

# Green Armband Initiative (FAQ)

*\* For the purpose of this document, “minor officials” refers to officials that are under the age of 18 or in other words, minors under the law and not only minor hockey officials necessarily.*

## **What is the green armband initiative?**

The green armband initiative was introduced in [Montreal](#) in January 2020. All officials below the age of 18 years old are required to wear a green armband as a means to identify them as a minor. The wearing of the armband is to highlight the age of the official regardless of the level of hockey that they are working. As part of this initiative, there will also be increased sanctions against team officials and spectators that are penalized for abuse or harassment of minor (below the age of 18) officials. Education will also be provided to players, parents, officials, and team officials about abuse and harassment of officials.

## **Why are we implementing the green armband initiative in the branch?**

First and foremost, this initiative is being implemented across the branch because it is the right thing to do. Abuse and harassment of officials continues to be an issue for officials working in HEO. While the vast majority of coaches, team officials, and parents treat officials with respect, there are still issues that need to be addressed. In recent years, Hockey Canada along with HEO has attempted to raise awareness about this issue. However, it is clear that more work needs to be done in this area. It is anticipated that introducing the green armband to minor officials will highlight for participants that abuse and harassment of officials continues to be a problem in our games, especially for minor officials.

Over 40% of all officials in HEO are under the age of 18. They represent the lifeblood of our minor hockey officiating program. It is important that the hockey community works together to protect the physical and psychological well-being of these minors.

Requiring minor officials to wear a green armband will identify to all participants that the official working the game is under the age of 18. It is important that these individuals who wish to harass and abuse officials know that some of these officials are minors under the law and be reminded that this behaviour is unacceptable. **It needs to be highlighted that the wearing of a green armband is a reflection of the official’s age and NOT of their skill level as an official. ALL officials under the age of 18 will be required to wear the green armband regardless of their skill level or level of hockey that they are working.**

## **When does the green armband initiative officially take effect?**

The initiative will officially begin at the start of the 2021-2022 hockey season with all impacted officials required to wear the green armband no later than October 15, 2021 or whenever they receive their green armband, whichever comes first.

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## *Official Specific Questions*

### **Will officials wear the green armband on both arms?**

No. Officials will only wear one green armband on the left arm above the elbow in the same place as red armbands for referees are normally worn.

### **Do officials have to pay for the armband?**

No. The green armbands will be paid for by the branch and distributed by District and Association Referee-in-Chiefs.

### **Is it only the referee who wears the green armband?**

All officials on the ice who are under the age of 18 will wear the green armband regardless of whether they are working as the referee or linesperson.

### **Do officials still wear the red armband if they are working a game as a referee rather than a linesperson?**

Yes, the official working as a referee will wear the red armbands for games. The green armband will then be placed over the red armband on the left arm only. The red armband will be worn normally on the right arm.

### **Will officials wear a green armband if they are working rep games (i.e., Rep B, A, AA, AAA, U18, Junior)?**

Yes, all officials under the age of 18 will wear a green armband regardless of the level of hockey they are working. This is a branch wide initiative and is not only being implemented at the minor hockey level. **The armband is being worn to identify the official as being a minor and has nothing to do with the level of hockey being worked or their skill level as an official.**

### **Do only new officials have to wear green armbands for the 2021-2022 season?**

No, all officials under the age of 18 must wear a green armband beginning from the 2021-2022 season. This includes brand new officials (under the age of 18) as well as officials who are returning from officiating in a previous season. There is no grandfather clause for officials that have already started officiating before the initiative was introduced. New officials who are over the age of 18 are not required to wear a green armband.

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## **What if an official refuses to wear the green armband?**

For the initiative to be successful and have the desired impact, all officials under the age of 18 need to do their part and wear the green armband. As the green armband is part of the required uniform for officials working in HEO, not wearing it may lead to disciplinary action similar to other dress code violations. If an official has concerns about wearing the green armband, they should contact their Association RIC or District RIC. You may also contact the RIC of Minor Hockey for HEO or the RIC of HEO. We welcome and encourage your feedback both positive and critical of this initiative.

## **When does an official stop wearing the green armband?**

Officials who are required to wear the green armband may stop doing so on the date of their 18th birthday. This means that even if they are in their 18th year, they must still wear the armband until their birthday even if that falls in the middle of a season. For example, if an official starts the season at 17 years old and their birthday is on February 12th, they must continue to wear the armband until February 11th. The goal of this objective is to identify minor officials to game participants. An official is still considered a minor until such time as they reach the age of majority (their 18th birthday).

## ***Supplementary Discipline for Team Officials who Abuse or Harass Green Armband Wearing Officials***

### **Will there be increased supplementary discipline for team officials and spectators who abuse or harass green armband officials?**

Yes, team officials who abuse or harass officials who are wearing a green armband will face increased supplementary discipline compared to team officials who abuse or harass officials who are not wearing a green armband. In some cases, the suspensions will be doubled. More information about the specific penalties to fall under this initiative are below.

### **Will there be increased sanctions against players who abuse or harass officials?**

No. There are already appropriate penalties and supplementary discipline in place for players who abuse or harass officials. In the majority of cases, players will be approximately the same age or a similar age as the officials working the game. The focus with this initiative is to reduce abuse and harassment of officials by adults and/or those in positions of authority. This includes team officials, who are mostly adults or are operating in positions of authority as well as spectators.

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## **What are the assessed penalties being called that will result in increased sanctions against team officials?**

Infractions impacted include:

- GM20, 21- Harassment of Officials (9.2A, B)
- GRM21- Taunts, Discriminatory Comments re: race, gender, sexual orientation, etc. (9.2F)
- GRM23, 24- Travesty of Game (4.7B)
- MP20- Threatens, Attempts to Strike (9.6A)
- MP21- Intentional Contact (9.6B)
- MP22- Deliberate Striking (9.6C)

In the case of Game Misconduct penalties for harassment of officials, supplementary discipline for team officials will double. For the first offense, the team official will be assessed 4 games instead of 2 games for the same penalty where a non green armband official is targeted. For the second offense, the team official will be assessed 8 games instead of 4 plus be subject to a district hearing. The third offense will result in suspension until a HEO hearing can be held.

In the case of Gross Misconduct penalties for making taunts or discriminatory comments related to race, gender, sexual orientation, etc. toward a green armband official, sanctions against team officials will double. For the first offense, the team official will be assessed 14 games instead of 7 games for the same penalty where a non green armband official is targeted. For second offense, the team official will be assessed 16 games instead of 8 plus be subject to a district hearing. The third offense will result in suspension until a HEO hearing can be held.

In the case of Gross Misconduct penalties for making a travesty of the game where a green armband official is targeted, sanctions against team officials will double. For the first offense, the team official will be assessed 6 games instead of 3 games for the same penalty where a non green armband official is targeted. For second offense, the team official will be assessed 8 games instead of 4 plus be subject to a district hearing. The third offense will result in suspension until a HEO hearing can be held.

In the case of a Match penalty for threats to strike or deliberating striking a green armband wearing official, the hearing panel will take into special consideration the fact that a minor official was involved in the incident when determining the sanctions to be imposed against the team official.

## **What conditions must occur for the increased supplementary discipline to be imposed against a team official?**

In order for the increased sanctions to be imposed against a team official, the referee or linesperson being targeted must be a green armband wearing official. If the official being targeted is not a green armband wearing official, then the regular sanctions for the penalty called will be applied. Note that it is the official being targeted resulting in the penalty being

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assessed that determines whether increased sanctions are to be imposed and **NOT** who calls the penalty. For example, if the official being targeted by a team official is an older official but the official who assesses the penalty is wearing a green armband, then the policy around increased sanctions would not apply as the green armband wearing official is not being targeted. If the official being targeted by a team official is a green armband wearing official, then the increased sanctions would apply regardless of which official actually assesses and reports the penalty on TTM. If the team official is targeting both officials throughout the game and is assessed one of the penalties above, then the increased supplementary discipline shall be imposed as the green armband wearing official has been targeted. The spirit of increasing the supplementary discipline is to specifically address harassment and abuse of minor officials.

**Will sanctions be increased for team officials who are assessed bench minor penalties as a result of disputing the calls of officials? For example, will a double minor be called instead of a minor penalty for disputing the ruling of a green armband wearing official.**

No, there will be no change in this policy. A minor penalty shall be assessed as per the current Hockey Canada Rulebook. The increased supplementary discipline will only be considered for Game Misconducts, Gross Misconducts, and Match Penalties.

**Will the supplementary discipline be imposed against a team official if the official is under the age of 18 but is not wearing a green armband?**

No, it is the responsibility of the minor official to wear the green armband for all games. If he/she is not wearing the armband then they are not identifying themselves as a minor. For this reason, the supplementary discipline cannot be imposed as the team official may not be aware that the official is a minor. The objective of the green armband is to identify for all participants that the official working the game is a minor. It should be stressed that no abuse or harassment of officials is acceptable regardless of their age.

**How will the league, association, branch know if the official being targeted was a green armband official?**

The plan is to incorporate questions into the TTM Game Incident Report (GIR) that clarifies if the official being targeted is a green armband wearing official. Once identified in TTM, this will trigger leagues, associations, etc. to impose the supplementary discipline against the offending team official. More information will be released on this process at a later date.

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## *Promotion and Measures of Success*

### **How will HEO promote this initiative?**

Presentations will be offered to representatives from HEO, district chairs, association presidents, as well as team officials, parents, spectators, and officials. In addition to talking about the green armband initiative specifically it will also focus on the problems faced by officials with respect to abuse and harassment behaviour. Posters explaining the initiative will also be placed in public areas in all arenas used by HEO. Finally, we will contact local media before the beginning of next season in hopes that they will do a story on the initiative and the importance of reducing abuse and harassment of officials.

### **How will we measure the success of this initiative?**

Measuring the success of an initiative like this can be challenging. Having said that, there are several things that we will be doing to help determine the success of the initiative. We will compare the number and types of infractions given to team officials for abuse and harassment of officials before the initiative to after the initiative. We anticipate these penalties will decrease for minor officials and eventually for all officials. We will also conduct brief surveys with district chairs, association chairs, parents, coaches, players, and officials to gather their input on the success of the initiative.

We will also be measuring the number of young officials we are losing due to abuse and harassment. This is not a metric that has been tracked in the past at the Branch level. While we know how many officials we are losing each year, we have not been tracking the reason why we have been losing them. This will change moving forward.

## *General Questions*

### **If abuse and harassment is an issue for all officials why is HEO only concentrating on minor officials?**

This initiative is designed to highlight the abuse and harassment that all officials face not just minor officials. It is hoped that by raising concerns about the challenges that minor officials face; players, team officials, and spectators will become more aware of how abuse and harassment of officials at the rink impacts all officials. We have also learned more about the psychological impact that abuse and harassment has on minors and everyone in the hockey community has a role to play in combating that.

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## **Will this put a target on younger officials who work their way into doing high level hockey but still need to wear the green armband?**

Minor officials who are selected to work higher levels of hockey should wear the green armband with pride as it represents a rise through the program more quickly than most. **The green armband is NOT a reflection or comment on an official's skill level but rather is merely an identifier of the official's age.** It is possible that some participants may try to target these officials because they are young. In these cases, referees need to ensure that these issues are addressed on the ice using the appropriate rules. It should be noted that nothing has changed with respect to the promotion of officials within the program. Officials who have the ability to move into higher levels of hockey should continue to be provided with these opportunities. The green armband initiative simply identifies the official as being a minor. Nothing more and nothing less.

## **Will this initiative eliminate all forms of abuse and harassment of officials?**

No program or initiative will eliminate all forms of abuse and harassment of officials. This is another step that we are taking to help reduce this behaviour toward officials in our program. Highlighting the concerns and identifying minor officials on the ice will give team officials and spectators pause about how their own behaviour impacts these youth during and after games. A comprehensive strategy of creating awareness, providing education, and increasing discipline will lead us toward an officiating program that experiences less abuse and harassment of officials.

## **I would like more information on this initiative. Who can I contact?**

For more information or to propose questions or concerns that are not addressed in this document, please contact the Referee in Chief for HEO Minor Hockey, Sean Tobin ([ric.heominor@gmail.com](mailto:ric.heominor@gmail.com)) or the Referee in Chief for HEO, John Reid ([jreid@hockeyeasternontario.ca](mailto:jreid@hockeyeasternontario.ca)).