

PIHO FAQ's

1. Why haven't I gotten paid yet?

Answer: Section 9 of the Independent Contractor Agreement that all officials e-sign upon registering with PIHO contains the game fees payout schedule. For the 2021-2022 season, for Games taking place between April 1 and June 30, PIHO shall transmit payment to you by depositing a check in the mail prior to July 31 - for Games taking place between July 1 and September 30, PIHO shall transmit payment to you by depositing a check in the mail prior to November 15 - for Games taking place between October 1 and December 31, PIHO shall transmit payment to you by depositing a check in the mail prior to February 15 - for Games taking place between January 1 and April 30, PIHO shall transmit payment to you by depositing a check in the mail prior to June 15.

Throughout PIHO's history, payouts have been issued comfortably in advance of these deadlines, but we cannot guarantee issuance of payouts prior to the established deadlines. All payouts are issued via check and delivered via First Class U.S. Mail to the address you input into your Horizon profile. It is essential to keep this address up-to-date at all times for scheduling purposes, but it becomes even more essential during payout times. If a payout check is lost in the mail due to an act or omission by an official (i.e., wrong address in Horizon), PIHO will cancel the payout check and issue a new one less a \$35 fee (which is the amount charged to PIHO by its bank for stopping payment on a check).

2. Why does PIHO pay out four times per season? And why does it take this long for PIHO to issue payouts?

Answer: Issuing payouts only four times per season is actually not uncommon in hockey officiating, particularly at the collegiate level. The economics of amateur hockey are such that many of the teams/leagues/organizations do not have the necessary funds to pay for their officials until after a substantial portion of the season has passed. This is because teams often allow players to "pay as they play" and make installment tuition payments as the season progresses. Simply stated, PIHO can't pay you until PIHO gets paid by the team/league/organization hosting the games, and the team/league/organization hosting the games can't pay PIHO until the players pay their tuition. In PIHO's history, there have only been two instances in which a team/league/organization defaulted on a payment obligation. Those instances involved relatively small amounts and, notwithstanding those defaults, PIHO still paid the officials who skated the games in question.

3. Why aren't I getting more/higher level games?

Answer: Almost every official wants to get more games, or higher-level games, or "better games" (whatever that might mean to him/her). PIHO's response: Good for you! You should want to advance your career, and we're always happy to have more officials to choose from than fewer. If you're not happy with your game assignments, in terms of quantity or quality, there are several things you can do.

First, in terms of quantity, the more available you are to skate, the more game assignments you will get. Why does Official A get so many assignments? Because he's available every day of the week at all times of the day and he's willing to drive anywhere from Erie to Morgantown and Cleveland to Altoona - That's why. So, if you want to be like Official A, open up your calendar and eliminate any rink blocks in Horizon.

If your calendar is fully open and you're still not getting assignments, chances are it's because our Scheduling Director/Scheduling Coordinators do not know who you are and therefore doesn't know your abilities, skill level and desire. The best way to remedy this problem is to request an evaluation by filling out this form: <https://www.pihoref.com/evaluation-request>. Those forms go directly to the PIHO Development Director, Frank Bastone, who will then put you in the queue to be formally evaluated during a game assignment by an experienced, trained PIHO Supervisor. We do not do surprise evaluations, so you will know about it in advance. A Supervisor will come out to watch you skate, give you some feedback, and report his observations back to the PIHO Directors, including the Scheduling Director. From there, we will have a better idea of who you are and what kind of games you can handle.

You should also always feel free to contact our Scheduling Director, Jason Mirich, at jason@pihoref.com and tell him a little about yourself and your experience, and express a desire for more game assignment opportunities.

If you've done all of the above and you're still not happy, chances are it's because you and we disagree as to the number and level of games you are able to successfully handle. All officials, by the very nature of the occupation, have high opinions of their own abilities. Sometimes, those opinions are not identical to those who make the game assignment decisions. The same is true in other occupations. Sometimes we watch NHL officials on TV and say, "I can't believe they blew that call—I should be out there!" All we can say is - keep working hard, be a good teammate, develop a good reputation and good things will happen.

The important thing to take from this section is that your game schedule isn't going to change by just sitting back and hoping. We encourage you to politely and professionally take control over your own officiating career by contacting the appropriate PIHO personnel.

4. I must decline/turnback a game assignment. Is that OK?

Answer: Generally speaking - no, it's not OK. Declines and turnbacks are the bane of the PIHO Directors' existences and not only do they cause duplicative effort, but they often have a domino effect on other game assignments for other officials that can cause the schedule for a busy tournament weekend to slip into a tailspin.

The Independent Contractor Agreement which all officials e-sign upon registering with PIHO requires that all officials keep their availability up-to-date in Horizon at all times. This includes date/time blocks, rink blocks, team/league blocks, and any pertinent notes you want to input into your Availability Calendar. If all of these aspects of your availability are always kept current, there should never be a reason to decline or turn back a game assignment except in special or emergency circumstances.

Acceptable reasons for turning back or declining a game assignment include an unexpected change in work (i.e., day job) schedule, receiving a game assignment from a junior league, the NCAA, or a pro league, illness that prevents you from officiating the game effectively, and family emergencies (death, illness, etc.).

Unacceptable reasons for turning back or declining a game assignment include, but are not limited to: it's too far of a drive (that's what rink blocks are for); it's not enough money (you're in the wrong business if that's what motivates you); it's only a low-level game (no official is "too good" for any assignment—even ADM); you changed your mind and you want to go to the movies that night instead of skating (yes, it has happened). Don't be that guy (or girl).

We do understand that sometimes it can be difficult to immediately update your Horizon calendar as soon as your personal schedule changes and so we do have some flexibility with regard to declined games that stem from availability calendar errors. We are reasonable people. That being said, it should only happen a few times a year, if that much. It should also not happen because of personal events that have obviously been scheduled for months in advance but which you forgot to block off in your calendar (i.e., brother's wedding, daughter's dance recital, elective cosmetic surgery). Those kinds of things should be on your radar screen months in advance and should be blocked so we don't have to deal with declines.

To summarize: keep your availability current and avoid turnbacks and declines altogether.

5. If I have to decline/turnback a game, should I find myself a replacement official?

Answer: No. Do not attempt to find yourself a replacement and do not offer the game assignment to anyone else. PIHO will get the game covered. If it is less than 24 hours before the game is to commence, turn back the game in Horizon and contact Jason Mirich via phone or text.

6. I got a game assignment but I didn't respond to it within 48 hours of it being published and now it's disappeared from my calendar. What happened?

Answer: Once an assignment is published, officials have 48 hours to respond to the assignment, either by accepting it or declining it. As stated above, there should be almost no circumstances under which a game assignment is declined, so this response should be but a mere formality. However, if you fail to respond to a game assignment within 48 hours of publication, Horizon will automatically respond for you by generating an "auto-decline for failure to respond." These are just totally unacceptable and constitute a blatant violation of your Independent Contractor Agreement. HorizonWebRef automatically sends you an e-mail and a text whenever you get a new assignment. Between the Horizon Mobile App and the Horizon website, you are never more than an arm's reach away from the ability to accept or decline an assignment. 48 hours is more than enough time to review the assignment, confirm that it fits into your personal schedule (which it should if your calendar is up-to-date), and click the "Accept" icon. It's not that hard.

The worst is when we get an auto-decline from an official who claims he/she didn't get notification of the assignment. Our super-user Horizon status allows us to see when an official views their

assignments. More often than not, an official who claims he/she didn't get notified has actually gone into Horizon to view the assignment but for whatever reason chose not to respond. Not cool.

7. Does PIHO report my earnings to the IRS?

Answer: If you earn more than \$600 in a calendar year, PIHO reports your earnings to the IRS on a Form 1099. You will get a copy of your 1099 for a given calendar year in January or February. Note that the Form reflects your calendar year earnings, not hockey season earnings.

8. What are Act 15 clearances and why do I need them?

Answer: In 2015, Pennsylvania enacted Act 15, which mandates that all persons who receive payment to work "in direct contact with children" must first obtain and provide three background clearances: PA Child Abuse, PA State Police, and FBI fingerprints. Working "in direct contact with children" has been interpreted to apply to youth sports officials, so PIHO and the officials it assigns are required to have them.

Below you will find instructions for obtaining the three separate clearances. If you are 13 years old or under, you are exempt from Act 15 requirements. In that instance, rather than obtaining and submitting these clearances, you can provide your date of birth to chadd@pihoref.com, which will entitle you to exemption until your 14th birthday. However, once you turn 14, you will be removed from PIHO's rosters until you provide the necessary documentation.

- **PA Child Welfare Abuse Clearance:** \$8 (credit card) –When asked what the reason for application is, select "An individual 14 years of age or older applying for a paid position as an employee responsible for the welfare of a child or with direct contact with children." Result generally in 14 days or less. You will receive an email notification saying that your result is ready and requesting that you log back in and view the result. Print out the result letter and save as PDF. <https://www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis/public/home>
- **PA State Police Criminal Record Check:** \$22 (credit card) – Select "submit a new record check." Do NOT select the volunteer option. Print out the result letter with the PA state police seal in the background. Immediate result. Save as PDF. <https://epatch.state.pa.us/Home.jsp>
- **FBI Criminal Background Check (Finger Printing):** Pennsylvania has switched vendors for finger print background processing. Go to <https://uenroll.identogo.com>. Enter code 1KG756. Click "Schedule or Manage an Appointment." Input your information, follow the prompts, and make an appointment to go to a fingerprinting location to have your fingerprints collected. Results via mail in approximately 2-3 weeks. Scan results letter as PDF.

Please send all clearances in one email to chadd@PIHOref.com as three separate .pdf documents. Please do not send clearances piecemeal in multiple emails, and do not save as file

extensions other than .pdf (no jpegs, tiff, other photo files). The clearances are valid for five years from the date on which they were obtained.

9. Do I really have to get fingerprinted?

Answer: Yes, unless you are under the age of 18, in which case you may be eligible to avail yourself of an exception to the fingerprinting requirement. If you wish to inquire about this exception, contact Officiating Personnel Director Chadd Colin at chadd@pihoref.com.

For you conspiracy theorists out there who are concerned about “Big Brother” having your prints to frame you for committing the crime of the century, it is our understanding that the fingerprints are collected, run through comparison software for relevant matches, and then discarded. In other words, the fingerprints are not cataloged or saved in a database accessible by law enforcement or other governmental entities.

10. How long do the clearances take to come back after I apply for them?

Answer: The State Police clearance yields an instant result. The Child Abuse clearance may take up to a week to ten days. The FBI fingerprint clearance is the big question mark. Generally speaking we have experienced turnaround in 2-4 weeks. This can be extended during high-volume periods (such as the start of the school year, which, incidentally, coincides with the start of hockey season) and periods of business interruption (such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year’s Day). PIHO has no control over the speed with which your clearances are processed and has no pull or sway over the various processing agencies to make them go faster, so don’t ask.

11. I live in [insert place]; do I really have to drive to [insert name of rink that is far away from place]?

Answer: No. PIHO gives officials the right to block any rink which he/she deems to far or otherwise inconvenient to travel to. Click on the Administrative Forms tab in Horizon, and then click on Arena Blocks. From there, select as many or as few arenas at which you are unwilling to work. Remember, however, that this will make you less available to skate games, which will mean your game assignment count may decrease—not because you are being punished for being unwilling to travel to certain rinks, but simply because you will not show as available for as many assignments, and so your chances of being given assignments will naturally decrease.

12. My child plays for [blank]; can I still skate games at that level?

Answer: If your child plays for a PAHL team, you should not skate any games in your child’s age group and skill level. In other words, if your child plays for Mon Valley U12 AA, don’t skate other U12 AA games. The idea is to keep you away from situations in which you could have a conflict of interest, real or perceived. So, if you could help your child’s team in the standings by calling a ton of penalties on

another team that your child competes against, don't take that game. And for the love of God, don't skate your own child's game.

For the PIHL, the same rules apply, except you should also avoid skating games involving the same school that your child plays for. Example: your child plays for Central Catholic Varsity; don't skate games at the Varsity AAA level and don't skate any Central Catholic games at any other level.

13. I coach for [blank]; can I still skate games at that level?

Answer: If you are a coach, don't skate games at the age group and skill level at which you coach, and don't skate games for other teams in your organization.

14. My dentist's kid who cut my grass once a year ago plays for [blank]; can I still skate games at that level?

Answer: This is where it gets messy and we have to rely on your common sense and good judgment (yikes). There is an infinite number of relationships and degrees of separation which you may have to a team, player, or league which might cause someone to question your impartiality. We request that you err on the side of caution and refrain from skating games in which a personal or business relationship you have with one of the participants would give even the appearance of a conflict of interest or otherwise cause your integrity to come into question. It's honestly just not worth it—there are plenty of games to skate in which you will have no relationship whatsoever with any of the participants, so don't ruin your credibility over something silly.

15. Do I have to send my SafeSport certification and/or Mid-Am screen to PIHO?

Answer: No. PIHO does not monitor, track, or collect these documents. These documents are handled by USA Hockey and/or the Mid American District Affiliate and PIHO relies on those entities to provide accurate information with respect to these non-legal requirements.

16. Do I get reimbursed for mileage I put on my vehicle to travel to PIHO games?

Answer: No. However, your mileage is tax deductible—consult an accountant for further information. On occasion, for special games or under special circumstances, PIHO may, in its sole and absolute discretion, provide travel assistance such as lodging or transportation funding. If you are selected for such an assignment, you will receive the details of that assistance at the time the game assignment is published.

17. Who do I input as “employer” on the applications for background clearances?

Answer: Yourself. All PIHO-registered officials are independent contractors, so PIHO is not your “employer.” This way, the result letters will come to you directly and you can distribute your clearances to PIHO as well as any other assignor for whom you skate. This saves you money. Be happy.

18. Is there a dress code for PIHO games?

Answer: Yes, for both on the ice and off the ice, and it varies from level-to-level, league-to-league, and game-to-game. Consult the chart here:

<https://www.pihoref.com/PIHO%20Official's%20Dress%20Code%20&%20Nameplate%20Outline-1.pdf>.

19. How early do I have to get to the rink before a PIHO game?

Answer: It depends, and it varies from level-to-level, league-to-league, and game-to-game. Consult the chart here: https://www.pihoref.com/PIHO_Game_Day_Protocols_2017-18-1.pdf

20. How can I schedule an evaluation?

Answer: It’s easy. Click here: <https://www.pihoref.com/evaluation-request>.

21. I heard a rumor that I’ve been “blackballed” by PIHO because the Directors are mad at me and that’s why I’m not getting games; is it true?

Answer: No. The hockey community is relatively small and comprised of passionate people who care deeply about the game and their connection to it. As a result, the rumor mill churns fast and furious—particularly among officials. Most of what you hear in the dressing room from other officials who are not in leadership positions is incomplete information, or exaggerated, or simply not true.

As indicated above, the biggest reasons why officials don’t get games is: (a) because they have limited availability; (b) because the Scheduling Directors don’t know who they are and what their abilities are; and (c) there is a fundamental disagreement as to your ability to skate at a certain level. All of those

problems can be resolved by the official by proactively taking control of his/her own career as described in this FAQ document. Open your calendar more, request an evaluation, and write to the Scheduling Director and ask for more opportunities.

On occasion, an official may receive a reduced workload because of a legitimate performance issue, such as excessive tardiness or absence, excessive unexcused declines and turnbacks, or indefensible on-ice errors or misconduct. When this happens, the affected official is notified by PIHO that it is happening and why so that there is no confusion and the official understands and can learn from his/her mistake. If you perceive that your workload has been reduced but you have not been so notified by PIHO, chances are it's just the luck of the draw, or how the game schedule matches up with your availability, or something like that. It is never because of a personal vendetta.

22. I just got my HorizonWebRef login credentials; now what?

Answer: First, you have to fill in all the necessary personal information fields, including mobile phone number, any alternative e-mail addresses, your home address, and your social security number. Yes, we need your SSN for tax purposes, and if you don't put it in, you won't get paid—it's that simple.

Now it's time to set up your Availability Calendar and your Arena Block List. Go into Horizon and click "Availability Calendar." You will note that the default setting for all days is "Not Available." This means that you will not be assigned games during those days. You have to click on a day, and choose from the drop down menu of options, such as "Available All Day;" "Available Between;" "Available After;" "Available Before;" etc. Depending on your selection, you may then be required to input a time, or a range of times, to complete your availability setting for that day. You can also set your availability on a recurring basis by clicking the corresponding icon at the top of the page. This is used, for example, if you know that you're only available on Sundays after noon because you go to church Sunday mornings, or for any other standing, recurring appointment.

How far out should you set up your availability? As far as you can, and keep it current. Every time you schedule something in your personal life, or get your day job schedule, or get an assignment from another assignor that you don't want to give up for a potential PIHO assignment, block your calendar accordingly. If you get in the habit of doing this, you won't even notice it after a while.

You can also block rinks that you don't want to travel to. Click on the Administrative Forms tab in Horizon, and then click on Arena Blocks. From there, select as many or as few arenas at which you are unwilling to work. Remember, however, that this will make you less available to skate games, which will mean your game assignment count may decrease—not because you are being punished for being unwilling to travel to certain rinks, but simply because you will not show as available for as many assignments, and so your chances of being given assignments will naturally decrease.

23. PAHL has my Act 15 clearances through another assignor; do I have to turn them into PIHO again to skate PAHL games?

Answer: Yes. The law requires that the entity responsible for arranging for a person to work "in direct contact with children" must maintain copies of the person's three required background clearances.

When PIHO gives you a game assignment, PIHO is the entity that put you “in direct contact with children,” and as such, PIHO has to have your clearances on file.

We understand that PAHL maintains its own database of clearances as a courtesy to some of the local association assignors who do not have the same resources that PIHO has. While we respect and applaud PAHL for providing this courtesy, we do not rely on it for PIHO game assignments.

24. What criteria does PIHO use when selecting officials for game assignments?

Answer: The first and most important criterion we use is availability: does your calendar show that you are available to skate a given game? The more available you are, the greater your chances are of getting game assignments. It’s just math and probability. If you’re only available Tuesday afternoons between noon and 5pm, I’m afraid I’ve got some bad news. Conversely, if you’re available every night of the week and all day on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, chances are you’ll see some decent action.

The second criterion is qualification: are you qualified, based on your skill and experience as we understand it, to skate a particular game? Obviously, if the PIHO Directors don’t know you and don’t know your abilities, it can be hard to put you on any game at all. This is why we strongly encourage new officials to request an evaluation (see above) and reach out to our Scheduling Director so you can get on the radar. If you don’t do this, don’t expect varsity assignments or D-1 college club games.

The last few criteria are all given fairly equal and interchangeable weight, including distance from a rink, balance in quality of crews, game count to-date, how many times you’ve seen a particular team, etc. There’s no hard and fast science to the game assignment distribution process, unfortunately. It’s more of an art than a science. If it were a science, we could develop an algorithm, put every game into it, put every official into it, and be done with the entire season’s schedule in 5 seconds. Unfortunately, we’re not that smart, and if we were, we definitely wouldn’t be in the referee assigning business.

25. What roster am I on? How do I know where I stand in terms of PIHO’s assessment of my officiating abilities?

Answer: It’s pretty simple: if you’re getting games at a certain level, that’s the roster you’re on and the level you’re at. Don’t worry about what games your peers are skating; worry about yourself and your own career path, and take control over that career by scheduling evaluations, e-mailing the Scheduling Director, and developing a good reputation.