



## **Devils Youth Diversity & Inclusion Policy**

The New Jersey Devils Youth Hockey Club is located in an exceptionally diverse part of the country. Essex County is home to the fourth and sixth wealthiest municipalities in New Jersey (Essex Fells and Millburn, respectively) as well as the tenth to last municipality in terms of wealth (Newark). The population of Essex County is 42.0% Black, 30.8% White, 23.2% Hispanic, and 5.7% Asian. The most commonly spoken languages besides English are Spanish, Portuguese, and French Creole, and English is not the primary language spoken in 34.6% of households. 8.6% of the population in Essex County has a disability.

Unfortunately, the heterogeneity of our community is not reflected inside the walls of our rinks for a number of reasons. It can be difficult for people who did not grow up with the sport to become involved as adults, and many potential fans and players do not see themselves represented on or off the ice at any level of the sport. Most importantly, nontraditional players and fans frequently suffer from discrimination and bigotry when they are at the rink.

Devils Youth is committed to promoting diversity in youth hockey. We believe that #hockeyisforeveryone, regardless of race, ethnicity, culture, language, nationality, religion, gender, sexual orientation, abilities, education, or socioeconomic status. We strive to make our programs as inclusive as possible and to make everyone feel like a welcome and valued member of our hockey community.

### **What do we mean by diversity?**

Diversity refers to the obvious fact that people differ from each other in countless ways. While we tend to associate the word “diversity” with racial diversity, that is just one dimension of the human experience. We use diversity to refer to both visible and invisible differences.

### **What is inclusion?**

Nurturing diversity is critical, but it is just the first step. We seek to create an inclusive environment where every athlete, parent, and staff member is treated fairly and respectfully, has equal access to opportunities and resources, and is able to contribute fully to the success of their team and the Devils Youth organization. It is not enough to just get people in the door - we want everyone to feel like they belong here.



### **Why is diversity & inclusion important?**

Research shows that it is more difficult to connect and empathize with people who are different from ourselves. However, it is also true that individuals thrive when they value and embrace diversity. Diverse teams outperform homogeneous teams; make better decisions faster; work harder; have more trust and openness; feel more a part of the team; and show enhanced creativity and innovation. As our world becomes more diverse, it is critically important that our children learn the skills necessary to work alongside all types of people.

We all know that a team comprised of seventeen similar players is unlikely to flourish. The best teams are made up of finesse and grit, offense and defense, power and speed, snipers and playmakers, and it is critical for each player to value and respect the skills and strengths that their teammates bring to the game. We intuitively understand that when we increase our diversity, we increase our potential for success; our work is to recognize, appreciate, and value the many ways in which diversity of thought and experience strengthen our community.

### **How do we build an inclusive environment?**

A perfectly inclusive environment cannot be created overnight, and we should all start by approaching our relationships with players and families with an open mind and spirit of curiosity.

- We never use offensive, hateful, and discriminatory language at any team functions either at or away from the rink, or in any official or casual communication among team members or personnel. We model inclusive language and communication at all times.
- We foster a culture of open and respectful communication with players and families.
- We commit to self-education around issues of diversity.
- We speak with players and families about their lives away from the rink and create team-building opportunities that allow teammates to explore and value their differences.
- We respect players' and families' right to privacy and do not disclose any personal information without their express permission.
- When we make a mistake, we take ownership and apologize. We allow the offended party to have their feelings, and we don't make the mistake about ourselves.
- We avoid making assumptions and examine our innate biases. We ask ourselves:
  - Do I expect my players to share my cultural and political views?
  - Do I expect my players to understand my cultural or media references?
  - Do I treat my players as if they are all heterosexual?
  - Do I assume all players look like the gender or race with which they identify?



- Do I treat all my players as if they are all of similar faith or religion?
- Do I assume most players of certain races come from lower income families or have weaker academic standing?
- Do I assume most players of certain ethnic groups come from highly competitive families and have high academic standing?
- Do I assume that my players live with either one or two biological or adoptive parents?
- Do I assume that my players' parents are a man and a woman?
- Do I think certain individual characteristics are necessarily correlated with certain levels of intelligence or ability?
- Do I think I naturally know which players have disabilities and which do not?
- Do I deliver information in a way that can be understood by players with many different learning styles?

## Resources

"Diversity & Inclusion: Leveraging the Differences That Make a Difference." *Colorado Rapids Youth Soccer Club*, 24 Oct. 2019, [rapidsyouthsoccer.org/diversity-inclusion-part-1/](https://rapidsyouthsoccer.org/diversity-inclusion-part-1/).

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"Diversity Definition: What Is Diversity." *Greater Good*, [greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/diversity/definition](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/diversity/definition).

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