2026/2027 Updated Decision on Age Group Formation

Following extensive review and discussion, US Youth Soccer, AYSO, and US Club Soccer have collectively decided to move to an age group player formation cycle that runs from August 1 to July 31, starting with the 2026-27 season/registration year. This change was made based on additional critical feedback, data, and expert input to better align players with their school-grade peers. Our associations feel that this age group player formation will be the most inclusive and help increase participation.

The August 1 to July 31 age group player formation cycle will be used for all USYS league and Cup competitions for the 2026-27 season/registration year including: National Championships, Presidents Cup, and National League.

US Youth Soccer CEO Tom Condone addressed the adjustment to the registration process: “At US Youth Soccer, our mission is to support the development of every player. After careful collaboration with our partners and listening to our membership, we believe this shift to an August 1 player formation cycle better aligns with school calendars, supports social and individual needs, and ultimately enhances the youth soccer experience for families across the country.”

As a reminder, under US Soccer’s new policy, each Federation member can determine age group registration rules for the leagues and competitions they operate or sanction. To support this transition, US Soccer has introduced a tool to help parents and guardians easily understand the age groupings based on their child’s birthdate.

Again, please note that this decision is effective beginning with each Organization Member’s 2026-27 season/registration year.

2026/2027 Age Grouping Rationale

- Transitioning to an 8/1-7/31 age grouping is a return to the former grouping prior to 2017. Calendar birth year was mandated by US Soccer when most youth soccer was previously using school age.
- The mandate has been removed, allowing US Soccer Member Organizations the ability to group players as they see fit.
- The majority of youth soccer is non-competitive/recreational. The benefits of youth sport participation are numerous, but USYS feels that the social elements are some of the most important.
- While using the calendar birth year age grouping, USYS heard frequently from families asking for their children to play with their classmates.
- Using the school year grouping creates the fewest trapped players.
- USYS feels that school year grouping promotes stronger team chemistry and retention by allowing children to play with their schoolmates and closest friends.
- Grouping by school year often places players in a more consistent emotional and physical developmental environment.
- School age grouping will help college recruitment. Players of the same graduating class will be participating together in high-level tournaments and matches.

2026/2027 Age Grouping Changes FAQ

When do the age group changes take effect?

For the 2026/2027 seasonal year, USYS competition age groups will be structured based on the dates August 1-July 31. Beginning on 8/1/2026 all USYS competitions will use August 1-July 31to group players. All teams formed for the 2026/2027 seasonal year should be grouped based on these dates.

What age group will my child play in based on the new groupings?

Parents and guardians can use the below table to determine their player's age grouping or the US Soccer roster formation tool.

Who else will be grouping players based on August 1-July 31?

USYS has collaborated with both US Club Soccer and AYSO to mutually recognize August 1-July 31 age groupings.

What about State Associations?

As direct members of US Soccer, State Associations may choose to group players by whatever dates they select. However, USYS regional and national competitions (leagues and cups) will be grouped based on August 1-July 31 cutoffs. USYS recommends that all state association programing follow these dates.

What about National Championships and Presidents Cup?

Teams participating in National Championships and Presidents Cup National Qualifiers and Nationals must be grouped using the dates August 1-July 31.

How will USYS National League implement the change?

National League will also group teams based on school year- August 1-July 31. National League rules allow for flexibility (playing up and combine U18/U19) to not pose significant issues with the team composition changes.

Note from National League rules- "Retaining player continuity of nine (9) from their previous seasonal year club". There is not a team continuity rule. Multiple teams from the same club who may be able to claim the team history of one previous team, will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Additional continuity concerns will also be examined individually by National League.

Will players who are impacted by the new groupings be given exceptions to play on their existing teams?

For USYS run competitions (National League, National Championships and Presidents Cup) there will not be age variances granted. Players can play up in accordance with the competition rules but play downs will not be permitted. USYS State Associations, can grant age variance under USYS Policy 105 (below) for state sanctioned play.

> *Rule 105. STATE VARIANCES*
>
> *A State Association may permit variances in Rules 104 and 205 of this policy in the best interest of*
>
> *developing the sport within the jurisdiction of the State Association. Those variances do not apply to the state level of*
>
> *US Youth Soccer National Championship, National Presidents Cup or Regional or National League competitions.*

How will the oldest age groups be handled?

For USYS competitions (leagues and cups), the U18 and U19 age group will continue to be combined in a U19 age group.

How will the Olympic Development Program (ODP) be grouped?

ODP groupings will be unchanged and continue to utilize only January 1-December 31.

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Birth Year and Season Matrix

When determining the age group for a season, the year the season ends should be used for determining the birth year. Also note that the format "U followed by age" really means that age and younger.

Birth Year	2026/27 Seasonal Year Age Chart (Team Age Banding)											
	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
2007	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		U19	U19	U19	U19
2008	U19	U19	U19	U19	U19	U19	U19	U18	U18	U18	U18	U18
2009	U18	U18	U18	U18	U18	U18	U18	U17	U17	U17	U17	U17
2010	U17	U17	U17	U17	U17	U17	U17	U16	U16	U16	U16	U16
2011	U16	U16	U16	U16	U16	U16	U16	U15	U15	U15	U15	U15
2012	U15	U15	U15	U15	U15	U15	U15	U14	U14	U14	U14	U14
2013	U14	U14	U14	U14	U14	U14	U14	U13	U13	U13	U13	U13
2014	U13	U13	U13	U13	U13	U13	U13	U12	U12	U12	U12	U12
2015	U12	U12	U12	U12	U12	U12	U12	U11	U11	U11	U11	U11
2016	U11	U11	U11	U11	U11	U11	U11	U10	U10	U10	U10	U10
2017	U10	U10	U10	U10	U10	U10	U10	U9	U9	U9	U9	U9
2018	U9	U9	U9	U9	U9	U9	U9	U8	U8	U8	U8	U8
2019	U8	U8	U8	U8	U8	U8	U8	U7	U7	U7	U7	U7
2020	U7	U7	U7	U7	U7	U7	U7	U6	U6	U6	U6	U6
2021	U6	U6	U6	U6	U6	U6	U6	U5	U5	U5	U5	U5
2022	U5	U5	U5	U5	U5	U5	U5	U4	U4	U4	U4	U4
2023	U4	U4	U4	U4	U4	U4	U4	U3	U3	U3	U3	U3

Rec Banding		
	U6 = U6 and U5	8/1/2020-7/31/2022
	U8 = U8 and U7	8/1/2018-7/31/2020
	U10 = U10 and U9	8/1/2016-7/31/2018
	U12 = U12 and U11	8/1/2014-7/31/2016
	U14 = U14 and U13	8/1/20012-7/31/2014
	HS = U15 U16 U17 U18 U19	8/1/2007-7/31/2012

HS High School