



Want to start a girls' high school team?

By Mitzi Witchger

"No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance."
Title IX of the Education Amendments

I've received emails where the question boils down to, "How can we get a girls' hockey team in my high school when all we have is a club team for boys?"

If there is no club team for girls and you want to start one, there's research to be done. Even the boys can help, as can your teammates, parents, coaches, other adults and whoever runs your team now. If the boys want to go to the varsity level, they will need your girls' team to get a balanced program to be in compliance with Title IX.

First of all, ask yourself why you want to do this. Is it because you think the only way to get more girls to play hockey is by having a school club team? Could you still compete at the USA Hockey youth level? My guess is that the boys' club team is still registered with USA Hockey for insurance purposes and in order to play some teams and in certain tournaments that are community-based rather than school-based. That would be the same for your school team. Or would it be more beneficial to stay in

your association? Your present hockey association can help broaden the base of girls' hockey by doing more advertising and marketing to increase the number of girls in your program. It can help a lot, especially when it knows you are interested.

Check out with your parents and the school about the pros and cons of a club team versus playing in your present youth hockey association mode. What would be the differences? What things would stay the same? Anything better, or worse, if you form a school club team? If you are a club team, will there be enough girls from other schools to start similar programs at their schools? Can you form one team made up of girls from two different schools? Usually the answer is yes.

Are you thinking this will help get a varsity program going? Realistically, will that happen before you are through high school? Does that matter? Do you know how many teams your state high school association requires in order to sanction (in the positive



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sense) a sport throughout the state? In Rhode Island, only six teams are needed. In Indiana, half of the high schools in the whole state need to have a program in order to get state association sanctioning. Are there exceptions to this kind of rule in your state? Ask your athletic director (AD) or call your state high school athletic association to find the answer.

If you decide this is the best way for you to move ahead, then write down your goals, some obstacles that you might encounter, and strategies to overcome them. Tell your AD that you and your hockey-playing friends are interested in starting a club team. The AD may ask you to present your proposal to the school board or to an athletic committee.

23

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