



Questions Regarding Competitive Programming for the 2026–2027 Season

The YKMHA Board of Directors would like to thank everyone who has taken the time to share questions, concerns, and ideas regarding competitive hockey programming for the upcoming season.

As part of our offseason planning, we have received a number of questions related to team formation, player evaluations, age advancement, team selection procedures, and female hockey programming. Some of these questions apply broadly to all tryout-based teams within YKMHA, including both co-ed and female competitive programs, while others are specific to female hockey.

We appreciate the engagement from our membership. Open discussion and thoughtful questions help us improve our programs and ensure families understand how decisions are being made. The goal of this document is to provide clarity, transparency, and consistency as we prepare for the 2026–2027 season.

Questions Applicable to All Tryout-Based Teams

Is YKMHA currently reviewing its policies?

Yes.

As is customary during the offseason, YKMHA is reviewing several policies and procedures in preparation for the upcoming season. This includes a review of the Team Selection Policy to ensure it continues to align with the needs of our membership and the growth of hockey within the Association.

The information outlined in this document reflects the Board's current direction and operational planning for the 2026–2027 season. However, some items discussed below have not yet been formally incorporated into the written Team Selection Policy and remain subject to final review and approval.

Our intent is to ensure any approved changes, clarifications, or procedural updates are properly reflected in Association policies prior to evaluations and team formation. Updated policies will be communicated to the membership once the review process is complete.

How are competitive teams selected?

Team selection for all tryout-based teams is conducted in accordance with YKMHA's Team Selection Policy.

Players participate in evaluations, are assessed using the approved evaluation process, and are ranked based on their performance. Roster spots are then offered in accordance with the Team Selection Policy applicable to that team.

Final roster decisions are based on evaluation results.

Will players who were on a team last season automatically keep their spot this season?

No.

YKMHA does not grandfather players from one season to the next for any tryout-based team, whether that player previously held a roster position in their age group or was an underage player who participated on an older team.

Every player seeking a position on a competitive team must participate in evaluations and earn their roster spot through the evaluation process each season.

This approach promotes fairness and ensures all players are evaluated consistently each year.

As always, the Association will not discuss individual player circumstances through general correspondence.

How does the Top 7 Rule apply to underage players?

The requirement that an underage player rank among the top seven players when trying out for an older Development Team has been part of the Team Selection Policy for many years.

The purpose of this provision is to protect age groupings while ensuring age-appropriate players have fair opportunities to earn positions on competitive teams.

In previous seasons, the Board approved limited variances for newly formed female teams where participation numbers required flexibility to maintain viable rosters and support program growth.

As participation within YKMHA continues to grow and programs become more sustainable, it is appropriate to return to the consistent application of the existing Team Selection Policy across all tryout-based programs, both co-ed and female, while continuing to allow underage players the opportunity to try out for older divisions.

Can players play down an age division?

Currently, players may request to play in a younger age division within YKMHA's recreational (house league) programming where appropriate.

However, this flexibility does not extend to Development Teams or Travel Teams.

In previous seasons, limited exceptions were approved in specific circumstances where participation numbers and competitive balance required additional flexibility.

As participation levels continue to grow, the Board's objective is to apply the Team Selection Policy consistently across all competitive programs while maximizing opportunities for the greatest number of players within each age division.

Must players register for multiple evaluations if seeking consideration in more than one division?

Yes.

Players must register for evaluations in each age division and/or co-ed or female program in which they wish to be considered.

For example, a player seeking consideration as an underage player in an older division who also wishes to remain eligible for consideration within their age-appropriate division must register for both evaluation processes.

This ensures the player remains eligible for consideration in either division based on evaluation results and roster availability.

Questions Specific to Female Competitive Programming

How will families indicate which female competitive program they would like to see offered?

During online RAMP registration, female players and their families will be asked to indicate their preferred female competitive pathway for their age division:

- Female Travel Team
- Female Development Team

This selection allows families to identify the competitive model they would most like to see offered for their age group.

Each age division will be considered independently, meaning one division may proceed with a Travel Team model while another proceeds with a Development Team model.

How will the preferred pathway be determined?

Once registration closes, the pathway selected by the majority of age-eligible registrants within that age division will determine which competitive model moves forward for that age group.

This approach provides the most accurate representation of what participating female players and families would like to see offered within their division.

Can families select a preferred pathway and a backup pathway?

No.

Families should register for the competitive pathway they genuinely prefer for their player.

The purpose of the registration preference is to understand the preferred competitive model of eligible participants within each age division. Registering for a pathway solely as a contingency option may not accurately reflect member preferences and could affect the information used for planning.

If a family's preferred pathway is not selected, the options available are outlined below under *"What happens if my preferred pathway is not selected?"*

When will families know which pathway has been selected?

Families will be notified of the selected pathway for their age division after registration closes and before evaluation sessions begin, except in the event of a registration tie as outlined below.

The Board anticipates reviewing registration results immediately following the close of registration and notifying families of the selected pathway as soon as reasonably practical thereafter.

This ensures families understand which competitive model is moving forward before evaluation ice times take place and can make informed decisions before participating in evaluations.

In the rare circumstance that registration results in an equal number of preferences for the Travel and Development models, evaluations will proceed before a final pathway is selected.

In that situation, the Board would not yet be in a position to communicate a selected pathway prior to evaluations. Once the team has been formed through the evaluation process, the Board would return to the registration preference data submitted by those players who earned roster positions to determine which model is preferred.

In other words, families would still determine the pathway. The difference is that, in the event of a tie, the decision would be based on the preferences of the selected roster players rather than the preferences of the entire tryout group.

What happens if my preferred pathway is not selected?

If the pathway selected by your family is not the pathway that moves forward for your age division, you will have two options:

- Continue through evaluations for the selected pathway; or
- Withdraw prior to evaluations and receive a refund of your evaluation fee.

This approach allows families to register for the pathway they genuinely prefer while ensuring they are not disadvantaged if the majority of registrants select a different competitive model.

Will my pathway selection impact evaluations or team selection?

No.

Selecting either pathway during registration provides no advantage or disadvantage during evaluations.

All players will be evaluated using the same process and criteria regardless of the pathway selected during registration.

How will evaluations be conducted?

All female players within an age division will:

- Attend the same evaluation sessions;
- Participate on the same ice times;
- Be evaluated together as one group; and
- Be ranked using the same evaluation process.

Players will not be divided into Travel Team and Development Team groups during evaluations.

Player rankings will be based solely on performance during evaluations.

How will female teams be selected?

Following evaluations, players will be ranked using the approved evaluation process and roster positions will be offered in accordance with YKMHA's Team Selection Policy.

All female competitive teams, whether operating as a Travel Team or Development Team, will be formed using the same evaluation rankings and selection procedures.

As outlined earlier in this document, the Team Selection Policy—including the Top 7 Rule for underage players where applicable—will be applied consistently across all tryout-based programs for the 2026–2027 season.

Final roster decisions will be determined by evaluation results, not by the pathway selected during registration. Families will continue to have the option to accept or decline any roster position offered to their player.

How are pathway preferences counted for underage players?

To ensure pathway decisions reflect the preferences of players within each age division, only age-eligible players will be included in the final Travel-versus-Development preference count for that division.

Players trying out for an older age division may indicate a pathway preference during registration; however, their preference will not be included in that older division's final tally.

This ensures pathway decisions are based on the preferences of players who are age-eligible for that division rather than players whose primary registration belongs to another age group.

Why is YKMHA using registration preferences to help determine female programming?

The best way to understand what families want is to ask the players and families who intend to participate.

Collecting preferred competitive pathways through registration allows every interested player and family to have input into how female hockey is structured within their age division.

This approach ensures decisions are based on the preferences of the full group of participants, rather than only those players who ultimately earn roster positions following evaluations.

YKMHA's Approach to Female Hockey Growth

YKMHA remains committed to supporting and expanding opportunities for female hockey wherever possible.

The discussion surrounding Travel and Development pathways is not intended to reduce opportunities. Rather, it is focused on ensuring that programs are structured in a way that reflects the preferences of players and families while remaining sustainable throughout the season.

The competitive pathway offered within each age division will be determined by the preference of the majority of eligible registrants.

At the same time, the Board has a responsibility to ensure that any team offered can reasonably operate and succeed throughout the season. As such, the Association must confirm that the selected pathway has sufficient player registrations, coaching resources, goaltending resources, and overall operational capacity to support a successful program.

These operational considerations are intended solely to assess the viability of the selected pathway and are not meant to replace or override the preference expressed by participating families.

Simply put, YKMHA wants these teams to happen. The Board remains committed to working collaboratively with players, families, coaches, and volunteers to provide meaningful and sustainable female hockey opportunities across the Association.

What about goaltender availability?

The Board recognizes that goaltender availability can be a challenge in some age divisions.

While having dedicated goaltenders is an important factor when considering team viability, YKMHA remains committed to finding practical solutions wherever possible.

The Board recognizes that goaltender availability alone should not unnecessarily prevent female programming from proceeding and will work with families and coaches to explore reasonable solutions wherever possible.

Our goal is to remove barriers wherever possible and create opportunities for female goaltenders and teams to succeed.

Summary

- The Team Selection Policy is currently under offseason review, and updates will be communicated prior to evaluations.
- No players are grandfathered onto competitive teams from previous seasons.
- Team selection occurs annually through the evaluation process.

- Underage player requests will be assessed in accordance with the Team Selection Policy, including the Top 7 Rule.
- Playing down is not permitted within Development Team or Travel Team programming.
- Players must register for evaluations in each age division in which they wish to be considered.
- Female families will indicate their preferred competitive pathway during registration.
- The pathway selected by the majority of age-eligible registrants within each division will determine which model proceeds, subject only to the selected program being operationally viable.
- Pathway preferences submitted by players trying out underage will not be included in the preference tally for the older age division.
- In the event of a tie, additional steps will be taken to determine the preferred pathway as outlined above.
- Families will be informed of the selected pathway before evaluations begin whenever possible.
- Players whose preferred pathway is not selected may either continue through evaluations or withdraw and receive a refund of their evaluation fee.
- Registration preferences do not impact evaluations, rankings, or roster decisions.
- All players within an age division will evaluate together and be ranked as a single group.
- YKMHA remains committed to supporting sustainable female hockey opportunities across all age divisions.

The Board's objective is not to determine which pathway members should prefer, but to provide a fair, transparent process that allows participating families to express that preference before programming decisions are finalized.

Thank you for your continued support of YKMHA and for your ongoing engagement in these important discussions. We are fortunate to have a passionate hockey community that cares deeply about creating positive opportunities for our players. We look forward to another exciting season and to continuing the growth of hockey in Yellowknife.

YKMHA Board of Directors