



## **KidSport Calgary & Area and the Calgary Flames Sports Bank to team up with local sport organizations to launch Project REF!**

March 2 - Calgary, AB – Supporting low-income families with access to sport is not new for KidSport but providing those same kids with access to officiating certification courses as an avenue to further pursue sport and some of the many opportunities sport can provide will be. 2023 will see KidSport Calgary & Area and the Calgary Flames Sports Bank teaming up with Hockey Calgary and the Calgary Minor Soccer Association to launch a pilot program aimed at giving further access to sport for the thousands of qualified kids KidSport supports in our community each year.

Project REF will give qualified kids access to additional funding to pursue their certification as a referee in their sport. That funding along with support to any necessary equipment through the Calgary Flames Sports Bank will open the door for KidSport kids to gain their certification, access additional knowledge in their sport of choice, and have income earning potential through the start of a very flexible part-time job that being a referee can provide.

“We are very proud and excited to see the Project REF pilot launched here in 2023” commented Kevin Webster – CEO KidSport Calgary & Area – Calgary Flames Sports Bank. “This is a great step for us as we look to find ways to keep kids in sport, to open doors for those that need to earn some money to stay in sport and to those that are looking for a different opportunity in sport, while supporting our sport community with opening up an additional stream of potential referees that can help fill some of the growing need for officials.”

“Hockey Calgary is thrilled to partner with, and support KidSport in their newest endeavor.” Commented Kevin Kobelka, Executive Director Hockey Calgary “We have seen a drastic decline in the number of officials in our system in recent years, and initiatives such as this can only help to grow the officiating pool. Officiating is a great way for the youth to stay involved in sport while developing some lifelong leadership and conflict management skills to help them in the future.”

“CMSA is eager to work alongside KidSport to launch Project Ref in support of youth who may have been presented with barriers to start this journey previously. Referees are an integral part of a meaningful soccer experience, and CMSA wants to make sure that everyone has a fair and equitable path to their desired level of referee certification.” States Carlo Bruneau, Executive Director CMSA “It takes collaboration and a collective group of dedicated individuals to overcome challenges present across our sport community, and we are confident that the program will support the development of new referees and aid in the referee shortage.”

The Project REF Pilot program will launch mid-March 2023. KidSport Calgary & Area will look to work with all officiating programs across all sports as the pilot gets off the grounds this year. Interested kids/families will apply to KidSport Calgary & Area. The program has started with Soccer and Hockey as those are the two highest impacted sports through KidSport Calgary & Area and the Calgary Flames

Sports Bank. Upon approval, funds and dates of certification programs will be confirmed with the respective officiating body for that sport.

“Without Ref’s we don’t have games, we have scrimmages. I am proud of this made in Calgary solution which is a first step in addressing a problem that plagues all sport the recruitment and retention of referees.” Highlighted Rob Kerr, KidSport Ambassador, Board Member and Project REF Champion. “By empowering and encouraging our youth we feel we can help swing the pendulum of this story in a very positive way. I look forward to Project REF launching new opportunities for kids in our community which will help to strengthen sports in our city.”

For more information you can contact any of the Project REF Partners below:

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