

ATHF Officiating Manual



Last reviewed & Updated: March 2026

Introduction

Welcome to the Alberta Team Handball Federation's Officiating Manual. The information in this handbook is to provide a common understanding of handball officiating in the province of Alberta. Officiating is a key development to any sport. Officiating services community, development, and promotes learning. Alberta Team Handball Federation aims to make the game; Safe, Fair, & Fun.

All officials serve as an ambassador for any sport. Referees are encouraged to participate in the game in a positive and encouraging manner. Interactions with athletes, coaches, representatives, and spectators leave a lasting impression. The hard work of an official will be rewarded by providing a safe environment that is fair to all stakeholders and encourages a fun played game.

Officials Training Pathway

Referee Levels

The Alberta Team Handball Federation uses a 4 Level Grading system. The level of a referee mandates the games a referee is eligible to participate in and reflects the effort to their growth and development as an official. The below naming convention and the age groups/league they are eligible to officiate are explained below:

	Officiating Eligibility Criteria.
Level 1 Official	Mini Handball, U12 League, Jr Highschool, U16 League, *Highschool*
Level 2 Official	High School League, 19U League, *Open League*
Level 3 Official	Open League, Jr Nationals
Level 4 Official	Sr nationals, Evaluators.

* = indicates an official may ref these games as learning and development under the right circumstances.

Education & Official Progression

Officiating is a part of sport that encourages and requires constant learning and development. Developing the knowledge and skillset to become a high level handball official can provide exciting opportunities. These opportunities can be traveling to officiate tournaments across Canada including but not limited to the Canadian National Championships. Below are the steps that an official must take to progress from Level 1 to Level 4.

Potential Level 1 officials -

- Register as a ATHF Referee Member on ATHF's membership platform
- Attend a ATHF Level 1 Officiating Course
- Must Pass the ATHF Level 1 Officiating Exam.

Potential Level 2 Officials

- Must be a Level 1 ATHF Official
- Must be at least in their second active season of officiating
- Must take a Level 2 ATHF Official Course
- Must Pass the ATHF Level 2 Officiating Exam
- Must Successfully pass a ATHF court evaluation

Potential Level 3 Officials

- Must be a Level 2 ATHF Official
- Must have reffed at least 20 Level 2 equivalent games (highschool or 19u league)
- Must Take a Level 3 ATHF Official Course
- Must Pass the ATHF Level 3 Officiating Exam
- Must pass 2 ATHF court evaluations in a Level 3 equivalent game (ATHL Open League)
- Need to be able to run a 6 on the beep test

Potential Level 4 Officials

- Must be a fully certified Level 3.
- Must have positive evaluations from a Canadian National Championship.

Maintaining Official Credentials

Officials who consistently referee games at their designated level within a 12-month period and maintain positive evaluations will not be required to complete additional courses. Officials who receive negative or below-standard evaluations may be required to take a course, based on the evaluator's recommendation. Officials may be reassigned to a lower level based on the overall average of their evaluation scores.

Returning from a Leave of Absence

If an official does not referee any games for 12 consecutive months, ATHF will allow them to return following their time away. Upon return, the official will resume officiating at one level lower than the level held at the time they stopped. The official must also complete the corresponding course for their current level after returning.

Pairing Guidelines.

The goal is to provide the best possible handball experience for all participants. This includes a good experience for the players, coaches, spectators and the referees. Setting officials up for success is key to developing the sport of handball and providing a safe learning environment. The below guidelines are used to ensure a positive outcome and it should be noted that these guidelines are a minimum. Meaning higher level refs for lower level games is not a restriction. Developing officials in a consistent pair will be aimed for whenever possible.

Game Levels	Minimum Partners	Training Situation
Mini Handball (Level 1)	*Two Level 1 Officials*	A Level 1 with a Level 2
U12 League (Level 1)	*Two Level 1 Officials*	A Level 1 with a Level 2
Jr High Handball (Level 1)	*Two Level 1 Officials*	A Level 1 with a Level 2
U16 ATHL League (Level 1)	*Two Level 1 Officials*	A Level 1 with a Level 2
High School Handball (Level 2)	Two Level 2 Officials	A Level 1 with a Level 3
U19 handball (Level 2)	Two Level 2 officials	A Level 1 with a Level 3
Open League (Level 3)	Two Level 3 officials	A Level 4 with a Level 2
Jr Nationals (Level 3)	Must be a level 3 to be considered by ATHF	-
Sr Nationals (Level 4)	Must be a level 3 to be considered by ATHF	-

Assumed with a more experienced Level 1 official; never 2 new officials

Officials Pay Scale	Pay per game	Game lengths
Mini Handball	\$10 per game	10min x 2 (5 min ½ time)
U12 League	\$20 per game	15min x 2 (5 min ½ time)
Jr High Handball	\$20 per game	15min x 2 (5 min ½ time)
U16 ATHL League	\$30 per Game	20min x 2 (5 min ½ time)
High School Game: after 4pm and 20 min halves	\$30 per game	20min x 2 (5 min ½ time)
U19 Handball	\$40 per game	25min x 2 (5 min ½ time)
Open League	\$75 per game	30min x 2 (10 min ½ time)

Evaluators

Alberta Team Handball Federation will use evaluators to teach, mentor and grow officials within Alberta. The role of evaluator will be a role of service to the official and provide expert knowledge and support. The evaluator will also serve as an ambassador for the sport to encourage professionalism from game participants and assist with the fun, fair, and safe environment to all stakeholders including the referees.

How to become an evaluator

There are two paths to become an ATHF evaluator. Either become a level 4 official with a positive professional relationship with the Alberta Handball Federation. Or be a level 3 official with a demonstrated history of leadership and the ability to develop or coach others. Level 3 applicants must have adequate officiating experience. In both instances evaluators will be asked to apply or sought after by the Alberta Team handball Federation.