



April 2019

## NEW POLICY ON 17 YEAR OLD PLAYERS

First, we are sorry for the delay in getting this information out, but the situation has been fluid and the analysis of the law by legal teams has been slower than we would have liked. Without that analysis, an informed decision has been difficult.

The adoption by Congress of the *Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and Safe Sport Authorization Act of 2017* has presented a significant amount of debate and interpretation in legal circles and among organizations nationwide. As the interpretations have continued, the tendency has been to make the requirements more stringent, not less. The pendulum will swing toward more strict interpretations for some time, especially under the cloud of the latest findings at several college institutions. We can expect compliance to get more difficult, not less.

USA Hockey has provided us with the following statement:

### *17-Year-Old Issue -*

*All rosters with the ability to roster a minor participant with adult participants will require all adults to take SafeSport training. This is the USA Hockey interpretation from the USOC and enacted federal law. Therefore, if ACHA allows minors to play in the ACHA then all rostered players that are 18 years of age or older, including those who are 17 and will turn 18 during the season, would be required to take SafeSport training. Based on the number of players submitted to USA Hockey for the 18-19 season this could be approximately 12,000 players.*

The wording of this statement means that if 17 year-olds are allowed in our Association, ALL individuals in our Association would be required to take Safe Sport Training. Players would not be able to be placed on rosters without Safe Sport Training. Given the number of players we have to track down every year who even fail to register, you can imagine where we will be with this. Without a dedicated compliance staff, the oversight on this is out of our scope. Therefore, the Board has decided to institute a policy that all individuals in the ACHA must be at least 18 years old in order to make sure we are at full compliance with the Federal Law. This is a policy decision, not a by-law change.

Our records indicate that this will affect between 5 and 12 players a season across 500 teams and 12,000 players.

Most players that arrive at 17, turn 18 shortly thereafter, and would therefore be allowed to register as soon as they turn 18. Teams can save one of the 30 player spots for that player and add them when they turn 18. Players may not participate in team activities until they turn 18.

Every school should understand the implications of not following the Safe Sport rules. Any institution that fails to adhere to federal law, can lose federal funding across the board, not just in a particular program. This includes all federally funded student grants and loans. We are doing our best to make sure our teams are complying with these laws to protect our Association AND our individual teams.

We must comply with Federal law in order to maintain our organization, and for now, this is the path forward that will help us get to 100% compliance.