



## LEADERS IN COMMUNITY SPORT

On September 14, the Ontario government announced an exemption to their Vaccine Passport for children under 12 and children aged 12 to 18, who enter an indoor facility to participate in youth recreational sport and those with a valid medical exemption. Considering this announcement, the Ontario Minor Hockey Association Board met last weekend to review our recently announced [COVID-19 vaccination policy for all eligible participants](#) aged 12 and up involved in minor hockey with the OMHA.

The Ontario Ministry of Health considers its regulations to be a baseline and allows organizations and businesses to supplement with further measures to ensure the health and safety of their participants. **After carefully considering the evolving public health response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Board of the Ontario Minor Hockey Association has decided its vaccination policy will continue to apply for all eligible participants 12 and up.**

“We know that the environment around return to play is a real concern for a large proportion of hockey families,” says OMHA President Bob Hill. “We believe in this unprecedented time we are living during this global pandemic, our vaccination policy puts the health and safety of your children and our participants first and foremost.”

The OMHA Board considered the latest advice from scientific experts who have said the best way to continue to protect young players who are not yet eligible to be vaccinated and the older people around the game who might be more vulnerable is to surround them with a community of people who are vaccinated.

“Our game is played in an indoor environment where there can be close contact, and we must do everything possible to reduce the risk of any transmission around the rink. It is the duty for our players, our officials and our communities,” Hill says.

The OMHA will comply with the Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC) and provide an accommodation to any affected person who is unable to be vaccinated for substantial medical reasons or other grounds protected under the OHRC.

Spectators aged 12 and over, who aren’t registered with the OMHA, are not subject to the OMHA’s vaccination policy. But under the Province of Ontario’s new regulations around indoor facilities, they should be prepared to show proof of vaccination to enter a facility.

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Last year, we faced many starts and stops to the season as regions dealt with different waves of COVID-19. That is something we all hope to avoid this season.

"We realize this continues to be a difficult and uncertain time for everyone. However, our priority is getting your kids back to hockey this fall in as safe a manner as possible," Hill says. "By taking an approach to control all that we can with mandatory vaccinations for all participants, along with continuing social distancing guidelines, we feel this is the best way forward to ensure a successful and continued return to play."

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