



2016 USSF Soccer Changes

Age-Group

Overview of US Soccer age-group changes:

The current—and often confusing—August 1 to July 31 “soccer age” will be discontinued, beginning with the 2016-17 cycle. Instead, teams will be organized by player year of birth: 2004, 2005, 2006, etc.

The primary reason behind this is that the United States Soccer Federation (USSF) decided to move the United States to the global age-group standard. The US already does this at the ODP level, and will now expand this to fully include all of youth travel soccer. This is a 'mandate', meaning that ALL youth soccer clubs MUST comply, without exception.

US Soccer will still categorize age groups with the “Under” designation (example: U9, U10, U11, etc). However, the definition of these categories will change, beginning with the 2016-17 season. This is being done in order to align the definition to the birth year changes.

Example:

- U10 Current Definition: Player must be aged 10 or younger.
- U10 New Definition: Player must be born in 2007.

Because of the definition change, it will appear to many that their child is skipping a year of travel soccer after the changes go into effect. This is not the case whatsoever! No player will skip a year of soccer due to the definition change.

Hunter Soccer Club (HSC) implementation of mandated age-group changes:

Because the age group changes go into effect for the 2016-17 season, when HSC travel team tryouts are held in March-April 2016, players will be assigned to age groups by birth year to align with the new standard.



However, HSC recognizes that one of the primary reasons that kids play soccer—at all levels—is the fun and camaraderie of playing with their friends. To that end, HSC has designed the implementation of age appropriate play for the 2016-17 season with the following considerations:

- Adhere to the developmental intent of the new standards.
- Stay true to our commitment to age-appropriate play.
- Allow older, long-established teams to remain together, if desired.

HSC's implementation plan was carefully and thoughtfully constructed starting when US Soccer announced the mandated changes earlier in 2015. Our Travel Soccer Committee spearheaded this plan, consulting with the club's leadership, EPYSA, travel leagues (ICSL, PAGS, Delco), many local soccer clubs, and of course our travel team coaches.

The table below summarizes HSC's implementation of the USSF birth-year changes:

Travel Soccer Cycle	2015-2016 (Current Cycle)	2016-2017 (Next Cycle)	
Age Bracket	Current USSF Age – effective until 2016 tryouts	New USSF Age – effective after 2016 tryouts	Notes for 2016-2017 season
U9	Age 9 and under	Birth year 2008 (Turns 8 in 2016)	Teams only contain players born in 2008, no underage player exceptions
U10	Age 10 and under	Birth year 2007 (Turns 9 in 2016)	Teams only contain players born in 2007, no underage player exceptions
U11	Age 11 and under	Birth year 2006 (Turns 10 in 2016)	Teams only contain players born in 2006, no underage player exceptions
U12	Age 12 and under	Birth year 2005 (Turns 11 in 2016)	Teams only contain players born in 2005, no underage player exceptions
U13	Age 13 and under	Birth year 2004 (Turns 12 in 2016)	Teams are primarily age pure (players born in 2004); There will be qualified exceptions for players born in 2005.
U14	Age 14 and under	Birth year 2003 (Turns 13 in 2016)	In addition to age pure players, HSC will allow qualified underage players on teams.
U15	Age 15 and under	Birth year 2002 (Turns 14 in 2016)	In addition to age pure players, HSC will allow qualified underage players on teams.
U16	Age 16 and under	Birth year 2001 (Turns 15 in 2016)	In addition to age pure players, HSC will allow qualified underage players on teams.
U17	Age 17 and under	Birth year 2000 (Turns 16 in 2016)	In addition to age pure players, HSC will allow qualified underage players on teams.
U18	Age 18 and under	Birth year 1999 (Turns 17 in 2016)	In addition to age pure players, HSC will allow qualified underage players on teams.



Implementation plan details:

As part of the implementation of the USSF age-group changes, HSC designates the 2016-17 playing cycle as a **Transition Year**.

U9-U12 Guidelines:

- Teams with the 2016 re-defined age brackets of U9-U12 will be birth-age pure.
- Underage players will not be permitted to be rostered on these teams.

U13 Guidelines:

- Teams with the 2016 re-defined age bracket of U13 are expected to be primarily birth-age pure (born in 2004), but qualified exceptions to be on a U13 team roster will exist for players born in 2005.
 - Qualified Exception Criteria:
 - HSC will follow current EPYSA State Cup roster guidance: Fielded +1 is the baseline, meaning 12 players on a 2016 U13 11 v 11 team must be birth-age pure (born in 2004).
 - The remainder of the player roster (starting at player 13 and up to the roster-size limit of player 18) may include underage players born in 2005.
 - 2005 birth-year Play Up players **MUST** be rated as starters at tryouts (“Starters” as defined by # field players for the age group. i.e.- top 10 players or the starting goalkeeper)
 - 2005 birth-year players aspiring to play in the 2004 birth-year group **MUST** try out for their age pure group (U12) AND play up age group (U13), and sign up for both ahead of time.
 - In the event of a player who plays up prevents Hunter Soccer Club’s ability to build an age pure team at that player’s age pure level, then HSC reserves the right to re-slot the player on their proper birth-age pure team. This stays with HSC’s mission of giving EVERY child a chance to play, so long as they attend and pass a tryout.

U14 & Above Guidelines:

- Teams with the 2016 re-defined age brackets of U14, U15, U16, U17, and U18 will contain birth-age pure players, but may also voluntarily elect to include qualified underage players on their teams.
- The intent here is to keep HSC's older, longstanding teams together and thereby prolong their longevity.



2016-17 Tryouts:

- During March and April of 2016, Future Player Academy (FPA) will run tryouts for the 2016-17 playing cycle, and will rate prospective travel players within their age groups.
- FPA will not be given prospective player names or birth years.
- No coaches, assistant coaches, or team managers will be permitted to force any player to play up out of their proper birth year.
- In the event a player playing up prevents Hunter's ability to build an age pure team at that player's age pure level, Hunter Soccer Club reserves the right to re-slot the player on their proper birth-age pure team. This stays with HSC's mission of giving EVERY child a chance to play, so long as they attend and pass a tryout.
- Hunter Soccer Club reserves the right to request (but never force) that a player or players play up in order to complete a roster, if and when extenuating circumstances require this. This is also in line with the Club's mission to give every child a chance to participate.
- Secondary/guest passes will be issued to fill all empty roster spaces as required. This will apply for the 2016 re-defined age bracket of U12 and older.
- This is a one year transition. It is designed to allow the older teams another year to play together and then move on. In 2017-18 travel teams will be 100% age pure from U9-U13, and this will expand naturally as time passes.

2016 US Soccer Changes Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Below are frequently asked questions pertaining to the implementation of the 2016 US Soccer mandates by Hunter Soccer Club (HSC).

[My child is currently playing on a Hunter travel team. What team will they play for during the Winter and Spring of 2016? Do the teams change on January 1, 2016?](#)

As will remain the case, travel teams remain intact until tryouts in the Spring (March-April). All players currently on a HSC travel team will still play with their same team through the Winter/Indoor season and through the 2016 State Cups and Spring league season.

[Are all youth soccer clubs complying with the new calendar year registration?](#)

Yes. US Youth Soccer has adopted the new standards nation-wide beginning with the 2016-17 season. All state associations, clubs, and travel leagues are required to comply with the new standards.



[Why is Hunter Soccer relaxing its strong stance on age appropriate play?](#)

HSC has maintained and strictly enforced that players should play within their age groups at the currently defined U9 to U12 age levels. Under exceptional circumstances, the club has allowed playing up for players beginning at U13 and above. The mandated changes to age groups certainly qualify as such. HSC's transitional policy on age appropriate play for 2016-17 is an attempt to strike a balance between the developmental intent of the new US Soccer standards and the desire to keep the older kids playing with their long-established teammates and coaches.

[My child is a new player joining Hunter Soccer from another club. Do the transitional "playing up" rules apply to my child?](#)

Yes. A key objective of the Transition Year policy is to allow older, long-established HSC teams to remain together for their final years of club soccer. All new players falling under the new age group definition of U14, U15, U16, U17, and U18 - whether joining HSC from another club or graduating from HSC's intramural program - will be eligible to play up.

[If I want my child to play up next year, do I need to notify the club that they are trying out for the older age group? Does my child still need to try out for their proper birth-age group?](#)

Yes. For planning purposes (tryouts, coaches, training staff, etc.), HSC needs to know what age groups our older players will select when registering for tryouts. At that time, the parents of players who are qualified to play up as noted in our Transition Year policy will be asked to select whether their child wishes to play age appropriate or play up an age group. Players that meet HSC's Transition Year Qualified Exception criteria to play up must attend their birth-age tryout as well as their play up tryout.

[Regarding "keeping teams together." Will there be tryouts for U14 and older teams next year or will the teams stay the same?](#)

Per existing club policy, there will be annual competitive tryouts for all age groups in the Spring. There should be no expectation that older teams will be exempt from roster changes simply because of the Transition Year policy.

[Who decides if my U14 child "plays up" next year? Can the coach force everyone to play up?](#)

Only PARENTS will decide whether or not they want their child to play up with the same group as last season. That is an individual decision for each family and no coach or administrator will make that decision for you.

That being said, Hunter Soccer encourages all players to play age-appropriate, even under the Transition Year policy.



What if there are too many or too few players at the older age groups to form full teams?

In the event that the total number of players in an age group is not sufficient to forming two or more teams, Hunter Soccer reserves the right to limit the number of players that may play up into that age group. Conversely, HSC may invite additional players to play up in order ensure that there are enough rostered players to maintain a team in an age group. HSC's goal is to place all players on a team and avoid cutting any players.

If my child plays up in 2016-17, can I move them to their age-appropriate team in 2017-18?

Yes. Players can always play in their age-appropriate groups and Hunter Soccer encourages this.

How will these changes impact team coach assignments?

With the implementation of the new age groups, HSC's volunteer coaching staff may also require realignment. In some cases, there will be a match between current coaches and the new age group teams. However, HSC also anticipates that volunteer coach vacancies will arise and these will be addressed by the club. Prospective coaches will be interviewed as is presently the case and such vacancies will be filled by the time the new age group teams assemble.

My child is not qualified to play up under Hunter's Transition Year policy, but I still want them to. Can I appeal this?

No. Only qualified players as defined in the club's Transition Year policy will be permitted to play up. There will be no appeal process for unqualified players, as this would be inconsistent with the mandates. Ultimately, if a parent of an unqualified player strongly feels that their child should play up, then there may be opportunities to play up at another club. However, based on our many discussions with other clubs, these opportunities will be highly limited. In fact, HSC's Transition Year policy is more progressive compared to how most other clubs are implementing the US Soccer mandates.

How do these changes affect Hunter's U8 PDP program?

The U8 Player Development Program is expected to also move to birth year. This means that the incoming crop of players who become part of U8 PDP will have a birth year of 2010.

How do these changes affect Hunter's Intramural program?

At this time, no decisions have been made regarding changes to HSC's Fall Intramural program. To date, US Soccer has not issued any mandates for recreational and intramural leagues. Over the winter, the club will evaluate whether it makes sense to adopt the changes mandated for travel soccer. Should HSC decide to implement changes, the club will inform parents in advance of 2016 Fall Intramural player registration.



Will Hunter be holding a parents Town Hall to review the mandate implementation plan?

No. Hunter Soccer will not be holding any Town Hall events with parents. The club will provide further updates via HSC's website and email. Additionally, for those parents who have a child on a current HSC travel team, you are encouraged to discuss the mandates with your child's head coach.