

HOCKEY TRAINER'S CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

Individuals with Disabilities:

Every young person is unique. There will be players who are tall, quiet, funny, and sensitive, and there will be players who have needs that require extra care and knowledge. A child or youth with a disability can have challenges or delays in their physical, intellectual, emotional, social, language, or behavioural development. Yet regardless of ability, challenges, or differences every young person deserves a chance to get on the ice and play.

In this module we are going to briefly look at some specific disabilities and some challenges these young people confront.

There are 5 disabilities we will cover, they are:

- Autism Spectrum
- ADHD, or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
- Hearing and Visual Impairments
- Learning Disabilities
- Tourette Syndrome

Every player, regardless of ability, has different needs, and what kids need to be successful isn't always obvious by looking at them. So, before assuming anything, speak with the player and their parents to understand their abilities and goals.

It's also important to know there are many resources available for coaches and Hockey Trainers who interact with athletes with a disability. The Coaching Association of Canada has an excellent document called Coaching Athletes with a Disability. This informative document has great information and many useful tips.

There's also a document provided by Special Olympics called the Athlete Centered Coaching Guide. This guide will help you answer the question, what do athletes with disabilities want from me?

Now let's look at what players with disabilities need, ways in which these needs affect how they communicate and interact, and tips you can use to assist these players to find personal success.

Just remember, this information is only a guideline. Every young person is unique and requires leaders who want to get to know and appreciate who they are and what they need.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a lifelong developmental disorder that affects communication and behaviour.

The impact of ASD can be mild to severe and while it may improve or change across a person's life, it's not something young people grow out of.

General Characteristics and Common Traits: Characteristics show up, in varying degrees, in social relationships, communication, pattern and range of interests, and sensory responsiveness. While ASD covers a broad spectrum, there are a few of the general characteristics and traits you may notice. They may:

- Have difficulty with social interaction or relationships.
- Appear remote and indifferent to others.
- Avoid eye contact.
- Appear to be unaware of others' feelings towards them and the impact of their behaviour.

- Appear to have no concept of their role within a group.
- Have little or no perception of danger.
- Appear resistant to change.

Communication Differences: Communication is often different or difficult. You may notice kids with ASD:

- Repeat or echo words or phrases.
- Inappropriately laugh or giggle or respond to sounds.
- Have difficulty expressing themselves verbally, so may use gestures.
- Fail to respond to their name unless you are looking directly at them.
- Fail to follow instructions given to a whole group.
- Have difficulty in understanding non-verbal communication such as gestures, tone of voice, and expressions.

Recognizing Patterns and Interests: Here are a few patterns of behaviour or interests you may notice. Some players with ASD may:

- Have a limited imagination and have trouble with visualizing instructions while others can be over-imaginative and will “know everything.”
- Seem to struggle with the concept of taking turns or sharing.
- Want to engage in unusual or inappropriate play.
- Feel most comfortable and successful when there is routine.
- Have sensory difficulties, like becoming overwhelmed by too much noise or flashing lights.

Tips:

- Use their name at the beginning of an instruction or question.
- Tell the participant what to do rather than what not to do.
- Use face-to-face interaction or visual communication when possible.
- Help your participant to anticipate what will happen next, for example, “I am going to check your leg to see if there is any bleeding.”
- Give warnings of any progressions that are about to happen.
- Control the environment and don’t overstimulate.
- Reduce anxiety by using a confident and positive approach. The participant will feel safer knowing that if they lose control, you won’t.
- Provide a safe place the participant can go to when a situation becomes too much for them to cope with.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, or ADHD, is a disorder that causes an impairment or deficit of the nervous system. ADHD is a medical condition, not a behaviour problem. A person with ADHD has differences in brain development and brain activity that affect their attention, ability to be still, and their self-control.

General Characteristics and Common Traits: Young people with ADHD can often be challenging to lead because of the differences in their brain development. There are three core symptoms of ADHD:

Rash or impulsive behaviour—may act without thinking and appear thoughtless. They interrupt, break rules, intrude on others and have trouble waiting their turn.

Inattention—may appear not to listen or seem able to follow multi-step directions. They have short attention spans and can be easily distracted.

Hyperactivity—may appear to never stop moving, especially in situations where we need them to be quiet and calm. A few common behaviours you may see in young people with ADHD are:

- Outbursts of temper and becoming easily frustrated.
- Being bossy, stubborn, and insisting that their demands be met.
- Constantly changing mood.
- Poor self-esteem, and they can be noticeably depressed or sad.
- Fear of being rejected by their peers.

Communication Differences:

- Participants with ADHD often seem to talk with the volume at 11, or in a high voice then a low voice and seem to take a lot of pauses when they speak.
- They will use a lot of filler words like, “Ummmm” and “Ahhhh” because they’re trying to organize their thoughts.
- They may appear not to be listening, have trouble understanding what’s being said, or lose track of where a conversation is going.
- It may be hard for them to focus, understand or engage in noisy, distracting environments, like an arena.

Recognizing Patterns and Interests: There are 3 different ways ADHD shows up in young people:

- They make careless mistakes and have trouble paying attention especially to details.
- They don’t follow through. They are easily sidetracked and don’t seem to be able to organize their thoughts or activities.
- They avoid tasks that require sustained focus or tasks with too many objectives.
- They can’t keep track of, and often lose their things and are easily distracted and forgetful.

Tips:

- Be firm with instructions, but calm and positive in your approach.
- Match your communication style to your participant’s learning style. Ask parents or caregivers how best to communicate.
- Know when to ‘back off’ if the participant’s level of frustration or anxiety begins to peak.
- Look at the participant when communicating.
- When speaking to a group and giving instructions, use the individual’s name to attract their attention.

Hearing Impairment

Hearing impairment happens when there’s a problem with one or more parts of the ear or ears, the nerves coming from the ears, or the part of the brain that controls hearing. Someone who has hearing loss might be able to hear some sounds or nothing at all. People also may use the words deaf, deafness, or hard of hearing when they’re talking about hearing loss.

General Characteristics and Common Traits: Here are some common characteristics and traits in young people with hearing loss. They may have:

- Difficulty following verbal directions.
- A hard time expressing themselves through speech.
- Challenges with social relationships or how they interact with others.
- Some degree of language delay, so they likely won’t communicate as clearly or effectively as their peers.
- Some behavioural difficulties and acting out because they may easily become frustrated if their needs are not met.
- Difficulty using their hearing aids because they are embarrassed or fear rejection.

Communication Differences: Children who have hearing impairment can have difficulties learning how to communicate because they can't hear all the sounds around them or sometimes even their own voice. So, their ability to develop language will often be delayed, however they often become skilled at other kinds of communication, like gestures, facial expressions, body language, and reading lips.

Recognizing Patterns and Interests: They may:

- Closely watch their peers to imitate behaviour and body language.
- Appear dizzy or disoriented because the nerves in the ears also control balance.
- Become frustrated that they aren't being understood.

Tips:

- Speak clearly and don't exaggerate lip movements. If you are a fast speaker, you might find that slowing down your rate of speech a little could help.
- Try to face the player when speaking and do not cover your mouth, and don't eat or chew gum. Also, be aware that a beard or moustache may make lip-reading difficult.
- Attract the participant's attention and ensure the player is paying attention before you begin to ask questions or deliver instructions or they may not realize you are talking to them. A tap on the shoulder or a wave is acceptable.
- Ask the player to teach you medical signs—there are a number of these that a participant with a hearing impairment teach you to let you know if they're in pain or not feeling well. You could also have pictures you could show them, for example an image of a body to show you where it hurts.

Visual Impairment

Visual impairment is a broad term that covers a range of difficulties with vision. Some children may have problems with their central vision, others with peripheral vision, so they may see things as if they are looking through a tube. Others see things that are close to them but have poor distance vision. Still others have enough vision to read but have difficulty with other tasks.

General Characteristics and Common Traits: While visual impairment covers a broad range of visual abilities, there are some general characteristics and traits you may notice. They may:

- Have difficulties with gross motor skills: skills needed for walking, running, skating, and other activities requiring control of the large muscles.
- Be unsure or lack motivation to explore the environment or try new things.
- Seem unaware of their movements and mannerisms.
- Have difficulties with location and positioning of themselves and others, as well as places.

Communication Differences: Visually impaired players can often have trouble following instructions and they can struggle to hear who's talking or addressing them, especially in noisy environments.

Recognizing Patterns and Interests: They can:

- Be anxious in new or unknown environments.
- Be embarrassed or fear they'll be rejected by their peers or teammates.
- Be reluctant to try new things.

Tips:

- Be aware that some visually impaired people's sight may vary from day to day or at different times of day. So, it's important to check with your player.
- It is very important that trust is developed quickly between you and the participant.
- Use the individual's name to get their attention.

- Allow time for touch instead of continued verbal description.
- Ensure a quiet learning environment so the participant is able to interpret, locate, and identify different sounds.
- As the Hockey Trainer, you should wear a different coloured top or arm band, in a colour the participant can see.
- If guiding a player, hold your arm out for the person to hold, and keep your guiding arm relaxed and still.
- Before touching a visually impaired participant, tell them that you are going to examine them and how you are going to do this.

Learning Disabilities

A learning disability is a neurological disorder, or simply, a difference in the way a person's brain is wired. Young people with learning disabilities are as smart, or smarter, than their peers. But when taught in a conventional way, they may have challenges in how they perceive, reason, remember, or learn.

A learning disability can't be cured or fixed, but with the right support young people with learning disabilities can succeed in every aspect of life.

General Characteristics and Common Traits: There are a wide variety of learning disabilities and an equally diverse number of ways learning disabilities affect young people, but there are some common things you may see:

- Being impulsive, jumping in to do things before they or anyone else is ready.
- Having trouble following verbal directions or understanding strategy.
- Having a very low tolerance for constructive feedback.
- Becoming frustrated very easily.
- Talking negatively about themselves and their abilities.
- Having a hard time remembering positions or rules of the game.

Communication Differences: You may notice some differences. They may:

- Hesitate and use a lot of filler words like, “Ummm” and “Ahhhh” because they’re trying to organize their thoughts.
- Be critical of themselves in situations that don’t seem to warrant it.
- Need things explained more than once, or in more than one way.
- Have trouble communicating their thoughts, ideas, or needs.
- Talk too much, at the wrong time, or say inappropriate things.

Recognizing Patterns and Interests: There’s a wide variety of learning disabilities, but there are some common patterns of behaviour you may recognize. They may:

- Lack confidence and be afraid of failure.
- Believe they aren’t as good or as capable as their peers.
- Have difficulty organizing what’s important or whom to pay attention to.
- Have trouble fitting in with teammates because they don’t immediately understand a joke or know how to pick up on what other people are trying to say, verbally or through body language.

Tips:

- Break learning into small steps when trying to explain what you want them to know or want to instruct them in, like safety procedures. Establish a positive relationship with them.
- Use non-verbal signals linked to questioning or instructing, such as pictures or graphs.
- Try to limit distractions when speaking with them.
- Be clear and organized when giving instructions.

Tourette Syndrome

Tourette syndrome (TS) is a neurological disorder that causes tics. Tics are movements or sounds that a person can't control and that are repeated over and over. Although TS can be a chronic condition with symptoms lasting a lifetime, most people with the condition experience their worst tic symptoms in their early teens. Things often start to improve in the late teens and into adulthood.

General Characteristics and Common Traits: Tics caused by Tourette syndrome are classified as either simple or complex.

Simple motor tics are sudden, brief, repetitive movements. Some of the more common simple tics include:

- Eye blinking and other eye movements
- Facial grimacing
- Shoulder shrugging
- Head or shoulder jerking

Complex tics are distinct, coordinated patterns of movements. Complex motor tics might include facial grimacing combined with a head twist and a shoulder shrug. Other complex motor tics may appear purposeful, including:

- Sniffing or touching objects
- Hopping
- Jumping
- Bending
- Or twisting

Communication Differences: People with TS often have challenges with communication, especially with how they make sounds, called vocalizations.

Vocalizations are classified as either simple or complex:

- Simple vocalizations might include repetitive throat clearing, sniffing, or grunting sounds.
- Complex vocalizations are dramatic and include a combination of movements. These can result in self-harm such as punching oneself in the face, or vocal tics like involuntarily uttering socially inappropriate words or repeating the words or phrases of others.

Recognizing Patterns and Interests: There are some common patterns of behaviour you may recognize in young people with TS. They may:

- Have a quick temper and seem to overreact to problems.
- Have fluctuations in their mood—up one minute, down the next.
- Seem rigid in their thinking.
- Want to have the last word.
- Have trouble with transitions from one activity to another.
- Be sensitive to noises, light, or touch, or they might crave certain sensations.

Tips:

- Be aware that tics, both motor and vocal, are often worse with excitement or anxiety and better during calm, focused activities.
- Certain physical experiences can trigger or worsen tics, these are all unique to each individual.
- Please do not take anything a person with TS say personally. They have no control over their tics.

Every child that picks up a stick and wants to play has distinct and individual needs regardless of their abilities. Some players just need a little more time and attention to bring out their best. It's our job as leaders to help them

do that. So, talk to parents and players directly to understand what supports and encouragement they need to be successful. As a coach and Hockey Trainer, you share in the success of all players on your team, and they also share in yours.

National Organization—Autism Canada:



<https://autismcanada.org/>

National Organization—Centre for ADHD Awareness Canada:



<https://caddac.ca/adhd/>

National Organization—Canadian Hard of Hearing Association:



<https://www.chha.ca/>

National Organization—Canadian National Institute for the Blind:



<https://cnib.ca/>

National Organization—Learning Disabilities Association of Canada:

Learning Disabilities Association of Canada

<https://www.ldac-acta.ca/>

National Organization—Tourette Canada:



<https://tourette.ca/>