

IT IS NOT OK!!!

An “Official” Intervention to Address Rampant Abuse of Officials in Ice Hockey (*Draft*)

This “Official” intervention will be delivered by experienced on-ice officials who aren’t interested in complaining or assigning blame, but genuinely want to find solutions that everyone can accept and implement. The program will develop and deliver a set of tools designed to facilitate alignment between on-ice officials and the players, coaches, families and fans for whom they officiate.

Many, if not most, on-ice officials have direct, first-hand experience of being hockey players, hockey coaches, and hockey fans. They have an appreciation and familiarity with each of these roles that was earned from having worn those shoes ... or skates, as the case may be.

However, very few hockey players, hockey coaches, hockey parents, or hockey fans have ever experienced officiating an actual hockey game at any level involving actual hockey coaches and players, in front of actual hockey fans. Anyone who has ever actually experienced officiating a real game, will immediately and forever change the way that they perceive those who are wearing the striped jerseys.

This program will provide the closest experience to actually letting players, coaches, parents, and fans put on the stripes and better understand what on-ice officials go through every time they lace up their skates. Would they want their son/daughter, mother/father, brother/sister, grandfather/grandmother to be an official under these conditions?

Some Proposed Objectives & Tools:

- Provide a first-hand, on-ice official’s perspective and experience of this abuse.
- Present clear examples of how it is negatively impacting players, fans, and the overall health and future of the sport of ice hockey.
- Review the actual role of an on-ice official, the requirements to become an official, the development path of officials, types of individuals that work as officials, and a very high-level summary of hockey organizations (USAH, NIHOA, NCAA, MIAA, etc), their objectives, as well as the rule sets and priorities that each have established.
- Use creative, effective methods (video, “war stories”, social media, news articles, etc...) to clearly demonstrate how foolish, incorrect, abusive, and completely unacceptable many of the behaviors that officials commonly experience truly are.
- Admit that there are instances where officials behave poorly, act unprofessionally, or otherwise don’t meet the expectations that are established by USAH, NIHOA, etc. Those officials need to be held accountable, but even in those circumstances abuse is still NOT OK and IS NOT an acceptable solution. What are some acceptable solutions for addressing legitimate issues/concerns?

- Develop innovative and exciting ways (video, virtual reality, images) to put individuals (players, coaches, parents, fans) into an official's skates to experience first-hand what the role actually entails.
- Discuss options for enabling responsible and concerned players, coaches, parents and fans to help address and safely mitigate inappropriate behaviors.
- Encourage players, coaches, parents and fans to proactively and publicly acknowledge, compliment when deserved, and show gratitude to officials (particularly younger & newer ones) for doing their best to ensure that hockey games are fun/enjoyable, competitive, positive, and SAFE for all participants.