



## Mass Youth Soccer Introduces **Safe Soccer** platform

...in support of U.S. Soccer's required Safe Soccer Framework and our collective efforts to provide the safest possible soccer environment for all players and participants.

What's coming this year from Mass Youth Soccer:

- Abuse Prevention Education and Training
- Expansion of Background Checks
- New Membership Management System
- New Safe Soccer Platform

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### **Safety Above All**

Our mission, vision and belief statements stress that our youth participants' health, safety and wellbeing are driving factors in all that we do and in the services we provide to our members. From the day a young child first registers to play through their final years as a teenager, Massachusetts Youth Soccer is dedicated to providing the best possible environment.

### **Massachusetts Youth Soccer Safe Soccer Statement**

The Massachusetts Safe Soccer platform provides all Massachusetts Youth Soccer participants (players, coaches, referees, administrators, volunteers and parents) the tools to make their soccer experience safe, healthy and free from emotional, physical or sexual abuse.

Our Safe Soccer platform includes policies, procedures, background screening of all adults, education and training, reporting, monitoring and enforcement to help all participants, young and old, have the very best soccer experience.

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### **Massachusetts Youth Soccer Athlete and Participant Safety Policy**

Under the Mass Youth Soccer Safe Soccer platform, we are required by U.S. Soccer to establish an Athlete and Participant Safety Policy. The official Massachusetts Youth Soccer Athlete and Participant Safety Policy can be found at [www.mayouthsoccer.org](http://www.mayouthsoccer.org) under Administration – Risk Management.

This expansive policy calls for the implementation of additional education, training, policies and procedures and protocols. This policy applies to all Mass Youth Soccer member organizations and should be referenced on each of these organization's websites. A brief description of the most important components follows.

### **Abuse Prevention Education and Training**

We all know our children derive countless benefits from playing sports. These include having fun, as well as making new friends, learning teamwork, learning how to win and lose, improving fitness, and many more. Yet, unfortunately, we know there are possible downsides to being actively involved in sports, inherent risks that potentially jeopardize our children's health and wellness. Just as we try our

best to teach our children about properly warming up, playing safely and understanding the rules, there are other risks we must be prepared to mitigate.

Abuse in youth sports is more prevalent than most of us think. Abuse comes in many different forms: physical, neglect, emotional/psychological and sexual. Abuse manifests itself through acts of misconduct, including bullying, hazing, harassment (including sexual harassment), emotional misconduct, physical misconduct, and sexual misconduct. A recent study published in JAMA Pediatrics found that around 1 million children per year experience some form of abuse in a youth sports setting. Of the participants surveyed for this study, 64% reported suffering from some form of emotional and/or verbal abuse while participating in youth sports. These include being called names by adults during practice/games, having “mean things” yelled at them, being punished for their athletic performance during a game, etc. Of those who reported experiencing abuse, 6.4% also reported some kind of sexual abuse.

Education and training is one way all adults involved in youth sports can help address and possibly thwart one of the most preventable injuries in youth sports: child abuse. By becoming more aware and learning how to become more engaged, we can all have an impact on abuse rates and improve the youth soccer experience for all.

Commencing with 2019, and mandatory per U.S. Soccer by September 1, 2019, all adults involved in youth soccer must take an initial Abuse Prevention Training course and an annual refresher. The course is offered online at no cost through the U.S. Center for SafeSport. More information about the course can be found in the Massachusetts Youth Soccer Athlete and Participant Safety Policy located at [www.mayouthsoccer.org](http://www.mayouthsoccer.org) under Administration – Risk Management.

### **Expansion of Background Checks**

Another component to help fight child abuse is a much broader and expansive background check and screening process. Currently, Mass Youth Soccer conducts the Commonwealth of Massachusetts required CORI record search and check, as well as ad hoc expanded checks on certain individuals. Under the new U.S. Soccer requirements, we must conduct more extensive checks. Commencing with 2019, and required per U.S. Soccer by September 1, 2019, all adults involved youth soccer will need to have appropriate background screening before being involved with our children.

U.S. Soccer has provided us with the guidance that appropriate background screening includes both state of residence and national criminal and sex offender searches and screening. To comply with this guidance, Mass Youth Soccer will require the following for all adults:

- Massachusetts Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) search and check
- Massachusetts and National Sexual Offender Record Information (SORI) search and check
- National Background search and check

Mass Youth Soccer will also screen against all necessary external databases, disqualification lists and disciplinary records.

All of these checks will be conducted in a streamlined and simple process similar to the one we currently use for Adult Registrations and MA CORI. One questionnaire can be used for all three types of searches. All three searches will have a common expiration date, lessening the need for multiple registration dates.

## **New Membership Management System**

How do we expect you and ourselves to handle this? Your Mass Youth Soccer state support staff have been contemplating this very question since the Federal Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and Safe Sport Authorization Act of 2017 (the “SafeSport Act”) was passed in February of 2018. Now that U.S. Soccer has thoroughly reviewed the act and established the norms and standards for us to follow, we have decided to move from our current Membership Management Service (MMS) provider to **Stack Sports**, the same provider being used directly by U.S. Soccer.



The MMS from Stack Sports is **U.S. Soccer Connect**. This service will now be used for all Adult Registrations and new CORI/SORI/Background Check processing, and as the system for player registration uploads starting spring of 2019 – in time for the soccer year starting September 2019. Every member organization will be provided free access to the U.S. Soccer Connect – Club Connect system to help manage this process.

The Club Connect system will have all of the tools needed to help town/club Registrars, Risk Managers (formerly CORI Submitters) and other leaders manage every adult’s risk management and credential needs.

Stack Sports will be contacting all member organizations to help with all steps necessary to get the Club Connect system up and working and then provide training at every phase. Plus, if your member organization decides to use Club Connect for your overall registration and team management needs, you will have access to the system at deeply discounted rates.

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## **New Massachusetts Safe Soccer Platform**

As introduced at the beginning of this document, the Massachusetts Safe Soccer platform provides all Massachusetts Youth Soccer participants (players, coaches, referees, administrators, volunteers and parents) the tools to make their soccer experience safe, healthy and free from emotional, physical or sexual abuse.

Mass Youth Soccer will be developing a new micro web site to provide all members quick and easy access to useful information, policies and procedures, training, videos and other resources encompassing all aspects of player and participant safety. This will include:

- Abuse Prevention
- Head Injury – Concussion and Heading Policies
- Injury Prevention
- Nutrition
- Weather Policies
- Goal Safety

## **Proposed Player Fee Increase**

With these new requirements comes the need for additional financial resources to provide the finest quality services. The largest cost will be for the more expansive SORI and National Background checks and screening. The total cost includes both the fees for the check as well as additional administrative expenses. Currently we absorb all of the costs for maintaining the MA CORI process with internal administrative staff only. We have used some outside resources for additional ad hoc checks, but not on the scale we must perform starting this year. We must now conduct the same CORI, SORI and National background checks on all adults and a large number of specific county-by-county checks on adults who have lived outside of Massachusetts, those who come back with positive “hits” on their records and others as required.

Based on our research, requests for proposals and economical negotiations we have been able to secure appropriate background check services at very reasonable fees. The per adult rates will range from \$8 to \$24 depending on the type of initial and subsequent search needed. We predict an average fee to be \$14 per adult to be conducted every two or three years, depending on final approval from USYS. We are hoping for 3 years to reduce annual costs.

In addition, there will be a need for additional funds to support the entire Safe Soccer platform so that we can provide quality fresh content directly to all players, coaches, referees, administrators, volunteers and parents.

As a part of our fee structure changes we will be providing one very large additional benefit to all members. Currently our insurance program primarily protects our players and adults during fall and spring normal season soccer activities with limited coverage during winter indoor training only. With the new fee structure all Mass Youth Soccer registered and affiliated players and adults will have insurance coverage all year long for normal soccer activities. This will be the continuation of regular town, club and league play as well as all indoor (soccer and futsal) practices and league play (in sanctioned facilities) and summer sanctioned clinics and camps. This expansion of member insurance benefit is broad reaching.

Another benefit built into the new fee structure will be the seed funding for our TOPSoccer program. TOPSoccer (The Outreach Program for Soccer) is a community-based training and team placement program for young athletes with disabilities, organized by youth soccer association volunteers. The program is designed to bring the opportunity of learning and playing soccer to any boy or girl, who has a mental or physical disability. Also, seed funding for our statewide Director of Soccer Development program is included. This strategic initiative has proven to be successful and will now become a regular program provided to every member town and club organization.

Even though we are confident that our membership numbers will continue to remain constant and start to grow, we have to be realistic in this present moment that the reduction in children playing sports is still very much a reality. We have to plan for and make arrangements to provide all members the best quality services at the most economical costs.

There are several parts to the overall annual fee our members submit for player registrations. These include:

- US Soccer Fee
- US Youth Soccer Fee
- Mass Youth Soccer Complex Funding Fee
- Mas Youth Soccer Player Fee

Below is the breakdown of our current (2018/2019) Fee Structure.

<b><u>Current Player Fees</u></b>	
U.S. Soccer Fees (pass-through)	\$1
U.S. Youth Soccer (pass-through)	\$1
Mass Youth Soccer Complex Funding Fee	\$3
Mass Youth Soccer Membership Fee	\$9
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$14</b>
<b><u>Current Adult Fees</u></b>	
Mass Youth Soccer Membership Fee	\$16

### **Proposed Fee Options**

As described in the paragraphs above and using the membership number of 133,000 players and 30,000 adults we will be able to create the necessary funds using either of the options present below to fund the requirement for broader background checks and screen, expanded insurance protection, TOP Soccer and Director of Soccer Development programs. Both options will provide us with nearly identical sums to meet our current needs.

<b><u>Option A</u></b>	
<b><u>Proposed Fees- \$2.00 per player increase</u></b>	
U.S. Soccer Fees (pass-through)	\$1.00
U.S. Youth Soccer (pass-through) *	\$2.25
Mass Youth Soccer Complex Funding Fee	\$3.00
Mass Youth Soccer Membership Fee	\$11.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$17.25</b>
* U.S. Youth Soccer has increased fees, first time in 15 years, by \$1.25 to \$2.25 per year.	
<b><u>No Change to Adult Fees</u></b>	
Mass Youth Soccer Membership Fee	<b>\$16.00</b>

<b><u>Option B</u></b>	
<b><u>Proposed Fees- \$1.75 per player increase</u></b>	
U.S. Soccer Fees (pass-through)	\$1.00
U.S. Youth Soccer (pass-through) *	\$2.25
Mass Youth Soccer Complex Funding Fee	\$3.00
Mass Youth Soccer Membership Fee	\$10.75
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$17.00</b>
* U.S. Youth Soccer has increased fees, first time in 15 years, by \$1.25 to \$2.25 per year.	
<b><u>Proposed Adult Fees</u></b>	
Mass Youth Soccer Membership Fee	<b>\$17.00</b>

A vote from our membership will be conducted at the March 9, 2019 Annual General meeting. An approved fee increase it will become effective in the soccer year starting September 2019.