



Introduction to School Year Transition for 26/27 Season

What is changing?

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.**

Why is this change being made?

This change was made based on additional critical feedback, data, and expert input to better align players with their school-grade peers. All associations involved feel that this age group player formation will be the most inclusive and help increase participation.

- 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.

What does this mean for IYSA Clubs?

All teams and players, both competitive and recreational, will be required to register players using school year (8/1-7/31) beginning the 2026/27 seasonal year. There will not be exceptions, as all teams are registered through the same registration event. Additionally, as all USYS events, including the National Championship Series, will be making this transition, it keeps IYSA in line with the national standard.

A more detailed document from USYS, including FAQs and a team banding matrix can be found here: [IYSA USYS School Year Statement.pdf](#)