

## **USA HOCKEY BODY CHECKING STANDARD OF PLAY**

Through the standard of rules enforcement, our game will continue to allow the opportunity for improved skill development and a more positive hockey environment for all participants. The mission of USA Hockey is clear; through this new initiative a greater emphasis will be placed on skating, puck possession and the proper use of the body to establish position and legally gain a competitive advantage.

The goal of the enforcement standard is to create an environment that enhances player skill development by reducing intimidating infractions designed to punish the opponent. This standard is designed to improve the proper skill of legal body checking or contact at all levels of play and will not remove the physical component from the game. A hard body check or using body contact/position (non-checking classifications) to gain a competitive advantage over the opponent should not be penalized as long as it is performed within the rules. The focus of the body check should be to separate the opponent from the puck.

The principles of the body checking enforcement standard include the following:

- The purpose of a body check is to separate the opponent from the puck.
- Only the trunk (hips to shoulders) of the body shall be used to deliver a body check.
- The check must be delivered to the trunk (hips to shoulders) and directly from in front or the side of the opponent.
- Players who use their physical skills and/or anticipation and have a positional advantage shall not lose that advantage provided they use their body to check the opponent within the rules.
- Players will be held accountable for acts of an intimidating or dangerous nature.

### **BODY CHECKING (Non-Checking Classifications)**

A player cannot deliver a body check to any player while participating in a non-checking classification.

Examples include:

- makes deliberate physical contact with an opponent with no effort to legally play the puck
- uses overt hip, shoulder or arm contact with the opponent to physically force them off the puck
- physically impedes the progress of the opponent with hips, shoulders or torso without establishing legal body contact and having no intent of playing the puck

### **BOARDING**

A player cannot commit any infraction, including body checking, for the purpose of intimidation or punishment that causes their opponent to go violently or excessively into the boards. Examples include:

- Accelerating through the check to a player who is in a vulnerable position off of the boards that causes them to go violently into the boards
- Driving an opponent excessively into the boards with no focus on or intent to play the puck
- Any other infraction (tripping, cross-checking, charging etc.) that causes the opponent to go violently and excessively into the boards.

### **CHARGING**

A player cannot take more than two fast strides or travel an excessive distance to accelerate through a body check for the purpose of punishing the opponent. Examples include:

- running or jumping into the opponent to deliver a check
- accelerating through a check for the purpose of punishing the opponent
- skating a great distance for the purpose of delivering a check with excessive force

## **CHECKING FROM BEHIND**

A player cannot deliver a body check to an opponent directly from behind or diagonally from behind. The onus is on the player delivering the check to not hit from behind. Examples include:

- body checking or pushing an opponent from behind directly into the boards or goal frame or in open ice

## **HEAD CONTACT**

A player cannot contact an opponent in the head, face or neck, including with the stick or any part of the players body or equipment. The onus is on the player delivering the check, regardless as to size differential, to not make contact in the head/neck area of the opponent. Examples include:

- a body check delivered with any part of the body that makes direct contact with the head or neck area
- the use of the fore arm or hands to deliver a check to the head or neck area of the opponent

## **ROUGHING**

A player cannot use the hands, stick or extension of the arms to body check an opponent or deliver an avoidable body check to a player who is not in possession and control of the puck. Examples include:

- intentionally playing the body of an opponent who does not have possession and control of the puck
- delivering an avoidable check to a player who has already relinquished control of the puck by a pass or shot. This is oftentimes referred to as "finishing" the check
- Any avoidable contact after the whistle shall be penalized strictly, including serum situations around the goal or along the boards. Officials are instructed to assess an additional penalty to those players acting as the aggressor or who instigates any contact after the whistle

## **CONCLUSION**

All USA Hockey members must demonstrate awareness and support for the application, spirit and the respect of the rules in order for continued improvement in the game of hockey. At the same time, it is important to remember that:

- a player is entitled to use proper body position and body contact in all age classifications in order to gain a competitive advantage
- players are allowed to compete for body position using their strength and balance in front of the goal or along the boards
- In classifications where body checking is allowed, the focus of the body check must be to separate the opponent from the puck

Coaches are expected to teach proper skills and hold their players accountable for illegal and dangerous actions, regardless as to whether they are properly penalized, or not.

Parents are expected to support the decisions of the officials and support the coaches in teaching the proper skills in a safe and positive environment.

Officials shall enforce a strict penalty standard according to the guidelines that have been established.

Players are expected to compete within the playing rules.

Administrators are expected to hold players, coaches, officials and parents accountable for their actions in an effort to promote a safe and positive environment for all participants.

All members of USA Hockey share an equal responsibility to ensure the integrity of the game is upheld. The onus to incorporate change is not only on the officials, but also on administrators, coaches, parents and players, as well.