



Introduction to U7 & U9 Hockey:

Metro East Inferno Female Hockey Association (MEIFHA) is very pleased to once again offer U7 and 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.

Regionalization: What rinks will be used for U7 & U9 hockey?

This is dependent on the number of registrants. At the U9 level, if numbers are strong enough, we will have an Intermediate team and 2-3 Development teams. At the U7 level, there is historically been one team within MEIFHA. 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, all-female U9 Development circuit and a U7 all-female 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 U7 or 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 evaluations 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 players will be placed on either an Intermediate or Development Team.

There are no evaluations at the U7 level.

Programming: What do the U7 & U9 hockey programs look like within 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 U7 and U9 level programming will serve as the foundations 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 both the U7 and U9 level is a crucial piece in building skills necessary for future 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 U7 & U9 level?

One of the key features of both the U7 and U9 programs are half-ice games. MEIFHA follows the Hockey Canada half-ice structure as it allows both players and goalies to have more puck touches and increases overall engagement for all players in game play. In half-ice games, offence is increased as there is often up to six times more shots in a half ice game, which in turn means goalies are engaged and getting more chances to stop and play the puck. Further, players are generally closer to the puck and all in-game action, which increases engagement and allows them to feel part of the game.

Are teams allowed to travel outside of Nova Scotia at the U7 & U9 levels?

Hockey Nova Scotia does not allow U7 and U9 teams to travel out of province to play games. However, other provinces have different policies and teams are able to visit and play our U7 and U9 teams.

Are jerseys and socks provided?

At the U7 and U9 levels, MEIFHA aligns its jersey and sock policy with both female and male association's across the country. Jerseys and socks are provided by the Tim Horton's program for all U7 and U9 teams, including the Intermediate U9 team(s). This is a nationally run program that helps ease the cost of hockey for

families and families are able to keep what is often their child's first hockey jersey. Jersey and sock colours are usually different for the U7 and U9 groups.

Are practices on full ice or half ice?

Most practices at both the U7 and U9 level are conducted on half-ice surfaces. This increases engagement for both players and goalies and the younger girls are more likely to hear and understand coaching directions from a smaller ice surface. Some full ice practises may be scheduled.

This is my daughters first time on the ice – I am worried that they will not have fun or it will be too serious.

Both the U7 and U9 programs are developed with the intention of having fun and both programs represent the first time many children have been on an ice surface. Programming will be delivered through a progressive learn-to-play teaching curriculum. Children learn best through participating in practice drills and sessions as well as through informal and modified games, such as shinny, freeze tad, obstacle courses etc. The program is designed specifically for young players and lesson plans follow a defined path of progression. The skills of skating, puck control, passing and shooting are introduced and refined in a progressive 'one step at a time' manner. The emphasis is on fun and skill development and the programs give the opportunity for your child to experience fitness, fair play, cooperation and new friends. Players should also be exposed to all positions in the game and MEIFHA offers goalie equipment to both the U7 and U9 group, and players will rotate and take turns practising the goalie position. To ensure a positive experience, 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.

Any concerns or questions can be sent to the U7 and U9 coordinator, at u9@metroeastinferno.ca