



Illinois Hockey Officials Association ("IHOA") Newsletter
September 2025 | 2025-26 Season | Volume 11

Presidents Keynotes

Welcome to the 2025–26 Hockey Season!

We're excited to kick off another year of hockey and want to extend a warm welcome back to our returning officials, as well as to those joining us for the first time. Games are being loaded into ZebraWeb by the hour, so please step in where you can—this is one of the busiest times of the year.

A few important reminders:

- Protective Equipment – Neck guards, mouthpieces, and helmet ear flaps must be strictly enforced. Please follow the procedures outlined in the USA Hockey rulebook.
- Bench Personnel – Each team is allowed a maximum of four staff members (including coaches, trainers, photographers). Any additional staff must relocate off the bench.
- Every Game Matters – September games carry just as much weight as those in January. Work hard, stay focused, and approach every assignment with professionalism and respect.
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Finally, the IHOA registration will be opening soon! Once it's live, our registrar will send details on how to pay your IHOA dues.

Let's make this a great season—see you at the rink!

Brad Baumruck
President of IHOA

IHOA/MCHO Mentoring Program

Start Your Officiating Career with Confidence: Join the IHOA Mentor Program

Taking the ice for your first games as an official can feel exciting — and a little overwhelming. The IHOA Mentor Program is designed to help you start strong by pairing you with an experienced official who will guide you through the process, answer questions, and give you real-time feedback.

Why take part?

- Build confidence quickly — Having a mentor by your side means you can focus on calls, positioning, and game flow without second-guessing yourself.
- Learn on the job — Classroom instruction gives you the rules, but mentoring shows

you how to apply them during live play.

- Get personalized feedback — After each game, you'll receive clear notes on what you're doing well and where you can improve.
- Set yourself up for success — Those first games shape your confidence and habits — a mentor ensures you're off to the best possible start.

How it works:

Once you've completed your requirements and are assigned games, simply email the Mentor Coordinator at ihoamentor@outlook.com with your first few game assignments. You'll be matched with a mentor who will skate alongside you, offering support throughout the game and follow-up feedback afterward.

The program is especially helpful for officials working their first few games, but even confident beginners can benefit from the insights and encouragement a mentor provides.

Starting out as an official doesn't have to mean going it alone. With the Mentor Program, you'll have a partner on the ice to help you learn, grow, and enjoy your officiating career from the very first drop of the puck.



Registration to Open on 10/2/25

Registration opens October 2, 2025!

You will receive an email once the site is live on 10/2/25. Please register for the season as soon as possible. Dues must be paid by December 1, 2025. Failure to pay by the deadline may affect your game assignments.

IHOA is proud to welcome non-USA Hockey officials this year. If you are officiating only CUHL or Men's League games, you are now eligible to be a part of IHOA. We would like to thank our partners at MCHO for helping unite all of Illinois hockey under one banner.

2025–26 Dues Structure:

- USA Hockey Level 1: \$50
- USA Hockey Level 2: \$25
- USA Hockey Level 3: \$25
- USA Hockey Level 4: \$25
- Non-USA Hockey Officials (CUHL and Men's League): \$50

IHOA will only be accepting credit card payments this year. No other forms of payment will be accepted.

If you are USA Hockey registered, please have your USA Hockey Official Number and level available when completing registration.

Thank you for your continued patience during this transition. While it may not appear to be a lot of work from the outside, IHOA and MCHO are working hard behind the scenes to strengthen our officiating community. Transitions from legacy systems can often take a year or more, but we have been tasked with completing this in just a matter of weeks.

Thanks,

Matt McManus
IHOA Registrar

CCM World Invite 2025!

The weekend of November 7-9 will be packed with events, including the CCM World Invite, featuring 9U to 18U teams from across the country, along with teams from Canada. Additionally, we'll have various local high school, college, and house league games. In total, there will be over 1,400 games.

Please mark your calendars!



2-1 Officiating System Refresher

The 2-1 officiating system will be used this season in the North Central and Illinois West High School Hockey Leagues, as well as in most ACHA Division 2 and 3 games. This will

serve as the primary system for all games in these leagues. Please take some time to review how the system works so you are prepared when officiating.

You can find more information on the IHOA Resources page at the link below:

[2-1 Officiating System](#)



Below are the differences in offsides and icing signals when working these games. Please be sure to explain these signals to the coaches before the game to avoid any confusion with delayed penalties.



Offside

Point at blue line, to avoid confusion on penalty calls



Icing

Arm bent, to avoid confusion on penalty calls

NCAA/ACHA Rule 2025-26 Rule Changes

Below are the 2025-26 rule changes made by the NCAA rules committee. These same rules are applicable to any ACHA hockey game played.

Key Rule Changes

Supplemental Discipline – Game Misconducts (Rule 29)

- Conferences may request NCAA review of game misconducts (in addition to disqualifications).
- Rationale: Ensures fairness; misconducts carry progressive penalties.

Facemask Penalty (Rule 47)

- Minor: Hand push on opponent's facemask.
- Minor: Moving open hand across facemask (was major).
- Major + Misconduct/Disqualification: Grasping/pulling or twisting facemask.
- Rationale: Keeps major penalties for significant fouls; avoids forcing majors on minor infractions via replay challenges.

High-Sticking the Puck (Rule 64)

- Scoring a goal: Stick cannot contact puck above crossbar (4 ft).
- All other plays: Stick cannot contact puck above player's shoulder (normal standing height).
- Rationale: Clarifies confusion from last year's change.



Local Illinois League Playing Rules

Did you know that the rules for Central States, Chicago Catholic HS, Chicago United (CUHL), Illinois West HS, North Central HS, NIHL, Northwest, and the Scholastic and Academic leagues are posted on our website? Many have been updated for the 2025-26 season and can be found at [IHOA Illinois League Rules Rules](#). **Please check the date as we continue to update the rules based on league submissions.**

Please note that we strive to include only the variations from USA Hockey rules, such as period length, ice cut procedures, penalty minutes, and overtime.



Performance, Education and Development Spotlight: Early Season Adjustments





Please review the video to see an example of teams failing to adjust to the penalty standard early in the season.

Get to Know Us! - Communications Committee Member



Following the IHOA by-law change voted on at the annual meeting on May 13, 2024, IHOA has established a Communications Committee, led by Scott Gaffney and Matt McManus with valuable contributions from Steven Gapski and Kevin Haller. This month, we'd like to introduce you to Kevin Haller. Next month, we will feature an IHOA board member!

Kevin Haller

Kevin Haller is a Level 4 USA Hockey official with nearly a decade of experience. He began officiating at 14 in Elmhurst, Illinois, and has since advanced through IHOA's Advanced Development Program, working his way from youth games to top-tier high school and junior hockey. His resume includes the Illinois High School Hockey State Championship at the United Center, the U14 National Championship, USA Hockey development camps, and games in the NAHL, NA3HL, USPHL, USHL, and ACHA.

Based in Forest Park, Illinois, Haller balances his officiating with pursuing pilot certifications, having already earned his private pilot license. He also gives back to the game by mentoring

younger officials and coaching with the Hornets sled hockey program, which serves athletes with physical disabilities. Recognized for his professionalism, communication, and commitment to fair play, Haller continues to be a respected presence on and off the ice.



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