundred thousand (\$100,000.00) minimum available start-up fund (to cover costs such as camps, coaches' fees, apparel, contracted ice, administration, legal fees, etc.).
- i. Tax Exempt: Must have Internal Revenue Service 501(c)(3) tax exemption status under the Internal Revenue Code.
- j. Other: Any other information determined by the Tier I Committee or Tier I Chairperson, from time to time, to be necessary or pertinent.

### 3. Notification –

Each Tier I Association Applicant will, by February 28 of the current season, be notified in writing by the Tier I Chairperson of the acceptance or denial of its Application.

## H. Team Selection:

### 1. Procedures –

Each Tier I Association shall institute procedures to select the best players available. Guidelines for team selection process shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- a. A Tier I Association shall hold open tryouts, which shall not be announced or advertised until such Tier I Association has received written notification from the Tier I Chairperson of its approval as a Tier I Association to field specific Tier I Teams for the ensuing season.
- b. Tryouts must be conducted in accordance with TAHA's tryout schedule published each Spring. A Tier I Association will conduct tryouts – for the Tier I Teams at the approved age divisions – during the protected Tier I tryout period, which will allow such Tier I Association to attract, evaluate, and select the best players at each age group.
- c. A Tier I Association that conduct tryouts during the protected Tier I tryout period (i.e. players on the ice) will be required to skate teams at Tier I for the coming season. Should a Tier I Association determine, either during or following tryouts, that one or more teams will not be competitive at Tier I, the Tier I Association may opt to disband the Tier I Team prior to Tier II or tryouts. Such teams will not be permitted to drop to Tier II following the Tier I tryout period.
- d. Personal invitations for tryouts are permissible, but tryouts must be announced publicly through a general publication.

- e. The announcement must contain, at a minimum, the Tier I Association name, level of tryouts, name and contact information of the head coach, dates/location/time of tryouts, and a brief statement of the program.
- f. In support of A. herein, Tier I Teams registered through TAHA shall limit the number of Out-of-State Players and Out-of-DFW Area Players (as defined below). For purposes of and specific to this Tier I Application:

| Roster Classification & Age Division | Out-of-State |         | Out-of-DFW Area Skaters and Goalies                                                                                    |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|---------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                      | Skaters      | Goalies |                                                                                                                        |
| Tier I 18U                           | 5            | 1       | Unlimited                                                                                                              |
| Tier I 16U                           | 3            | 1       | Three (3) but no more than one (1) goalie and no more than one (1) Out-of-DFW Area Player per single-market community. |
| Tier I 15O                           | 2            | 1       | Two (2) but no more than one (1) goalie and no more than one (1) Out-of-DFW Area Player per single-market community.   |
| Tier I 14U                           | 2            | 1       | Two (2) but no more than one (1) goalie and no more than one (1) Out-of-DFW Area Player per single-market community.   |
| Tier I 13O                           | 2            | 0       | Two (2) but no more than one (1) goalie and no more than one (1) Out-of-DFW Area Player per single market community.   |

- i. An **Out-of-State Player** is any player whose family unit, as at the date of tryouts, is permanently domiciled outside of either the State of Texas or the State of Oklahoma.
- ii. A player who has reached the age of eighteen (18) years (major birth year 18U) and who otherwise would be an Out-of-State Player under Article H.1.g.i. herein will be treated as an **Out-of-State Player** notwithstanding any assertion that said player is of the age of majority.
- iii. An **Out-of-DFW Area Player** is any player whose family unit, as at the date of tryouts, is permanently domiciled in or closer to another non-DFW hockey market within TAHA's borders.
- iv. A **Billed Player** is any player who temporarily resides – for the purpose of playing hockey – within the TAHA Affiliate with someone other than an immediate family member as set forth herein (Article H.1.g.i.).
- v. Upon all such players signing a contract with such Tier I Association, each Tier I Association shall notify the TAHA Travel Section President of the names, birth years, and respective positions (skater or goalie) of all Out-of-State Players and Out-of-DFW Area Players as set forth herein.

## 2. Player Commitment -

Any player who signs a Tier I Team contract is committed to that Tier I Team for the ensuing playing season and is not eligible to play for another tiered team until he/she has been released from that Tier I Team. All such player releases shall be submitted to the Tier I Chairperson. Exceptions to this rule are Girls, High School, House, Junior, Junior College, College or University.

No player shall be allowed to contractually commit or pay monies to a Tier I Association or Tier I Team prior to the TAHA-approved tryout dates for the ensuing season.

3. Roster –

USAH 1T rosters for Tier I Teams must be submitted to the appropriate TAHA Associate Registrar prior to any team participating in a non-league, league, or tournament game. Any Tier I Association or Tier I Team found to be in violation of this rule will be sanctioned accordingly as outlined in the Annual Guide. Tier I Associations must register their teams as Tier I Teams by September 15 of the current season to be eligible for the State Tournament. A Tier I Team may not be registered as a High School or House/Rec team at any point during the season.

4. Fact Sheet –

Each Tier I Association shall furnish each player and his/her parent(s) – before any tryout and prior to such player/parents signing a contract – with a Fact Sheet (Fact Sheet) that provides full disclosure of the Tier I Association's and each Tier I Team's program, season details, and financial commitments. At a minimum, such disclosure shall include the following, together with specific amounts or reasonable cost estimates that players may expect to pay to the Tier I Association, such team, or a third party, where applicable or as the case may be:

- available payment options, respectively, and any additional fees or discounts related thereto
- player registration or other association fees
- game and team apparel costs
- number of games and practices/ice hours
- additional ice and on-ice instruction and training, if any
- off-ice training/development program (provider, frequency, and length),
- expected out-of-town travel and approximate costs associated therewith
- team fees
- coach travel costs
- fundraising requirements, if any.

The Fact Sheet shall also outline the refund policy should a player, regardless of the reason, not play for the full season.

Each player and his/her parent(s) must sign, or electronically acknowledge, the Fact Sheet prior to signing a contract.

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