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## Hockey parents onside with sportsmanship program

By Sarah McGinnis, Calgary Herald October 17, 2010



Hockey parents Dan and Nikki Stang say they benefited from taking the Respect in Sport course. Their children, from left, Josh, 14, Danika, 10, and Zach, 12, have played hockey since age 6.

Photograph by: Ted Jacob, Calgary Herald, Calgary Herald

CALGARY - Hours after the deadline passed for parents to complete an online Respect in Sport course or have their kids barred from the ice, it appears the bulk of Calgary's young hockey players will be suiting up this season.

By midnight on Friday, Hockey Calgary had recorded 10,980 parents who had finished the mandatory course, said association president Perry Cavanagh.

He estimates less than five per cent of parents -- perhaps a few hundred -- haven't taken the program.

Players who haven't had one parent or guardian complete the hour-long course are not eligible to play until they do, Cavanagh said.

"Change is always difficult for people to accept. . . . There are still those who will never adapt. They need to make some decisions about what's more important, the principle they're standing on or their children's privilege of playing a sport in Calgary," said Cavanagh.

"We believe this initiative is too critical for anyone not to buy into."

Over the past week, between 500 and 700 parents a day clicked on the course website -- including a few who finished the program one minute before the deadline.

Hockey mom Joy Bowen-Eyre said 113 of the 115 families with kids in the Crowfoot Minor Hockey Association's novice program finished in time and she expects the two remaining sets of parents will complete the course soon.

"Being a hockey parent for five years, we have definitely seen good and bad hockey parents, they are out there," Bowen-Eyre said.

"It's really good to remind our families it's about making sure our children's self-esteem and self-confidence is intact. It's just about playing and having fun."

Over at the Westwood Hockey Association, all of the players on the Westwood Warriors junior team had at least one parent or guardian

take the course, said team coordinator Bonita McCurry.

Calgary Northstars Hockey Association president Alec McColm acknowledges he was nervous as the deadline approached.

"I was a little surprised," said McColm, who had all of his minor-age teams and the majority of his junior teams finish the requirements.

"I was worried about what are we going to have to stickhandle at the 11th hour and was pleased to see that we're looking to be in good shape."

Cavanagh said the Respect in Sports course -- which was created with the help of former NHL player Sheldon Kennedy -- is not just about getting parents to be more polite rinkside.

The program covers other safety concerns, such as giving parents some of the early warning signs for verbal, physical or sexual abuse.

With Calgary girls hockey coach Michael Shawn Bourgeois sentenced last week to a 60-day jail term for fondling a female player after taking her and another player to dinner, Cavanagh said the skills offered in the online program should help to keep all players safer both on and off the ice.