



SOUTH SHORE MINOR HOCKEY ASSOCIATION COACH SELECTION POLICY

Updated August 2026

1 PURPOSE

The purpose of the South Shore Minor Hockey Association (SSMHA) Coach Selection Policy is to establish a fair, unbiased, and transparent process for selecting head coaches across all divisions (U7 to U18).

This policy outlines:

- Coach Selection Committee formation and responsibilities
- Coach expectations and responsibilities
- The application process
- Evaluation, interview, and scoring procedures
- Final selection and approval methods

Our goal is to ensure coaching appointments are objective, consistent, and focused on player development, positive culture, and the overall success of the association.

2 SCOPE

This policy applies to all teams and age divisions (U7–U18) registered with the SSMHA.

It governs all stages of the head coach selection process, including:

- Coach applications and expressions of interest
- Credential scoring and candidate evaluations
- Applicant interviews
- Ranking and head coach selection
- Decision notifications
- End-of-season performance evaluations

3 GOVERNANCE

The implementation and oversight of this policy is the responsibility of the SSMHA Coach Selection Committee.

3.1 COMMITTEE COMPOSITION

The committee shall consist of a minimum of five (5) members. However, the committee size will accommodate the number of individuals deemed required to meet the standards of the committee. The committee aims for a diverse, experienced membership drawn from the following categories:

- Members with team coaching experience (head or assistant coach)
- Members with team administrative experience (e.g., Team Managers, Division Coordinators)
- External sports coaches or educators (hockey or non-hockey)
- External high-level hockey coaches (e.g., High School, Major U18, Junior)
- Members-at-large with extensive experience as a hockey parent (across multiple levels or divisions)

3.2 COMMITTEE FORMATION

The SSMHA Board of Directors appoints the Coach Selection Committee annually through the following steps:

1. **Member Callout:** Issue a call for candidates to the general membership with a clear application deadline.
2. **Candidate List:** Compile all submitted applications.
3. **Board Review:** The Board reviews the candidate list against selection criteria.
4. **Chair Appointment:** Appoint the Committee Chair by majority vote.
5. **Member Appointments:** Select and appoint the remaining committee members by majority vote.
6. **Notification:** Notify all appointed members for the upcoming season.

3.21 COMMITTEE CHAIR

The Board appoints the Chair annually. Preference is given to experienced candidates who do not have a child or relative actively registered in SSMHA, though this is not strictly required.

The Chair's responsibilities include:

- Overseeing the entire coach selection process in accordance with this policy.
- Collaborating with the Tryout Committee Chair in cross-referencing the coach rankings and player rankings master lists to facilitate the matching of a player in the “Top 12” to an eligible head coach for each registered team.
- Extending head coaching offers to selected candidates.

3.22 **COMMITTEE MEMBER SELECTION**

The selection of the remaining committee must occur without bias or favouritism. Selections will involve a review of the interested candidates by the board of directors. During the review, the board will take into consideration the following traits:

- Coaching or team administrative experience (e.g., Manager, Coordinator)
- Leadership background and achievements (internal or external to SSMHA)
- Demonstrated ability to follow and enforce standardized processes
- Existing conflicts of interest across specific divisions

Each committee member is subsequently appointed by ways of majority vote. This process will continue to establish a committee of adequate size and diversity necessary to carry out the processes outlined in this policy.

3.3 CONFLICT OF INTEREST

If a conflict of interest arises for any member of the active Coach’s Selection Committee, the individual must declare the conflict immediately.

3.31 **DEFINITION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

A conflict of interest exists when a committee member:

1. Has a child or relative registered in the age division under review
2. Has applied for a head coaching position in that age division.

3.32 **RECUSAL REQUIREMENTS**

Any committee member with a conflict of interest must recuse themselves entirely from the selection process for that specific age category. This includes:

- Candidate credential scoring
- Conducting candidate interviews
- Candidate ranking
- Final selection decisions

3.33 **COACHING CREDENTIAL SCORING EXCEPTION**

- **Parent Conflicts** (Reason 1): Committee members with a child or family member in the division must still complete candidate credential

scoring. Their historical and contextual insights add value to the objective evaluation phase.

- **Applicant Conflicts** (Reason 2): Committee members who have applied to coach in the division are fully recused and must not participate in credential scoring.

3.34 **COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITY**

The Chair will assign non-conflicted committee members to handle interviews, rankings, and final selection decisions for each division to ensure complete neutrality.

4 COACHING DUTIES AND EXPECTATIONS

4.1 HEAD COACH

The Head Coach leads and manages the team, with core responsibilities including:

- **Leadership & Operations:** Serving as the team's primary spokesperson, establishing clear team rules, coordinating and delegating responsibilities amongst staff, and ensuring compliance with all SSMHA and Hockey Nova Scotia (HNS) regulations.
- **Staff Selection:** Appointing team staff, including Assistant Coaches, Team Managers, Safety Representatives, and Fundraising Coordinators.
- **Player and Goalie Development & Execution:** Designing practice plans and game strategies that prioritize skill development, while planning and attending team practices, games, tournaments, and off-ice events.
- **Year-End Reporting:** Completing and submitting a year-end questionnaire to the SSMHA Board summarizing:
 - Overall player and goalie growth and development recommendations
 - Key successes, challenges, and lessons learned
 - Feedback for SSMHA on organizational support and areas for improvement

4.2 ASSISTANT COACH

Assistant Coaches support the Head Coach in creating a positive, effective team environment. Responsibilities include:

- Assisting with practice planning, execution, and game-day bench management
- Contributing to player and goalie evaluation and strategic planning
- Supervising and supporting player development
- Enforcing team, SSMHA, HNS, and Hockey Canada standards
- Serving as interim Head Coach when the Head Coach is unavailable

4.3 COACHING LIMITATIONS

- **Head Coach Cap:** An individual may serve as Head Coach for only **one (1) team** per season.
- **Dual Roles:** An individual may serve as Head Coach for one team while acting as an Assistant Coach for another.
- **Assistant Coach Limit:** There is no limit on the number of teams an individual may serve on as an Assistant Coach.

5 COACHING QUALIFICATIONS

SSMHA encourages all members to participate in coaching. The association recognizes that coaching is a **volunteer role** and appreciates the commitment of individuals who support the development of youth hockey players.

While participation is encouraged, head coaching candidates must meet **core requirements** and may also be evaluated based on **suggested personal qualifications**.

5.1 CORE REQUIREMENTS FROM HOCKEY NOVA SCOTIA

These requirements are based on Hockey Nova Scotia and Hockey Canada coaching standards.

AGE GROUP CERTIFICATION OVERVIEW

AGE GROUP	TYPICAL CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS
U7	Coach 1, The Shift Forward, CRC/VSC
U9	Coach 1, The Shift Forward, CRC/VSC
U11	Coach 2, Checking Skills (if applicable), CRC/VSC
U13-18 Recreational	Coach 2, The Shift Forward, CRC/VSC
U13-18 Competitive	Development 1, Checking Skills (if applicable), First Aid coverage, CRC/VSC

5.11 HOCKEY CANADA COACHING CERTIFICATIONS

Depending on the age group and level, coaches **must** complete the following certifications:

- Coach 1 – Intro to Coach (typically U7 & U9)
- Coach 2 – Coach Level (U11 and above)
- Development 1 (competitive teams)

- Checking Skills Clinic where body checking is introduced

These certifications are delivered through the Hockey Canada Learning Lab. Certifications are subject to change based on Hockey Canada's requirements. Visit www.hockeycanada.ca for up-to-date requirements.

5.12 **THE SHIFT FORWARD (FORMERLY RESPECT IN SPORT)**

Beginning with the 2025–2026 season, all new coaches and rostered staff **must** complete The Shift Forward program.

This program focuses on:

- Safe sport principles
- Creating positive team environments
- Abuse prevention and reporting procedures

5.13 **FIRST AID/CPR/AED CERTIFICATIONS**

At least one bench staff member per team must be certified in:

- Emergency First Aid
- CPR Level C
- AED training

This requirement supports improved player safety.

5.14 **CRIMINAL RECORD AND VULNERABLE SECTOR CHECKS**

All coaches and rostered volunteers must complete:

- Criminal Record Check (CRC)
- Vulnerable Sector Check (VSC)

Renewal is required every two (2) years.

5.2 PERSONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Candidates are also evaluated on their personal suitability, including:

- **Hockey Background:** Playing, coaching, or evaluation experience
- **Development Focus:** Demonstrated commitment to player and goalie growth and skill development
- **Leadership and Collaboration:** Strong communication skills and the ability to work effectively with staff, parents, players and goalies
- **Vision and Mentorship:** A clear season plan, passion for mentoring youth, and strong player/goalie rapport
- **Reliability:** Availability to meet the time commitments required for the position

6 COACH SELECTION PROCESS

The coach selection process follows the steps below:

1. Appointment of the Coach Selection Committee
2. Circulation of coaching applications
3. Creation of a condensed candidate list
4. Coach credential scoring
5. Conducting Coach interviews
6. Candidate ranking
7. Final Coach selections following player and goalie evaluations
8. Notification of applicants and initial instructions

7 EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

All individuals interested in coaching must complete the **SSMHA Coach Application Form**.

Application Rules:

- **Annual Submission:** Applications do not roll over and must be submitted every season.
- **Timeline:** Applications will be distributed to the membership by July 1 (or when player registration opens). Deadlines are announced alongside registration notices.
- **Division Limit:** Candidates may apply for a Head Coach position in a maximum of two (2) divisions per season (e.g., U9 and U13).
- **Late Applications:** Late applications will not be considered for Head Coach positions, except under special circumstances outlined in Section 14. However, late applicants remain eligible for Assistant Coach roles.

8 CANDIDATE SHORTLISTING

Following the application deadline, the Coach Selection Committee reviews all applications and creates a **Condensed Candidate List** of Head Coach applicants for each age division from U7 to U18.

Applicants who express interest only in Assistant Coach roles are compiled into a master list and provided to selected Head Coaches to assist in building their team staff.

9 COACH CREDENTIAL SCORING

Each Head Coach candidate is evaluated across eight categories and assigned a **Credential Score**. Each category is scored 0–5 points, for a maximum total score of 40 points.

9.1 EVALUATION CATEGORIES

1. **Dedication:** Demonstrated commitment, reliability, and effort toward teams, players, and parents.
2. **Positive Environment:** Ability to build trust, connect positively with players, and create an enjoyable team experience.
3. **Hockey Credentials:** Required certification levels and specialized coaching/development training.
4. **Player Development:** Proven focus on enhancing individual and team skill levels.
5. **Philosophy & Style:** Alignment with player-centred growth and constructive coaching practices.
6. **Communication Skills:** Organization, clarity, and openness when interacting with staff, parents, and players.
7. **Policy Compliance:** Commitment to upholding SSMHA and HNS rules and standards.
8. **Coaching Experience:** Prior experience within SSMHA or external programs (e.g., spring hockey, school teams, private development).

9.2 SCORING CALCULATION

Each non-recused Coach Selection Committee member (minimum 5) completes an independently scored SSMHA Credential Scoring Sheet per candidate.

The individual totals are summed and averaged to produce the candidate's final **Coach Credential Score**.

$\text{SUM OF ALL SCORES} \div \text{NUMBER OF SCORING MEMBERS} \\ = \text{COACH CREDENTIAL SCORE}$

10 COACHING CANDIDATE INTERVIEWS

Only candidates on the **Condensed Candidate List** will be interviewed.

10.1 INTERVIEW PROCEDURES

Format: Interviews may be conducted in person or by phone.

Panel Composition: Each interview is conducted by a panel of three (3) non-conflicted selection committee members assigned to that division.

Standardized Evaluation: Interviewers independently score candidates using standardized forms (labelled A–E). Candidates receive a copy of the evaluation form at least **3 days in advance** to prepare.

Scoring Calculation: The three individual panel scores are summed and averaged to determine the candidate's **Interview Score** (out of 60 points).

$$\text{SUM OF ALL SCORES} \div 3 = \text{INTERVIEW SCORE}$$

10.2 DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS

All interview records are retained and must include:

- Candidate's name and division(s) of interest (U7–U18)
- Interview date and panel members' names
- Itemized question scores and Final Score (out of 60)

10.3 INTERVIEW STRUCTURE

Interviews consist of 12 questions drawn from an annually updated question pool (Section 11) to ensure fairness and prevent memorization.

Each question is scored from 0–5 points, yielding a maximum potential score of 60 points per interviewer.

Core Areas Evaluated:

- Coaching philosophy and objectives
- Teaching and instructional methods

- Player communication
- Parent communication and transparency
- Player development strategies and team management
- Defining a successful season

11 INTERVIEW QUESTION POOL

11.1 COACHING PHILOSOPHY AND OBJECTIVES

- Please describe your overall coaching philosophy and objectives for coaching with the association this season.
- How important is winning in youth hockey?
- What do you believe is the most important thing players should learn from hockey?
- What are your top five coaching objectives in order of importance?
- What commitment do you expect from players in order to succeed as a team?
- For your previous team:
 - What objectives did you set?
 - How did you determine them?
 - Were they achieved?
 - Would you change anything?
- How do you establish and maintain team standards and expectations?
- What is your philosophy regarding line combinations?
- What is your attitude toward off-ice activities such as:
 - Dryland training
 - School sports
 - Social activities

11.2 TEACHING AND INSTRUCTION

- What preparation do you complete to ensure practices translate to game performance?
- What does a typical practice plan look like for you?
- How do you keep practices organized and productive?
- How do you structure time for:
 - Warm-ups
 - Skill development
 - Team systems
 - Cool-down activities
 - Competitive or fun drills
- Describe a time you taught a player a new skill.
- What percentage of practice time is spent on fundamentals versus systems?
- How do you define player development?
- How do athletes learn new skills?

- Describe your approach to offensive and defensive play.
- Why is season planning important?
- How do you manage bench time during games?

11.3 WORKING WITH PLAYERS

- How do you communicate team rules and expectations?
- How important is the coach-player relationship?
- How do you build trust with players?
- How do you get the best effort from players?
- How do you provide constructive feedback?
- How do you recognize effort and commitment?
- How do you handle teams with varying skill levels?
- How do you motivate struggling players?
- How do you ensure every player feels included?
- How do you build confidence in young athletes?
- What technical skills should improve by season's end?
- How do you define success for players who are not top scorers?

11.4 TEAM CULTURE

- What does a positive team culture look like?
- How would parents describe a successful season under your leadership?
- What behaviours demonstrate that players have bought into your philosophy?
- How do you measure team chemistry?

11.5 DEFINING A SUCCESSFUL SEASON

- How do you measure success in a season?
- What three things do you require as a head coach to achieve success?
- What is your vision for the team?
- What culture should exist by the end of the season?
- What life skills should players gain?
- How would you evaluate your own coaching performance?
- If the season did not meet expectations, what would you change?

11.6 SITUATIONAL QUESTIONS

- Imagine a close game where one line is weaker than the others. What do you do?
- Tell us about the most challenging coaching situation you have faced.
- Why do you want to coach this team?
- What makes a great youth hockey coach?
- What do you offer these players as their head coach?

12 CANDIDATE RANKINGS

Following the completion of both the **Coach Credential Scoring** process and the **Coach Interview** process, all candidates who expressed interest in a head coaching position will be ranked.

Each age division (U7–U18) will have its own ranking list of coaching candidates, ordered from highest to lowest based on their final score.

12.1 RANKING METHOD

A candidate's **Final Score** is determined using a weighted scoring system:

COMPONENT	WEIGHT
Coach Credential Score	40%
Interview Score	60%

Candidates are ranked within their respective division(s) based on their **Final Score**.

12.2 CANDIDATES APPLYING FOR MULTIPLE AGE LEVELS

If a candidate expresses interest in serving as Head Coach at multiple divisions, the same **Final Score** will be used to determine the candidate's relative ranking within each of those age divisions.

A candidate's ranking may differ between age divisions depending on how their **Final Score** compares with other applicants within each specific division.

EXAMPLE

A candidate declares that he would like to be considered for Head Coach of U11 and U13. If the candidate receives a cumulative **Final Score** of 72, it will be applied for both **U11** and **U13** divisions.

CANDIDATE	FINAL SCORE	U11 DIVISION RANKING	U13 DIVISION RANKING
Candidate 1	90	1	--
Candidate 2	81	2	--
Candidate 3	72	3	1
Candidate 4	68	4	2

Therefore, a candidate could be ranked third in one division but first in a different division despite having the same score.

12.3 PREPARATION AND RECORD KEEPING OF RANKINGS

The Coach Selection Committee Chair is responsible for:

- Collecting all scoring information (Coach Credential Scores, Interview Scores and Final Scores)
- Preparing the coaching candidates master ranking lists for each age division
- Ensuring the accuracy of candidate scores and rankings

The finalized ranking list will be reviewed and provided by the Chair to the following:

- Two (2) members of the Coach Selection Committee
- The Chair of the Tryout Committee

Each of these members will retain a copy of the finalized ranking lists for recordkeeping purposes annually.

The ranking process must be fully completed and finalized prior to the start of the SSMHA player evaluation process.

This ranking of the coaching candidates is to be repeated for each minor hockey season. No scores (Coaching Credential Score or Interview Score) are eligible to roll over from one season to another.

12.4 RELEASE OF SCORES, RANKINGS, AND MASTER LISTS

INDIVIDUAL COACHING CANDIDATE SCORES

Request Timeline: A coaching candidate may request a copy of their scores **48 hours after** the official public release of final division team rosters. Requests made prior to the 48-hour window will not be processed.

- **Submission Process:** A coaching candidate must submit an official **SSMHA Score Release Form** (available on the SSMHA website) to the chair of the Coach Selection Committee.
- **Provided Information:** Upon approval, a coaching candidate will receive his or her own scores for both the Coaching Credential and Interview sections.
- **Privacy:** Coaching candidates are strictly limited to receiving scores for their own application. Scores for other coaching candidates will not be disclosed under any circumstances.

SSMHA views individual scores as constructive feedback. Scores highlight specific technical strengths and identify areas for ongoing coaching development.

CANDIDATE RANKINGS

Coaching candidates' final rankings will not be released to coaches, players, parents, or families for any reason, across any division or position.

Relative rankings do not provide actionable feedback regarding a candidate's skill set or development needs and are strictly reserved for internal team formation.

MASTER RANKING LISTS

The master ranking list will not be released to any individual outside the Coach Selection Committee Chair, two (2) designated members of the Coach Selection Committee, and Tryout Committee Chair.

In the case of any dispute, the master ranking list may be reviewed by the Dispute Resolution Committee.

Relative rankings do not provide actionable feedback and are reproduced annually. Release of such lists is a breach of privacy and confidentiality of our volunteers and thus are strictly reserved for internal purposes only.

13 FINAL COACH SELECTION

13.1 TIMING OF SELECTION

No head coaching offers will be made, nor will any head coach be appointed, until the following evaluation milestones are completed:

- **AA Teams (U11–U18):** Completion of Game 2 of the SSMHA tryout game phase.
- **A, B, and C Teams (U11–U18):** Completion of Games 3 and 4 (where applicable) of the SSMHA tryout game phase.

Head coaching offers will only be determined and extended after these milestones are met. Head coaches must be appointed prior to the finalization of team rosters to ensure they can exercise their coach's selection options in accordance with the *SSMHA Tryout and Evaluation Policy*.

13.2 THE MASTER RANKING LIST

The master ranking list serves as the official tool for determining primary coaching offers and the order of any subsequent offers.

In all cases, the highest-ranked eligible candidate for a given division will receive the primary offer. Eligible candidates include:

1. **Non-parent candidates**
2. **Parent candidates** whose child has independently earned a roster spot (defined as placing in the top 12 players as per the *SSMHA Tryout and Evaluation Policy*).

A parent candidate whose child does not meet the Top 12 requirement may only be considered under "Special Circumstances" (see Section 14).

13.2 NOTIFICATION AND RESPONSE PROCESS

NOTIFICATION OFFER

The Chair of the Coach Selection Committee will issue all head coaching offers in writing via email, copying the Chair of the Tryout Committee.

CANDIDATE RESPONSE

Upon receiving an offer, the primary candidate must choose one of the following:

- **Accept the position** and finalize the team roster in accordance with the *SSMHA Tryout and Evaluation Policy*.
- **Decline the position.**

The candidate must submit their decision in writing to both Committee Chairs within **24 hours** of receiving the offer to allow for timely roster finalization.

SUBSEQUENT OFFERS

If the primary candidate declines, the offer will pass to the next highest-ranked candidate on the master ranking list whose child has earned a roster spot for that specific level and division.

This sequence will continue sequentially down the ranking list until a candidate accepts the position.

13.3 APPLICATION ACROSS DIVISIONS AND UNCONTESTED CANDIDATES

This selection procedure applies to all SSMHA age categories (U7–U18).

SINGLE CANDIDATE PROCESS (ACCLAMATIONS)

In the event that only one candidate submits an Expression of Interest for a given division, that candidate will be designated as the primary candidate by default.

However, single candidates must still undergo the complete evaluation process. This ensures:

- Consistent evaluation standards across the entire association.
- A safeguard allowing the association to withhold an appointment if significant concerns regarding candidate suitability or player safety arise.

Withholding an appointment under these circumstances requires a majority vote by the Coach Selection Committee and subsequent final approval from the Board of Directors.

14 SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

The Coach's Selection Committee may appoint a head coach directly under certain conditions where the standard selection process cannot identify a suitable candidate.

Special circumstances include the following scenarios:

- No person submitted an Expression of Interest to act as a head coach for a particular division.
- All candidates who expressed interest in a head coaching position for a given division have been exhausted and thus none remain available.
- A team would otherwise be left without a head coach based on the principles and requirements described in this policy.

14.1 APPOINTMENT PROCESS

If a head coaching vacancy remains after exhausting the candidates on the master ranking list, the Coach Selection Committee may fill the role using the sequential order of priority below.

The committee must consider and exhaust each option in exact numerical order:

1. **Assistant Coach Applicants:** Contact and appoint an individual who submitted an Expression of Interest for an Assistant Coach role at that division/level.
2. **SSMHA Members:** Contact and appoint a candidate in good standing with a positive SSMHA coaching history who did not submit a formal Expression of Interest.
3. **External / Alternative Candidates:** Contact and appoint any other individual deemed qualified by the committee to fulfill the head coaching responsibilities.

APPROVAL VOTE

Once a suitable candidate is identified through this process, the Coach Selection Committee must conduct a formal vote (by a show of hands) to approve or deny the candidate's appointment.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE

The Coach Selection Committee will utilize these alternative procedures solely as a last resort to ensure every registered SSMHA team is assigned a capable and committed head coach.

15 COACH EVALUATIONS

At the conclusion of each minor hockey season, coach evaluations may be completed by:

- Players
- Parents and guardians
- Team staff (e.g., Assistant Coaches, Team Managers)

PURPOSE

The primary objectives of these evaluations are to:

- Provide constructive feedback.
- Support ongoing coach development.
- Identify strengths and areas for improvement across team leadership.

PROCESS AND DISTRIBUTION

Evaluations will be conducted using the standardized **SSMHA Coach Evaluation Form**. At the end of the season, the Division Coordinator will distribute these forms to each team's parent group and team staff.

Participation is entirely voluntary; completing and submitting an evaluation form remains optional for all parties.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND RECORD RETENTION

All completed evaluation forms must be submitted directly to the SSMHA Vice President and the VP of Risk Management on behalf of the Board of Directors.

These records will be confidentially retained on file and may be accessed by active Coach Selection Committees in subsequent seasons to inform future coaching selections.

