



Metroplex Christian Hockey Association - Captain's Handbook

"We exist to share the love of Christ through camaraderie and a great hockey experience."

This mission statement can get lost in a captain's day-to-day grind of building a roster, getting skaters checked in for games, finding subs, and the other activities that are part of playing the game we love. It is your role as a captain to remember that you are *first and foremost a missionary*, and to always keep in mind that the purpose of MCHA is to create an environment where the Gospel of Jesus Christ can be proclaimed (remember, MCHA is first and foremost a missionary organization). This handbook contains encouragement and instruction for you as a captain, focused on that mission.

1. The Captain's Role

An MCHA captain is comparable to a small group leader at church. You are not only the coordinator for your team in the traditional adult league sense - you are also a representative of the global body of Christ and of the MCHA mission to the people in your locker room, on the ice, and anyone else in the rink who may be watching.

Your role as a small group leader is to lead your team in a Christ-like manner and to lead by example in all respects both on and off the ice. If your goal is purely to win games and you are not committed to proclaiming the Gospel, then this is not the place for you to lead a team. Read and reflect on the passage below concerning the calling of leaders before continuing any further in this handbook. Does your life credibly reflect this passage?

2 Peter 1:3-10 (NIV): *"His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.*

For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble"

1.1. Captain Leadership Behaviors

As a captain, an ambassador for Christ, and member of the MCHA missionary team, you are expected to exhibit leadership behaviors that are beyond reproach. Christ is the greatest example, and while we will all fall short of Him, we can look to His word where He shows us that leadership begins in the heart.



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Below are a few examples of leadership behaviors that will help you be successful in building the environment of fellowship for which we are striving:

- **Communicate Expectations** - Your team should know expectations for an MCHA-led team and any specific expectations you may have for your team. This will help them take ownership of results and will create respect and loyalty.
- **Set the Example** - If you are creating expectations, then you have to model those expectations in your own conduct. Reflect on Ephesians 4:29-32 (NIV): *"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."* You have to put these behaviors into practice before anyone else will.
- **Practice Accountability** - Consider Proverbs 27:17 (NIV) *"As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another."* When the expectations you have set are not met, hold your team members (and yourself!) accountable - that accountability may take many forms, from a gentle reminder to sending one of your own players off the ice in the middle of a close game should the need arise (even if it creates a disadvantage for your team).
- **Walk the walk** - It is easy to quote scripture and show we know all the "Sunday School answers", but our true character is shown by our actions. Consider James 2:14-17 (NIV): *"What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."*
- **Be Present** - A captain should be present at a majority of their team's games and should be a leading voice in team-wide communication (email threads, text threads, group chat apps, etc.). Consider Hebrews 10:24-25 (NIV) *"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."*
- **Find the Win** - Look for small victories and focus on the positives, even in a blow-out loss. Create an environment of positivity and remember that winning hockey games is **not** the ultimate goal of this ministry. Letting a negative attitude win out will rob you of ministry opportunities. Consider Proverbs 17:22 (NIV): *"A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones."*



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- **Leverage the League Equipping-** The board of directors is here to support you, as are the Ministry Coordinator and the chaplains. The chaplains' role specifically is to serve and equip the leadership in their division and therefore your interaction with them is not only encouraged, but *expected*. Please bend their ear, ask them for ideas on ways to minister to your team, bounce your ideas off them, invite them to your locker room, set a time each season for them to meet you and your Cord of 3 members, etc. The league website has a Ministry Resources page with a toolkit for you to use. Make use of the resources you have been given!

1.2. Leading In Ministry

As a captain, you are responsible for leading your team in ministry that will create fellowship, foster Christ-oriented camaraderie, spark conversations about the Gospel, and demonstrate what a Christ-following community looks like to team members who are not yet believers. Our goal is to leave a lasting impression for those who are not yet seeking Christ but whose hearts might be softened in the future. Consider the following passages:

- Acts 2:42 (NIV): *"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."*
- Philippians 2:1-2 (NIV): *"Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind."*
- Galatians 6:2 (NIV): *"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ."*
- 2 Timothy 4:2 (NIV) *"Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction."*

Again, we can think of a team like a small group at a church, and model our ministry accordingly.

Example ministry activities that you can explore for your team include but are certainly not limited to:

- **Prayer** - This can be led by you in the locker room, you can ask for praises/prayer requests from the team, or you can challenge someone else on the team to lead it. Just as with the post-game prayer, don't let this become rote or follow too set of a pattern. Speak from the heart when you are praying.
- **Devotionals** - There are a plethora of resources for 2-5 minute devotionals that can be read/discussed in the locker room and followed by a prayer before or after the game (or both). The Stop-n-Think email is one of these. Devotionals are a great way to get a quick focus change for everyone.



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- **Service** - Service projects can be accessed through local service organizations - consider partnering with other captains to get critical mass for service projects. Service can also take the form of carrying each other's burdens within your team or division. Is someone injured? Is someone having a baby? Did someone experience a death in the family? If so, what can you do for them? Mow a lawn, bring a meal, take care of odd jobs, babysit, etc.
- **Fellowship Time** - Time spent in a non-game environment is important to build fellowship. Share a meal, get a coffee, go to a game as a group (any kind...not just hockey), etc.
- **Relationship Building** - Speaking into your players's lives and getting to know what challenges they are facing can be a key element of opening hearts to hear the Gospel. Secular hockey teams don't have the depth of relationship that MCHA is striving for. Players on your team may not be ready for an overt Bible message but they may be ready to share what is happening in their lives and give you an opportunity to model Christ in how you respond.
- **Guided Bible Studies** - This is more time-consuming and thus more logistically challenging, but can be a greatly rewarding experience and create some of the strongest bonds between teammates.

At least one of these ministry activities **MUST** be occurring in your locker room pre and/or post game on a regular basis. Devotionals and prayer requests are easy and don't take up much time. Some teams find that the devotionals may work better after the game, although it makes more sense to *begin* with a devotional. You can *begin* a devotional before the game and *finish* it afterwards...be creative in your delivery.

Ultimately, your locker room should be *clearly* distinguishable from a non-MCHA locker room through the presence of ministry activities. If that is not the case for your team, please take some time in reflection to understand why, and contact your divisional chaplain if you would like assistance in putting together a ministry plan for your team.

1.3. Building a Strong Cord of 3

The Cord of 3 is established in Ecclesiastes 4:12 (NIV): "*Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken*"; it consists of yourself and two other players who are known for their Christian faith. That is, through their actions and words they demonstrate to be Christ-followers. The other members of the Cord of 3 should fulfill the qualities of a captain and be able to answer all the questions from The Mission Matters, just as you did before you became a captain.

Leaders need people who can help them through tough times and can share the burden of leadership. You are ultimately accountable as the captain, but this is more than just a typical adult league coordinator gig, and you will need partners in carrying out the ministry needs of your team. Consider the advice of Jethro to his son-in-law Moses in Exodus 18:18-22 (NIV): "*You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone. Listen*



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now to me and I will give you some advice, and may God be with you. You must be the people's representative before God and bring their disputes to him. Teach them his decrees and instructions, and show them the way they are to live and how they are to behave. But select capable men from all the people—men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain—and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. Have them serve as judges for the people at all times, but have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you."

The Cord of 3 work together to carry out the mission of MCHA, remain accountable to one another, and provide an environment that piques spiritual interest among their players while leading and guiding them in a great hockey experience. Each captain is responsible for creating a Cord of 3 for their team. The other players who make up your Cord of 3 must be trustworthy and strong believers, meeting the expectations of a captain in their own right.

Your Cord of 3 members will also serve as your Assistant Captains, and should be able to take over the team for you should you no longer be able to act as captain (if you have an injury, if your life season changes and you don't have the time to devote to ministry, if you have to change jobs or relocate, etc.).

1.4. Being an MCHA Leader

Just as a small group leader is a representative of the church to their fellowship group, you are a representative of the MCHA to your team. You may have heard the phrase "play for the name on the front of your jersey, not the back", but as part of the MCHA we need to go one step further and play for the name of the Lord, not for the name on the front or back of your jersey.

As an MCHA leader, your first and primary responsibility is to the mission and ministry; if your attitude is "my team comes first", then it needs correction. We (the MCHA directors, chaplains, and captains) are **one ministry team** working together to show the love of Christ; we are **not** a collection of people playing in parallel that just happen to be believers.

Consider 1 Cor 12:25-27: *"so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it."*

Being an MCHA leader means you must push back against division in our body which takes the form of team-based tribalism and create community across team boundaries - a wider sense of community that goes beyond the borders of teams is what fosters the camaraderie we are working towards.

You may have players on your team who played competitively in their youth and were conditioned to see their opponents as "enemies" - it is up to you to change their view of this game, re-define their attitude towards their opponents, and show them that fellowship can exist outside of just their team.

Tactical ways that you can build community outside of your team include:



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- Opening your ministry activities to other teams - e.g., invite the opposing team into your locker room for 5 minutes before the game to participate in a devotional.
- Captain-to-captain lines of communication - set the example by having an open dialogue and open lines of communication with your divisional peers. This could be an email thread, a text group, a group chat app, etc.
- Subbing - we encourage you to sub with other teams in your division as often as possible (within the rules on subbing) and invite other captains to do the same on your team as well. Subbing requires planning ahead so use those open lines of communication.
- Special events - Fellowship games, private drop-ins, and charity events organized by MCHA operations team are all opportunities for building community outside of your team. Take these opportunities!

1.4.1. Conflict Resolution

Conflicts should be resolved at the captain level whenever possible - resolution of any conflict (whether it is related to player leveling, on-ice conduct, the results of a game, etc.), should start with a private captain-to-captain conversation that is respectful, and keeps the mission and priority of the MCHA front and center. If there is a true difference of opinion that requires independent adjudication, involve your divisional chaplain in the discussion and/or escalate to the MCHA President, but only after you have done your due diligence to resolve it privately.

Let go of anything that is solely focused on winning. If there is a complaint about one of your own players, approach it objectively and without a defensive nature. If you are considering making a complaint to a peer or escalating to involve the MCHA President, consider whether you are living out Paul's words in Colossians 3:12-15 (NIV): *"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful."*

Take special care when using email or other written communication in the midst of a conflict. Written media cannot convey your tone or inflection so take caution in how you choose your words and whom you include in the distribution list. If you are fired up about a topic, it is best to write a draft, save it, **pray about it**, sleep on it, and then revise the next day before sending - or better yet, make a phone call instead.

1.4.2. Leader Participation

Being an MCHA leader also means being an active participant in activities including but not limited to the following:



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- Captains' Meeting(s) - Captains' meetings are an important time of reflection, encouragement, and one of the only real opportunities to fellowship with captains in other divisions who you don't see on Sundays. Building connections and community outside of your own division is especially important in creating player movement pipelines - if there is a player on your team who needs to move up or down, but you have no relationships developed with captains outside of your level, it may be more difficult to find them a place. Moreover: it is **mandatory** for all teams to be represented at these meetings in some form or fashion.
- Divisional meetings - Divisional meetings are also **mandatory** and must occur at least annually (and preferably twice a year). This meeting must include representation from all divisional teams and the divisional chaplain. It should be focused on planning specific ministry activities for the division, and what equipping the captains need to accomplish their ministry goals.
- Providing input on rules and operations issues - From time to time, the President may ask for your input on rules updates, scheduling, divisional makeup, and other operational items. Get feedback from your team as needed, and provide your input in a timely manner so that your voice is heard.

1.4.3. MCHA Representation

Your role as an MCHA leader and as an ambassador for Christ does not start when you arrive for your game on Sunday and end when you leave the rink. In all things that you do, you are representing this league and the body of Christ. Consider Colossians 3:17 (NIV): *"And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him"*

You are a representative of the ministry when you:

- Play in other leagues (SPAHL, SSSL, Allen, NyTex, Parks Mall, etc.)
- Interact with others in the hockey community on Social Media (e.g., Facebook groups)
- Interact with parents on your children's youth sports teams
- Interact with friends, family, neighbors, coworkers, customers, clients, etc. in your life outside of hockey

What would someone who observes you **only** outside of your Sunday games see? Do your actions and words every day demonstrate that you are a Christ-follower? What would they think of this ministry if they knew you were a ministry leader?



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2. Game Day Responsibilities

You and your Cord of 3 are to approach every game with a ministry mindset. The following "Game Day" template is a proven framework that will help you be effective in ministering well, thus providing an excellent hockey experience. The key is for you and your Cord of 3 to be relationally driven and intentional in those relationships.

2.1. Pre-Game

2.1.1. Prayer or other Ministry Activity

As mentioned earlier, your pre-game routine **MUST** include a ministry element of some kind. This handbook has some examples, but you have to own this and be accountable for making sure it happens consistently. If you have questions about this or are not sure how to proceed (or how to get started) please contact your divisional chaplain or the MCHA Ministry Coordinator, who would be glad to assist you.

2.1.2. Confirm Player Registration

Confirm that all players who are going to step on the ice for your team are registered with the league and claimed with the league USA Hockey insurance. Your single source of truth for this is the Registered Players List on the website on the Hockey Resources page. A player appearing in HockeyShift alone does NOT confirm their eligibility - the HockeyShift registration does not validate players' USA Hockey number and there have been instances where players are registered but provided an invalid USA Hockey number so they are NOT eligible to play.

You **MUST** refer to the Registered Players List which is only updated AFTER a player is successfully claimed with USA Hockey. If there is any confusion on a player's registration status, contact the league Administration Coordinator.

2.1.3. Accurate Roster

You **MUST** turn in an accurate roster to the scorekeeper before every game. The roster must have the correct jersey number for ALL skaters – there is no excuse for an incorrect number or for a player playing with no number - tape a number on if you have to. If you have a borrowed/sub registered skater from another team they must be identified correctly on the roster.

You can print out a game sheet from the game "Preview" in HockeyShift - cross out any players who are not present and add subs/borrowed players as needed. Some scorekeepers may prefer you to edit the roster live with them during the warm-up if they are live-scoring the game in HockeyShift. Ask the scorekeeper their preference but always be prepared with an accurate, written roster.



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2.1.4. Captain Greeting & Pre-Game Prayer

During the warm-up, meet with your opposing captain at center-ice for a quick pregame introduction and greeting. Exchange names and learn faces if you are not already familiar with each other so that if there is a problem during the game the captains will know who to address on the opposing team to keep the situation under control. Take 30 seconds and pray together for the game ahead of you.

This is also the absolute best time to share any important information such as identifying a substitute goalie, identifying a new player, or voicing any other concerns.

2.2. During the Game

During the game, always stay alert for potential problems and opportunities for community-building. Be visible and proactive, and set the tone for your team.

2.2.1. De-Escalation

The purpose of situational de-escalation is not to point fingers, but to get everyone on the same side to solve the immediate issue (whatever they may be). And after a game is over, you and your peer captain can rationally discuss the individual issues that occurred, and practice the conflict resolution strategies outlined earlier in this handbook. *During the game*, the entire focus should be on player safety and ensuring that retaliation, additional aggressive play, or violent behavior does not take place.

If players are getting out of hand, it is your responsibility as the captain to step in to calm the situation for your own team. Each captain should have their Cord of 3 aligned to assist during these situations. Do not rely solely on the referees to control the situation, be assertive and take control of your team. All players are all accountable for their own actions and the league will not accept "the referee was not in control" as an excuse for aggressive or violent behavior that arises out of competition during a game.

If the play is getting to the point where the captains need to discuss an issue or issues, the following is the appropriate way to discuss:

1. You and your peer captain can agree to discuss it during a period break (*if and only if it's appropriate to wait*). You may have one of your Cord of 3 accompany you, but no other players as multiple players tend to escalate the situation during these discussions.
2. If it's more appropriate to discuss on the spot, you and your peer captain can agree to take your teams' respective time outs to address the situation there and then. Again, you may have one of your Cord of 3 accompany you at center ice to discuss. For situations that need to be addressed on the spot, be prepared to hold your own players accountable including and up to **sending them off of the ice for the remainder of the game voluntarily** if need be.
3. For situations that can wait, the captains will agree to convene at the conclusion of the game with an assistant, to work out the situation together after the fact.



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2.2.2. Interaction with Officials

Officials are a core part of the game, and just as much of an opportunity for evangelism as any player on your bench. Numerous officials are also league players or otherwise involved in MCHA activities, so make sure you are affording them the respect they are due, and keep in mind that you could not play this game without them on the ice.

During the game, you should be the only one talking to the officials, and only for purposes of clarifying a rule or understanding the effects of a call made on the ice. They are human and make mistakes just like any of us do. Do not argue, insult, or berate the officials, and keep your team from doing so as well. Abuse of officials will be met with zero tolerance by the league.

If you are not present, only members of your Cord of 3 should be discussing the calls with officials.

2.2.3. Lopsided Scores

A large score differential often results in frustration or ugliness, so never allow the score to get out of control. Keep in mind that all teams make the playoffs, and moreover the goal ratio does not affect the standings: it is penalty minutes that are used to break ties in the standings! A one goal win is as good as a ten-goal win.

If you are on the upper end of a lopsided score, consider implementing self-enforced rules to challenge your team and rein in scoring. For example - an "All-Pass" rule in which all players on the ice must receive and give a pass before a shot is allowed. Most of all, keep sportsmanship in mind - flagrant celebrations will create unnecessary conflict. Cherry-picking and "going hard" with under a minute left with a score so lopsided that the clock is running are practices that should be avoided.

If you are on the lower end of a lopsided score, make sure to keep a positive attitude and find the little wins. Celebrate good defensive play, saves by your goaltender, good puck movement, and most importantly: good sportsmanship.

2.3. Post Game

2.3.1. Handshake Line

ALL of your players must participate for the post-game handshake. If any of your players does not participate, hold them accountable. Even if they have to leave urgently, they just played hockey for a 75-minute stretch and can spare the extra 30s it takes to make their way through the handshake line. Always place yourself or one of your Cord of 3 in line behind any volatile players on your team (particularly if there were any incidents during the game). Helmets cannot be removed until after the handshake.

2.3.2. Post-Game Prayer

After the team handshake, the winning captain is responsible for either leading or assigning a team member to lead both teams in prayer at center ice. If your game runs late (e.g., in a shootout, had a



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delayed start), or you feel you are being hustled off the ice by the rink staff, you can take the prayer off-ice: find a spot outside the locker rooms or squeeze both teams into one locker room if needed.

If the game was heated, don't avoid it, mention that although things became heated, you really appreciated how both teams responded in helping to calm things down (if things got heated in a game, good team leadership will be proactive in calming things down, never relying totally on the officials to do so.)

Keep in mind that for some of our players, this may be the only ministry they experience in their week - be authentic, be vulnerable, speak from the heart, offer up prayer requests unrelated to hockey. Christ gives us the Lord's prayer as a template - use that and build on it in your specific context. "Cookie-cutter" prayer is often counterproductive and creates distance between the non-believer and believer (and even worse: between them and God).

2.3.3. Score Sheet

Spot check the score sheet for your game sometime in the week following the game. The most relevant points for the score sheet which could skew league decision making if inaccurate are the roster, points, and penalties.:

- Does the roster accurately reflect who played in the game (and are subs accurately reflected)?
This is important for playoff eligibility
- Are goals and assists attributed to the correct players?
- Are penalties attributed to the correct players?

If any score sheet corrections are needed, fill out the Stat Correction Request form on the website on the Hockey Resources page and the operations staff will make the needed corrections in HockeyShift.