

Avalanche Warriors Hockey



Official Player Handbook

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Avalanche Warriors Welcome & Introduction

We would first like to take this opportunity to thank you for joining the Avalanche Warriors Hockey Program (AWH). On behalf of a grateful nation and state, we would like to thank you for your service and for your sacrifice. It is heroes like you that make our great country the greatest country in the world.

The Avalanche Warriors Hockey Program is a Colorado Non-Profit Organization. Originally we were a subsidiary of the USA Warriors Ice Hockey Program out of Washington DC. The USA Warriors Ice Hockey Program was formed in 2008 in Washington D.C., to give wounded soldiers at Walter Reed and Bethesda Naval Medical Center the opportunity to participate in the sport of ice hockey. Today, the program is made up of wounded and injured soldiers from Walter Reed and Bethesda, as well as many other injured and disabled veterans from any or all conflicts. The purpose of the USA Warriors is to give wounded or injured veterans the opportunity to play hockey in a safe and adaptive environment, as well as to provide a place for disabled veterans to form friendships and networks. It consists of two disciplines; the first discipline is the sled hockey team, which is for players who are unable to skate standing. The second discipline is the standing team, who skate standing up. The general criteria required to participate in the AWH program is that you must have served honorably and had some type of disability as a result of serving in a military capacity. We'd like to take this opportunity to emphasize that you do not have to be combat wounded or have served in a combat zone. Service members who were injured in training or while on active duty in any capacity (to include Guard and Reserve members on drill weekends) are included. That said, any applicant must provide at least one of the following:

- 1) Visible evidence of an injury or disability.
- 2) Written documentation of an injury or disability from DoD or VA. Documentation from a private care provider will also be considered.
- 3) You must provide a detailed description of your injury or disability on this application.

Please note that you may be required to come to a board meeting for an interview. You will be notified of this in advance should this be the case. The USA Warriors Ice Hockey Program is in no way affiliated with the Department of Defense, the Department of Veterans Affairs, or any other government entity. We are facilitated entirely by USA Hockey, the governing body of hockey in the United States, and in Colorado, we are affiliated with USA Hockey, which is the governing body of hockey Nationwide. Because of this, you will be required to register yourself with USA Hockey as well as Avalanche Warriors Hockey. Under both USA Hockey and Avalanche Warriors Hockey we are affiliated under their Disabled Hockey sections. You can expect the total cost of this to be \$50. If you are unable to pay this amount to register, please contact an AWH board member.

In closing, the USA Warriors Ice Hockey Program and AWH program would like to thank you for your distinguished service and to welcome you to our program. We look forward to seeing you out on the ice.

Best regards,

The Avalanche Warriors Hockey Program Board of Directors

Board of Directors & Contacts

Avalanche Warriors Board of Directors

<u>Position</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Email</u>
President	Michael Kocab	President@avalanchewarriors.org
Vice President	Raymond Brooks	VPBusinessOPS@avalanchewarriors.org
Vice President		VPHockeyOPS@avalanchewarriors.org
Treasurer	Rick Sharp	Treasurer@avalanchewarriors.org
Secretary/Registrar	Debbie Kocab	Secretary@avalanchewarriors.org
Marketing Director	Sean Keebler	Sean.Keebler@gmail.com
Media Relations	Sean Keebler	Sean.Keebler@gmail.com
Volunteer Coordinator	Debbie Kocab	Secretary@avalanchewarriors.org

Hockey Operations

<u>Position</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Email</u>
Recruiting Director		
Ice/Hotel Director		
Equipment Manager		
Maroon Team Captain	Michael Kocab	Kocab.Michael@gmail.com
Grey Team Captain		
White Team Captain		

Recruiting

Who can join the Warriors

The Avalanche Warriors welcome wounded, injured, or otherwise disabled and non-disabled veterans of the U.S. Military. A veteran does not have to have been deployed overseas to join.

Wounded is defined as any physical injury as a result of enemy fire in any capacity, in any combat zone, from any theatre, of any era. Being awarded the Purple Heart Medal automatically qualifies a veteran to join our program.

Injured is defined as any injury not caused by an armed enemy of the United States, but that was incurred while on active duty. The injury must have occurred while on active duty, or on inactive drill status in the case of Guard or Reserve veterans. In addition, the injury must have been documented and/or be evident.

Otherwise, Disabled is defined as any other injury or disability that is not covered in the first two appendices such as hearing loss. This also includes illnesses due to time in service such as agent orange exposure, or mental health conditions such as (but not limited to) Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Depression, Anxiety, or others. Under these criteria, any veteran with a disability rating from either the Department of Veterans Affairs or the Department of Defense is automatically qualifying that veteran to join our program.

Documentation

All players must submit some type of documentation indicating their status as a wounded, injured, or otherwise disabled veteran of the U.S. Military. Documentation that is accepted includes any DoD documentation of an injury or disability while on active duty, any VA documentation of service-connected injuries or disabilities to include a summary of service-connected conditions and percentage, or any other documentation from any other source that indicates an injury or disability as a result of military service.

Recruiting Initiatives

Current members of the Warriors may recruit veterans who meet the criteria for our program. In addition, the Warriors use tools like our website, Facebook, flyers distributed through the VA system, tabling at VFW events, local businesses and TV ads and media coverage. Anyone interested in participating in the program should contact the recruiting director to begin the registration process. Those interested in volunteering should contact the volunteer coordinator.

Recruiting Procedure

Players who wish to join the Avalanche Warriors must follow the following procedure:

1. Go to our website at AvalancheWarriors.org, hit the recruitment tab.
2. Once the player has completed the registration, register with USA Hockey, they will be allowed to join the program.

Mission/Vision Statement

Mission

The Avalanche Warriors Hockey Program's mission is to organize and administer an ice hockey program that provides recreational, therapeutic experience and education to its participants.

Vision

The Avalanche Warriors Ice Hockey Program has been organized to operate exclusively for charitable and educational purposes, for wounded, injured, or otherwise disabled veterans of the United States Military, in conjunction with the USA Disabled Hockey Program.

The program educates, trains, motivates and encourages individuals who have physical disabilities incurred during service to the United States to participate in the sport of ice hockey in an environment that is adapted to the level of ability of the participating athletes. It is designed to integrate people with disabilities with people without disabilities in order to promote awareness of challenges and to encourage team building.

The program uses the game of hockey to assist individuals with disabilities in developing self-confidence, adjusting to their new lifestyle, rehabilitation, self-reliance, concentration, and to assist in helping participants back into mainstream lifestyles they were accustomed to prior to their disability, that will help the individual be more successful both within and outside a hockey environment.

General Player Information

General Guidelines and Expectations

The Avalanche Warriors Hockey Program strives to provide every participant with a high-quality playing experience that is adapted to the level of the participant. We acknowledge and understand that different players want/need different things from our program and we want to offer as many options as possible to accommodate our veterans. Players who participate in our program should expect to be treated with respect at all times. They should expect to feel welcome and accommodated while participating in the program. They should expect clear and regular communication from the leaders of the program and should feel welcome and encouraged to approach the leadership with questions or concerns. In addition, players should expect to receive constructive help and instruction from the coaching staff and leadership and should expect to be evaluated and placed at an appropriate level for their abilities.

In order to maximize the benefit of being a part of the team, players are expected to make a commitment to participating in the program. Players are expected to attend practices, and games on a regular basis, and when players are unable to participate due to other obligations or situations, to communicate that to the leadership. Players are also expected to communicate changes in life circumstances, health, or anything that would significantly affect their ability to participate in the program. Any equipment that is issued is the property of the program and players are expected to return any equipment given them at such time as they are finished using it or it is no longer able to be used. Players who do not return equipment are subject to be billed for it.

Work Ethic The program educates, trains, motivates, and encourages, individuals who have physical disabilities incurred during service to the United States, to participate in the sport of ice hockey in an environment that is adapted to the level of ability of the participating athletes. The program educates, trains, motivates, and encourages, individuals who have physical disabilities incurred during service to the United States, to participate in the sport of ice hockey in an environment that is adapted to the level of ability of the participating athletes. Players will never be questioned on this subject. **Playing hockey with the Avalanche Warriors is a privilege, not a right.** With a maximum effort, you will be rewarded properly.

Personal Integrity/Team Integrity

Personal integrity greatly affects how team members are viewed by other team members and coaching staff. Team integrity is how the public and other veterans view the program. Do not make the mistake of jeopardizing the respect our program has worked so long and hard for. Players are expected to treat fellow players with respect and to represent the program in a positive way at all times in public. What players do with their time away from the rink is their business until it affects the program adversely. Conduct which tarnishes the public image of the program will be subjected to review by the board and possible suspension from team activities.

Respect

As previously mentioned, all players in the program should expect to be treated with respect. All participants in our program are expected to refrain from downgrading other team members. This includes on the ice, on the bench, in the locker room, or anywhere for that matter. Until you have mastered your position and can compete at hockey's highest level, do not question the ability of another person. Always remember who we are and what we're here for. Major disputes between team members should be brought to the team captains to work through.

USA Hockey Policies

As an affiliate of the USA Hockey Program, the Warriors shall abide by all organizational policies including the USA Hockey Safe Sport Program.

Locker Room Policy

It is expected that what is said in the locker room is kept in the locker room. We do not think it is fair to tell the community about something that should be a private affair. Our problems are not public problems and are not for public dissection. Remember, if you don't want the public discussing you or your issues, don't do it to other players. Additionally, it is the policy of the captains, coaches, and board of directors never to talk about private team business except to each other.

Drug & Alcohol Policy

Under no circumstances are players allowed to be under the influence of drugs during on-ice activities. Moreover, drugs are not permitted to be present on the ice, in the locker room, or in the arena in any way. Beer may be permitted at certain events but unless it is previously approved, is also not allowed. Players deemed to be in violation of this or deemed to be intoxicated will be removed from the ice immediately and subject to suspension. Suspensions for violating the team's drug and alcohol policy is as follows:

First Offense: 2-week suspension from all team activities

Second Offense: 1-month suspension from all team activities

Third Offense: 1-year suspension from all team activities

Note: First and Second offenses are not negotiable; a 1-year suspension may be appealed by requesting a hearing at a board meeting. In addition, the player will be fined 5 Warrior points with each suspension.

Fighting Policy

Fighting on the ice, in the locker room, or in the arena at Warriors practices or at pick up sessions will not be tolerated. Fighting is defined as two or more players squaring off and exchanging blows. Self-defense will be handled on a case by case basis. Players who engage in fighting as defined by the program are subject to the following actions:

First Offense: 2-week suspension from all team activities

Second Offense: 1-month suspension from all team activities

Third Offense: 1-year suspension from all team activities

Note: First and Second offenses are not negotiable; a 1-year suspension may be appealed by requesting a hearing at a board meeting. In addition, the players involved will be fined 3 Warrior points with each violation.

Players who engage in trash-talking, shoving, excessively rough play or any other behavior that the captains or coaches feel may lead to a physical altercation are not considered to be fighting as previously defined, but those players involved will nevertheless be asked to leave for the duration of the ice time. Full authority is given to the captains and coaches to enforce this policy on the ice, locker room, or in the arena. Players who are asked to leave are not allowed to loiter in the vicinity; they must vacate the premises immediately. Failure to do so may result in law enforcement being called if necessary to defuse the situation.

In the case of our club teams, fighting in a game against another team is frowned upon, taking into account that circumstances may put players in an involuntary position of being involved in an altercation. In these instances, players are subject to league or tournament rules, if applicable. If it is a game scheduled by the Warriors organization, players involved in physical altercations on the ice that the referees deem to be fighting, all involved players will sit out the rest of the game. It will be up to the coaches and/or captains if supplemental discipline is necessary.

It is important to note that hockey can be a rough game, especially when played at higher, faster levels. Getting bumped or having your stick slashed is not considered excessively rough play unless it is done flagrantly. It is incumbent upon players to keep their play in check, and it is equally incumbent upon players to maintain awareness of what's going on around you on the ice. Players who fail to keep control of their bodies and/or sticks and who are deemed to pose a threat to other players will be warned. If the behavior continues the player will be told to leave. If the player continues to play recklessly, they may become subject to disciplinary measures at the discretion of the captains and coaches.

Injuries

Hockey is a rough game in nature. Despite the fact that we are playing a non-check, adapted version of the game, injuries are bound to occur playing ice hockey. We also realize that because we are dealing with wounded, injured, and otherwise disabled veterans, this further increases the risk factor. If a player is injured on the ice, proper safety precautions will be taken as necessary. Ultimately, however, players participate at their own risk. Players are required to wear (at a minimum) Helmets, athletic cups, shin pads, and gloves for practices. For games, players will wear (at a minimum) helmet, pants (breezers), elbow pads, athletic cup, shin pads, and gloves. Mouthguards and cages are not required but are highly encouraged. If a player is injured on the ice or away from the team, it is the responsibility of the player to keep their captain informed of the situation. Failure to do so may result in placement on the inactive roster.

Warrior Points System

The Avalanche Warriors have a points system which tracks participation by our players. 1 Warrior point is given for attendance at practice/games, and 1 Warrior point is given for participation in off-ice events. In the case of events that are a day in length or more, more Warrior points may be awarded to players. Warrior points are not given for participation in pick-up sessions. The Warrior points system is tracked by the team captains and is available upon request at any time. Captains are responsible for taking attendance at practices and turning in attendance rosters to the Secretary/ Registrar. The Secretary is responsible for the tabulation and tracking of Warrior points.

Rostering Policy

All players who are actively participating in the program are assigned to the active roster. Players on the active roster are eligible to participate in all team practices, games, trips, and to use team equipment, depending on what level of commitment a player is within the program. In order to occupy a spot on the active roster, a player must have the following:

- A. Completed Avalanche Warriors registration on the website
- B. A current USA Hockey registration number
- C. At least one Warrior point earned within the last two-month period*

Players who fail to meet the above requirements, or players who request to be placed on the inactive list due to circumstances that will prevent their participation in the program, will be placed on the inactive list. This means that the player must return all team equipment and are no longer eligible to participate in team events.

The exception to this rule is in the case of injured players; players who are injured or incapacitated against their will from participating will have an injury note placed on their name, which holds their spot on the active roster regardless of the status of their registration or how many points they have.

Players wishing to be reactivated may do so by informing the Secretary/ Registrar. Players coming to the active roster from the inactive roster are required to give advance notice and provide a copy of their current USA Hockey registration. **Note: all players must update their USA Hockey registration each year. Registrations expire every August.**

Bubble System

The bubble system is a place where players who fall into an ability level that is between our teams. It is designed to maximize ice time for players assigned here by getting ice time with any of the teams with the eventual goal of moving to one team or another on a permanent basis. Players assigned to the bubble system are available to teams as needed and are often called upon to fill holes in lineups on teams. Captains and coaches are the ones who have the input as far as where players are assigned.

New Player Policy

New players to the team may begin participating in practices immediately. New players who wish to play for any of the teams must attend a minimum of 3 practices before they are allowed to debut in our lineup if practices are available. New players are automatically assigned to the bubble system until we can get a good idea of where the player is on the ability scale and assign them accordingly. New players will be assigned to a team roster after their third practice or at the team captain's discretion. New players hold a "new player" status for two months long. This protects them from being placed on the inactive roster and gives players a chance to adapt to the way we do business regarding practices, games, etc. After those two months, the player no longer holds this status and is considered a full member. **Players may always request specific assignment/reassignment, but the final decision will always be with team leadership.**

Equipment Procedure

General Equipment Policies

The Avalanche Warriors Hockey Program issues as much equipment as it has on hand to players who need equipment. We do not issue skates, sticks, or athletic cups to players, but we do issue helmets, shoulder pads, elbow pads, pants (breezers), and shin pads, if available.

Equipment that is issued to players is the property of the Avalanche Warriors Hockey Program and is subject to recall at any time. While equipment is in the player's possession, it is their responsibility to maintain it and return it to the program if it becomes unusable due to wear and tear, no longer need it due to purchase of their own equipment or leave the program for any reason.

Players are required to fill out and sign a receipt in order to be issued any team equipment which will list a comparable replacement cost. ****At this time the Avalanche Warriors Hockey program does not have extra gear to issue to players/goalies****

Unreturned Equipment Policy

Avalanche Warriors program equipment that is not returned upon recall or upon a player leaving the program will be billed to the player the equipment was issued to for the total cost of the equipment. Failure to return the equipment or pay the bill may result in legal action to recover lost equipment or equivalent compensation. **Equipment recall and reissue will occur every July. Players who do not attend or make arrangements for their equipment to be counted will be issued a bill within 30 days.**

Jerseys & Uniforms

Practice jerseys are provided to players on an as-needed basis as we have them available. Loaner game uniforms, which include jerseys and socks are provided to players at each game or tournament. At the end of the game or tournament, players required to return the jerseys and socks to the equipment manager or the captains. Jerseys and socks are routinely laundered and maintained by the team for its players. Exceptions to this rule are at the discretion of the team captains, who may issue game uniforms for prolonged periods of time as they deem necessary. Game sox are not to be worn during practices. Practice sox are available for issue.

Apparel

Team apparel issued to a Warrior Player shall become the personal property of the player. Apparel consists of Warrior Hoodie, Cap, and a Polo Shirt. Additional apparel may be purchased. Special event jerseys may be issued to players and shall be treated as apparel for accounting purposes. Team Jerseys and Sox are not apparel and will not be worn at practices under any circumstances.

Warrior Team & Game Day Procedure

Definition

The Avalanche Warriors Teams represent the highest level of commitment and involvement in our program. The Warriors will have two teams; the Warriors Maroon Team, which is made up of the more experienced skaters in the program, the Warriors Grey Team, which is made up of the less experienced. These teams participate in competitive games, league play, tournaments, and exhibition games against other teams wearing the Warrior game uniforms. In addition, all teams will practice when they can to prepare for the games that they participate in.

Procedure

Composition and assignment to a team are completed during the registration process on our website. New players who come to the program following registration will be assigned to a team. Once the season starts and the teams begin competition play, game day lineups for each game are put together by the captains. A standard Avalanche Warriors Club Team lineup consists of 11-17 skaters. This includes 1-2 goaltenders, 4-6 defensemen, and 6-9 forwards. Team captains reserve the right to modify this as they see necessary to meet the needs of the team. Who gets into the lineup each week is determined by the captains and approved by the VP of Hockey Operations. Decisions are based on the following *criterion*:

1. Players registered for a team in league/tournament per tournament /league rules
2. How many players are available to play in the game.
3. How many Warrior points each player has accrued from participation in practices or other events.

Bubble players may be assigned to any Team. Bubble players assigned to any team will be counted as rostered members of that team and will have an equal opportunity to be in a given lineup based on their participation in team activities. In the event that a team is short on players for a lineup, bubble players may be called in to help fill holes in lineups. Bubble players can be sent to another Warrior Team on a temporary basis, or they can be reassigned on a more lengthy basis. However, in order for a player in the bubble system to be moved from one team to the other for a long period of time (two weeks or more), both team captains must be in agreement of the movement. As previously mentioned, League and Tournament rules and the Warriors Points system will always be used as the determining factors as to who will play.

Non-Veteran Players

At no time will Non-Veteran players wear or play for the Avalanche Warriors Ice Hockey Program. They shall not represent our team even if tournament or league rules allow it. The board of directors can override this for local games and or tournaments.

Expectations

Members of the Warriors Teams are expected to participate in team practices when ice time is available. Players participating at this level are expected to communicate with their team leadership in the event they are unable to make it to practices for any reason. Participating at this level of commitment means that players will be expected to be available for games, tournaments, and team travel as much as possible. Attendance policies and any additional individual team guidelines are up to the team captains.

Team Travel Policy

Players rostered on any of the Warriors Teams are eligible to travel with their team to events taking place out of town. The team captains are the final say on who travels to any event and who doesn't.

While traveling on team business, players, coaches, and volunteers are expected to represent the program with pride and integrity at all times. Players are expected to adhere to the team drug and alcohol policy, as well as the team fighting policy. In addition to those policies, players involved in any indiscretions, some of which include (but are not limited to) excessive intoxication, public disturbances, breaking of the law, or failure to participate in all team functions sober and to team standard, will result in suspension from the team and possible revocation of future travel privileges. Suspensions will be at the discretion of the captains and board of directors and will depend on the degree and nature of the offense(s).

Consideration for Financial Hardship

Any player who feels they cannot meet the financial obligation for their desired level of participation with the Warriors program should contact their team captain immediately. A private meeting with the board of directors will be called on the player's behalf to discuss their situation and alternative ways of meeting the obligation.

Board Meetings & Special Events

Board Meetings

The Avalanche Warriors Board of Directors meets quarterly. The meetings take place every three months at various locations which are named in the meeting notice. Players are not required but are **highly** encouraged to attend these meetings, as this is where the business side of the organization is discussed as well as voting on a lot of important matters regarding the team takes place. Players who attend board meetings are awarded one Warrior point for participation in an off-ice activity.

Board meetings are presided over by the president of the organization. Quorum is required in order to conduct any official business, and attendance, along with meeting minutes are recorded. Any player or board member may submit an agenda item. Those who wish to submit agenda items, or obtain copies of meeting minutes from any meetings, should do so by contacting the secretary of the organization.

Board members and Directors have voting rights at board meetings. Board member positions are elected on a Bi-yearly basis, along with captain positions. For information regarding which board positions are up for elections, captains positions, or how to run for a position, contact the organization president.

Special Events

Very often, the Avalanche Warriors organization puts on or participates in, special events.

Players are often called upon to participate in these events as ambassadors of the program. The public, and specifically our fans and donors, want to see the players who benefit from their contributions and hear about the program and how players benefit from it. If and when players are asked to participate in events such as these, they are expected to participate as best they can. Player participation in events off the ice is essential to the sustainment and growth of our program. Players who assist another warrior team at one of their games or who go watch/ support another Warriors team are eligible to be awarded a point for their support. Players are awarded Warrior Points for participation in these off-ice activities.

Avalanche Warriors Media Policy

The Avalanche Warriors Hockey Program has received a good deal of media coverage. Interacting with media is good to get the word out about the program, but certain guidelines must be followed in order to maintain order and continuity of our program. Players and board members are allowed to talk to the media about the program. Any media wishing to cover any events, on the ice or off the ice, or interact with any player or board member regarding the program, are welcome to do so but are required to contact the Avalanche Warriors ahead of time.

If any member of the organization is in doubt as to whether or not they should interact, in any way, with the media on behalf of our program, please seek guidance from a board member.