



## US Soccer Player Development Initiatives

### ***FAQ: Birth Year Registration***

#### GENERAL

##### **Q: What is the birth year registration age group change that is taking place?**

**A:** Currently the age group registration cut-off date has been August 1 through July 31. This was designed to form teams within the same academic grade.

The new age group registration is based on calendar year. The new cut-off dates will be January 1 through December 31 of any given year. Players born within the same year will now play on the same team — unless a player is “playing up” in an older age group.

In order to implement this change, refer to the U.S. Soccer birth year matrix for the seasonal playing year. (*See the Overview document for a link to the U.S. Soccer documentation.*) Players born in the younger half of the year (January-July) on a current 2015/16 team will move up one age group in 2016/2017 — for example, U11 to U12. Players born in the older half of the year (August 1- December 31) on a current 2015/16 team will move up 2 age groups — for example, U11 to U13. In this initial transition, some players will skip an age group.

##### **Q: When is the birth year registration age group change going to take place?**

**A:** These changes will be implemented as of August 1, 2016. Any preparation needed for the implementation of these changes should start immediately.

##### **Q. Why is U.S. Soccer making these changes?**

**A.** According to U.S. Soccer, the current landscape is inconsistent and not as successful as it could be when it comes to player development. These initiatives are intended to develop players with more individual skill, intelligence, creativity and confidence. These changes also provide a consistent approach across the country, and challenge the status quo of our soccer landscape by focusing on the development of the individual versus the success of a team.

##### **Q. Who is required to follow the birth year registration initiatives?**

**A.** These changes impact all age groups across all levels of play. All members of U.S. Soccer are required to put these initiatives into place no later than August of 2017. This includes, but is not limited to, all youth members and their respective competitions: State Associations, US Youth Soccer, US Club Soccer, AYSO, SAY, etc.

***Please note: US Youth Soccer and Iowa Soccer have decided to implement these changes by August 1 2016.***

##### **Q. How do I determine the birth year used for a competition?**

**A.** Birth year registration should be based on the year in which the seasonal year ends. For example, if a seasonal year begins in the fall of 2017 and ends in the summer of 2018 (ex: 2017-

18 season), the players would be registered based on their age in the year 2018. To simplify determining the age group, just subtract the birth year from the year the seasonal year ends. Year Season Ends – Birth Year = Age Group:

- 2017-18 – 2003 = U15
- 2022-23 – 2016 = U7
- 2018 – 2012 = U6

**Q. Will the birth year registration change reflect the seasonal year, with season one happening in the Spring and season two happening in the Fall?**

**A.** No. The seasonal year will remain the same. It will be an August through July playing season with the first season happening during the Fall and the second season happening during the Spring.

**Q. Many players will miss a seasonal year of play due to birth year registration. Is this developmentally appropriate and won't players lose a year of training?**

**A.** There will be considerable player movement during the first season of the transition and players born in the older half (August 1-December 31) of a current 2015/16 team will move up 2 age groups — for example, U11 to U13 in 2016/17. This does mean that a player could miss out on an entire age group of play and in many circumstances developmentally appropriate small-sided play.

However, U.S. Soccer has added a U19 division to the age group matrix, which means a player missing out on an age group in 2016/2017, will still play the same number of seasons throughout their career.

**Q. How does a coach explain to parents/players that playing with friends may no longer be possible?**

**A.** The birth year registration standards support the development of the individual player as a priority over a team success and the placement of individual players should be determined by finding the best possible environment for their development.

However, if your club allows it — and it is developmentally appropriate — a player may play up, stay on the same team, and teams may stay together. Please note that playing up could mean some players could be playing against others who are up to 18 months older than them, and your team may be at a competitive disadvantage.

If playing up is not developmentally appropriate, explain that players joining and leaving teams is something that already happens regularly throughout the club. In addition, there are a variety of factors that require teams to evolve and adapt including players maturity rates, moving away, focusing on new interests, or changes in soccer abilities as opposed to their peers.

Playing on a team with friends isn't always the reality in the current environment — much like not having all of your friends in the same class or classes at school. The age cut-off used for

school registration varies across the country. This means that there are already a variety of unique player age and grade combinations.

**Q. I currently coach a combined team of players born in different birth years. What age group will they play Fall 2016?**

**A.** If your team(s) remains together, which is a club decision, they will play in the birth year age group of the oldest player on your team. For example, if your team has players born in 2001 and 2002, your team will play in the 2001 birth year age group.

**Q. Will Iowa Soccer's rules prevent members of my team from playing up in Fall 2016.**

**A.** The 60/40 and 40/60 Iowa Soccer rules prevent more than 40% of players on a U11 and U12 team and more than 60% of players on a U13 and U14 roster from registering from a younger birth year. There is also a similar 80/20 rule for U9/U10 Academy clubs.

Iowa Soccer will allow a two-year grace/transition period starting August 1, 2016 where these rules will be relaxed. All clubs will need to be back in compliance by August 1, 2018.

## LEAGUE and COMPETITION

**Q: How does this change impact the U15 (high school freshman) age group?**

**A:** Players born January 1 through July 31 (actual dates may vary depending on the school district) will be in an older year at school, than players born August 1 through December 31. Starting spring 2017, this presents some unique challenges in the U15 age group where half of the birth year could be playing high school soccer during the Spring season.

To address this issue, Iowa Soccer will offer a U15 ISL Spring League that will be played on Sunday afternoons to help eliminate any potential conflicts with high school schedules. Players who are freshmen may be allowed to play high school soccer and club soccer at the same time, depending on the school district and high school coach. Alternatively, players may choose to play club soccer instead of HS soccer.

If teams do not have enough U15 players to form a team, the Iowa Soccer League (ISL) and many Level 3 leagues will offer a choice of 7v7 and 11v11 play, so that players will still have a place to play.

Iowa Soccer will also allow clubs to combine U15 teams during the spring season and work with the Iowa High School Coaches Association to ensure all high school coaches are aware of the new U.S. Soccer initiatives.

**Q: How does this change impact the U19 age group?**

**A:** U19 players born January 1 through July 31 could be attending college resulting in a reduced number of players available to form U19 teams in that birth year.

There will be a U19 division in the ISL and in other Level 3 leagues, and if needed, leagues may play with modified numbers. In the ISL, the U19 division will be comprised of U19 and U18 teams, and many teams will combine U18 and U19 players to form teams.

**Q. Many U19 teams will have players in college during the Fall season. Will State Cup still be played in the Fall?**

**A.** Yes. The U19 State Cup will be played in the Fall. U19 players who are in college will still have the opportunity to be registered on a state cup team, and play on that team if their team qualifies for the Region II Championships.

If their team does not advance to the Region II Championships, Iowa Soccer is looking into the possibility of offering a U20 State Cup in the Spring.

**Q. Will Iowa Soccer still offer single-age group State Cups, even though many U18 and U19 teams will be combined.**

**A.** Yes. The National Championship Series will continue to be based on single-age group teams in 2016/17. Therefore players will only be eligible to compete in that event according to their birth year age eligibility.

**Q. Will the Midwest Regional League (MRL) still offer a U13 division?**

**A.** No. Beginning in the Fall of 2016, MRL League play will start at U14.

### **LEVEL 3 CLUBS**

**Q. Why can't there be different standards for recreational and competitive teams.**

**A.** There is no universal definition of what separates recreational and competitive soccer. In addition to supporting the overall objectives of player development, U.S. Soccer believes that having separate registration systems based on undefined levels of play would create unnecessary confusion, and would not provide a consistent approach across the soccer landscape. Players should also be provided the opportunity to develop to best of their abilities regardless of the level of play they are participating in.

**Q. What will be the youngest birth year for the 2016/2017 seasonal year?**

**A.** Iowa Soccer birth year registration will start at U4 (2013 birth year) for the 2016/2017 season.

**Q. Many Level 3 leagues only offer programming up to U14. With the new changes, many leagues will now need to offer U15 programming in both Fall and Spring. With a reduction in the number of players available due to high school conflicts in the spring, how should we organize this age group?**

**A.** Create a U15/U16 league in the Fall to accommodate all U15 and U16 players. During the Spring, create a U14/U15 league and allow 8<sup>th</sup> grade waivers to ensure U15 players still have a place to play. League play can be 11 v 11 or small sided play.

## IOWA SOCCER MEMBER BOARDS

**Q:** What steps do you recommend I take in order to effectively guide my club through this transition?

**A:** There are a number of steps that Iowa Soccer would encourage you to take in order to effectively make this transition:

1. **DO YOUR HOMEWORK.** Read through the materials provided by U.S. Soccer to make sure you understand the new initiatives, implications and timelines.
2. **COMMUNICATE.** Share and discuss the new player development initiatives with your coaches, players, and parents. Inform them that you are working on a plan to ensure your club transitions smoothly.
3. **PLAN.** Create an implementation plan. This plan may include identification of age groups that are significantly impacted by the changes, and a roster analysis of the teams within your program to establish the projected impact these changes will have at the team level. In addition, you may want to schedule meetings with your club members and coaches as well as any other key players involved in the transition.
4. Contact the Iowa Soccer office with questions, or to schedule a face-to-face meeting, or request an Iowa Soccer staff member attend your board or parent meetings.

## IOWA SOCCER STAFF

Primary staff contacts

515-252-6363

- Gareth Smith, Director of Coaching Education, ext. 107, [gsmith@iowasoccer.org](mailto:gsmith@iowasoccer.org)
- Nancy Greenley, State Registrar, ext. 101, [ngreenley@iowasoccer.org](mailto:ngreenley@iowasoccer.org)

Additional staff contacts

515-252-6363

- Harold Kahler, Executive Director, ext. 103, [hkahler@iowasoccer.org](mailto:hkahler@iowasoccer.org)
- Craig Winger, Director of Competitions, ext. 106, [cwinger@iowasoccer.org](mailto:cwinger@iowasoccer.org)
- Jenny Wood, Director of Marketing and Communications, ext. 104, [jwood@iowasoccer.org](mailto:jwood@iowasoccer.org)