



## Changes Coming to Youth Soccer in 2016

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### Changes Coming to Youth Soccer in 2016

#### Age Group and Small-Sided Games Mandate from U.S. Soccer

**Click to view official press release from U.S. Soccer (<http://www.ussoccer.com/stories/2015/08/24/18/07/150824-coaching-player-development-initiatives-rel>)**

**FRISCO, Texas (August 24, 2015)** — Next year, the world of youth soccer will continue its evolution as all members of U.S. Soccer will begin to transition on two key factors to encourage further youth development. The first change will be the nationwide adoption of Small-Sided Games and the second will be a shift from school-year to calendar year for the age grouping of teams.

"With these initiatives, we're more likely to have players better prepared down the road," said Tab Ramos, U.S. Youth Technical Director and U-20 Men's National Team head coach. "With small-sided standards, what we're trying to do is to help players develop by putting them in an environment where they are constantly involved in the play, and our changes in birth-year registration will make age groups easier to understand, while aligning our calendar with the international calendar."

US Youth Soccer, the largest member of U.S. Soccer, will assist members with information on these changes through the national office and our 55 member State Associations.

US Youth Soccer director of coaching education and long-time advocate of Small-Sided Games, Sam Snow acknowledged, "Since the mid 1980's US Youth Soccer has been an advocate for Small-Sided Games. Why? The many benefits to the players and even to novice coaches are clear. With fewer players on the field making quick tactical decisions is easier. Players are in the vicinity of the ball more often which engages them in all four components of the game. The players are realistically exposed to the principles of play frequently. In short, Small-Sided Games will accelerate the development of American soccer players."

#### Small-Sided Games

Small-Sided Games will be mandated come August of 2017, with specific changes occurring in regard to alterations to the field size, goals and rules. The result will be a decrease in 11-vs-11 competitions in lieu of more 9-vs-9 and 7-vs-7 competitions. U.S. Soccer will encourage the adoption of Small-Sided Games best practices in August of 2016. US Youth Soccer has been encouraging Small-Sided Games for more than 20 years and most of the 55 member State Associations have adopted the philosophy during that time.

The benefits of Small-Sided Games for players include more fun, more touches on the ball and more tactical decisions. The style of play will allow players to learn different positions, learn tactics

quicker, increase fitness and allow players to be more emotionally and socially involved — creating a more fun and enjoyable game.

**Small-Sided Games FAQ:** [[Download PDF \(/assets/1/15/2016-SSG-BIRTH-YEAR-USYS-FAQ1.PDF\)](#)]

**Small-Sides Games USSF Standards Chart:** [[Download PDF \(/assets/1/15/Standards Chart SSG.pdf\)](#)]

"What we're trying to do is to help players develop by putting them in an environment where they are constantly involved in the play," Ramos said. "That could be with the ball and that could be without the ball, but when you make things small-sided, everyone is somehow involved in the play, whether that's in defending, in cutting angles, in cutting the ball back, you're always in the play."

## Calendar Year

Effective August 2017, the grouping of players will also change nationwide, with encouraged adoption of best practices in August of 2016. U.S. Soccer will go back to calendar birth years to align with international standards and Youth National Team programs.

**US Youth Soccer will implement the best practice of calendar year age grouping for player registration beginning with the 2016-2017 soccer year for US Youth Soccer programs and competitions** (<http://www.usyouthsoccer.org/programs/>).

Using the school calendar for age groups is practiced only in the United States and Canada; as all other FIFA members go by the calendar year.

Previously, age groups were determined based on players born between Aug. 1 and July 31. The change to calendar year age groups will reflect the calendar year, or Jan. 1 to Dec. 31. Players are still allowed to "play up" or play in an older age group.

US Youth Soccer, a respected leader in player development for more than 40 years, has seen the evolution of the game and various changes. The US Youth Soccer Olympic Development Program has used the birth year for the grouping of players since it was established in 1977. In fact, the James P. McGuire Cup, the oldest trophy in youth sport, awarded at the annual US Youth Soccer National Championships also shows the history of teams named for their calendar year age group.

**Calendar Year FAQ:** [[Download PDF \(/assets/1/15/2016-SSG-BIRTH-YEAR-USYS-FAQ.pdf\)](#)]

**Calendar Year Age Matrix 2016-2023** [[Download PDF \(/assets/1/15/USYS-NEW-SOCCER-AGE-CHART-2016-BIRTH-YEAR-MATRIX v1.pdf\)](#)]

"Overall, the two things this accomplishes is it makes things easier and it gets us on the same calendar with the rest of the world," Ramos said. "So now it becomes easier to identify for U.S. National Teams and everything else when it comes to international soccer."

[Click here \(http://www.ussoccer.com/stories/2015/08/24/18/07/150824-coaching-player-development-initiatives-rel\)](http://www.ussoccer.com/stories/2015/08/24/18/07/150824-coaching-player-development-initiatives-rel) for U.S. Soccer's official statement on the changes. More details will be provided as available regarding specific implementation for these mandates from U.S. Soccer.

[Back \(http://www.usyouthsoccer.org/changes\\_coming\\_to\\_youth\\_soccer\\_in\\_2016/\)](http://www.usyouthsoccer.org/changes_coming_to_youth_soccer_in_2016/)

# FAQ

## SMALL-SIDED GAMES

US Youth Soccer Director of Coaching Sam Snow answers some frequently asked questions regarding US Youth Soccer's implementation of Small-Sided Games. For more information on Small-Sided Games, visit <http://www.usyouthsoccer.org/coaches/smallsidedgames/>.



### **What are Small-Sided Games?**

Anything less than 11-a-side is considered a Small-Sided Game. [More Info](#)

### **What are the differences between Small-Sided Games and 11 v. 11 matches in regards to field size, goal size, etc.?**

The fields are smaller, as are the goals and the ball. The length of the game is also shorter. The rules to play the game are modified for each age group. [More Info](#)

### **What are the benefits to Small-Sided Games for players?**

With fewer players on the field and a smaller field on which to play the game the kids are more directly involved in the action of the game. That equates to more enjoyment in playing, more contact with the ball, more tactical decisions made and executed and more physical movement, which improves the player's physical fitness. [More Info](#)

### **Is this something clubs in the United States already participate in?**

Many clubs, especially those affiliated to US Youth Soccer, have been playing Small-Sided Games in one version or another for years, perhaps even a decade or more.

### **Are Small-Sided Games a fixture in other countries like Brazil, Germany, Spain?**

While Small-Sided Games are not new to American soccer, many other countries around the world also play Small-Sided Games with young players. In fact, Spain plays Small-Sided Games up through the U-15 age group. [More Info](#)

### **What are U.S. Soccer and US Youth Soccer doing to help coaches organize Small-Sided Games?**

Assistance is given to coaches through coaching courses and clinics given by the State Associations and the two national organizations.

### **Where can I find more information on Small-Sided Games?**

Anyone interested in learning more about Small-Sided Games should use the Small-Sided Games Resource Center in the Coaches section of the US Youth Soccer website. [More Info](#)

### **When will these Small-Sided Games be introduced in US Youth Soccer?**

Clubs that are ready may make the change immediately, especially for intramural programming. Others may wait until August of 2016. All clubs must be playing Small-Sided Games by August 2017.

US Youth Soccer is the largest member of U.S. Soccer and the Official Grassroots Partner of MLS.

# FAQ

## CALENDAR YEAR AGE GROUPS

US Youth Soccer Director of Coaching Sam Snow answers some frequently asked questions regarding US Youth Soccer's implementation of calendar year age groups as opposed to school year age groups.



### **Why has the decision been made to switch from grouping teams by the school year to the calendar year?**

To be in line with the other 208 countries that register youth players by their year of birth. The change will also make it easier for American club teams to play internationally.

### **How do I know in which age group a player will participate?**

Players born between Jan. 1 and Dec. 31 of any given year will all play on the same team, unless a player is "playing up" in an older age group. For example, a player born on Jan. 1, 2000, would play on the Under-16 team in 2016.

### **What if a player wants to play with his or her school friends, but is in a different age group?**

Depending on local rules for playing up age groups, a player will be able to play up with an older age group, which has been true for decades. As always, a player may not play down with a younger age group.

### **How will this change impact clubs?**

Clubs will need to adjust the players on team rosters once the club makes the change. Most clubs will accomplish that task by simply adjusting the try-out age groups or how they distribute players to teams in the club.

### **How are age groups determined in other FIFA nations?**

By the year in which a player is born; i.e., calendar year.

### **Which US Youth Soccer programs will be affected?**

The Olympic Development Program will not change since it has grouped players by birth year since its inception in 1977. TOPSoccer will be unaffected since players are grouped by ability and less so by age. All other player programs will be directly affected by the change to calendar year player registration.

### **When will the change to calendar year age groups take effect?**

US Youth Soccer programs will change to Calendar Year beginning with the 2016-2017 season. U.S. Soccer has mandated that all play move to the Calendar Year by August 2017.



## US Youth Soccer Programs

[\(http://www.usyouthsoccer.org/programs/AmericanCup/\)](http://www.usyouthsoccer.org/programs/AmericanCup/)

**[Kohl's US Youth Soccer American Cup \(/programs/AmericanCup/\)](#)**  **[\(/videos/kohls\\_american\\_cup-highlights/\)](#)**

The Kohl's US Youth Soccer American Cup provides recreational youth soccer players an opportunity to experience a consistent and high quality statewide tournament in a fun, family-like atmosphere. It fosters stimulation and excitement about soccer in an effort to increase the recreational players interest and love for the game.



[\(/programs/OlympicDevelopmentProgram/\)](#)

**[US Youth Soccer Olympic Development Program \(/programs/OlympicDevelopmentProgram/\)](#)**  **[\(/videos/odp\\_highlights/#\)](#)**

The US Youth Soccer Olympic Development Program (US Youth Soccer ODP) was formed in 1977 to identify a pool of players in each age group from which a National Team will be selected for international competition; to provide high-level training to benefit and enhance the development of players at all levels; and, through the use of carefully selected and licensed coaches, develop a mechanism for the exchange of ideas and curriculum to improve all levels of coaching.



[\(/programs/NationalChampionshipSeries/\)](#)

**[US Youth Soccer National Championship Series \(/programs/NationalChampionshipSeries/\)](#)**  **[\(http://www.usyouthsoccer.org/videos/national/\)](http://www.usyouthsoccer.org/videos/national/)**

Each summer the United States Youth Soccer Association (US Youth Soccer) crowns a boys and girls national champion in each of its seven age divisions (Under 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19). The finals are a culmination of a year-long series of competitions at the state and regional levels known as the US Youth Soccer National Championship Series which provides approximately 185,000 players on 10,000 teams from US Youth Soccer's 55 State Associations the opportunity to showcase their soccer skills against the best competition in the nation.



**[\(/programs/NationalLeague/\)US Youth Soccer National League](#)**

**[\(/programs/NationalLeague/\)](#)**  **[\(/videos/national\\_league\\_highlights/\)](#)**

The US Youth Soccer National League is an extension of the highly successful US Youth Soccer Regional Leagues (US Youth Soccer Region I Champions League, Midwest Regional League, Region III Premier League and Far West Regional League) to play not only to claim the title of National League Champion but also to earn four slots in each gender age group at the US Youth Soccer National Championships. In addition to the four Regional Championship winners, the top four finishers in each age group from the National League will earn slots to the national finals. The National League's top four finishers will also retain their positions in the league for the following season.





[\(http://www.usyouthsoccer.org/PresidentsCup/\)](http://www.usyouthsoccer.org/PresidentsCup/) **US Youth**

**Soccer Presidents Cup** (<http://www.usyouthsoccer.org/PresidentsCup/>)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OGY8mVMssoE&list=PL9iWt4YeIRgQRDNm0RZEEfUtpfghPX\\_n&index=3](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OGY8mVMssoE&list=PL9iWt4YeIRgQRDNm0RZEEfUtpfghPX_n&index=3)

The US Youth Soccer Presidents Cup provides a progressive, competitive experience to US Youth Soccer teams from the state to regional to national level. The Presidents Cup gives players an additional opportunity to compete against teams from across the country at a high level for the joy and the challenge of the game. It provides the chance to experience a unique US Youth Soccer event with camaraderie, community and competition through sport.



[\(/programs/SoccerAcrossAmerica/\)](/programs/SoccerAcrossAmerica/) **Soccer Across America**

[\(/programs/SoccerAcrossAmerica/\)](/programs/SoccerAcrossAmerica/) (Formerly Soccer Start)

[\(/videos/soccer\\_across\\_america\\_highlight/\)](/videos/soccer_across_america_highlight/)

Soccer Across America is designed to introduce the sport of soccer to youngsters living in communities not yet served by existing clubs and leagues. Focused on making soccer available to lower-income children in underserved communities, Soccer Across America provides soccer training and administrative guidance to players and organizations who might otherwise not be exposed to the sport.



[\(/programs/TOPSoccer/\)](/programs/TOPSoccer/)

**US Youth Soccer TOPSoccer** (</programs/TOPSoccer/>) [\(/videos/topsoccer\\_highlights/\)](/videos/topsoccer_highlights/)

US Youth Soccer 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.



[\(/programs/YouthSoccerMonth/\)](/programs/YouthSoccerMonth/)

**Youth Soccer Month** (</programs/YouthSoccerMonth/>) [\(/videos/youth\\_soccer\\_month\\_highlights/\)](/videos/youth_soccer_month_highlights/)

In September, the National Youth Soccer Month campaign celebrates its 12th year of educating the public about the joys, rewards and benefits of playing youth soccer, and offers a variety of resources to learn more about youth soccer and get involved.



[youthsoccermonth.org](http://youthsoccermonth.org)

**US Youth Soccer Capri Sun Roarin' Waters Skills Challenge**

[\(http://www.usyouthsoccer.org/skills\\_challenge/\)](http://www.usyouthsoccer.org/skills_challenge/)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BAeSB5\\_Ixm4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BAeSB5_Ixm4)

The US Youth Soccer Capri Sun Roarin' Waters Skills Challenge provides recreational athletes a chance to test their speed, control and accuracy in a fun and exciting new way. How fast can you run? How is your control around defenders? How accurate are you? Test yourself at the Skills Challenge.





## US YOUTH SOCCER AGE CHART BY SEASONAL YEAR

| Birth Year | 2016-2017 | 2017-2018 | 2018-2019 | 2019-2020 | 2020-2021 | 2021-2022 | 2022-2023 |
|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 2015       |           |           |           |           | U-5       | U-6       | U-7       |
| 2014       |           |           |           | U-5       | U-6       | U-7       | U-8       |
| 2013       |           |           | U-5       | U-6       | U-7       | U-8       | U-9       |
| 2012       |           | U-5       | U-6       | U-7       | U-8       | U-9       | U-10      |
| 2011       | U-5       | U-6       | U-7       | U-8       | U-9       | U-10      | U-11      |
| 2010       | U-6       | U-7       | U-8       | U-9       | U-10      | U-11      | U-12      |
| 2009       | U-7       | U-8       | U-9       | U-10      | U-11      | U-12      | U-13      |
| 2008       | U-8       | U-9       | U-10      | U-11      | U-12      | U-13      | U-14      |
| 2007       | U-9       | U-10      | U-11      | U-12      | U-13      | U-14      | U-15      |
| 2006       | U-10      | U-11      | U-12      | U-13      | U-14      | U-15      | U-16      |
| 2005       | U-11      | U-12      | U-13      | U-14      | U-15      | U-16      | U-17      |
| 2004       | U-12      | U-13      | U-14      | U-15      | U-16      | U-17      | U-18      |
| 2003       | U-13      | U-14      | U-15      | U-16      | U-17      | U-18      | U-19      |
| 2002       | U-14      | U-15      | U-16      | U-17      | U-18      | U-19      | U-20      |
| 2001       | U-15      | U-16      | U-17      | U-18      | U-19      | U-20      |           |
| 2000       | U-16      | U-17      | U-18      | U-19      | U-20      |           |           |
| 1999       | U-17      | U-18      | U-19      | U-20      |           |           |           |
| 1998       | U-18      | U-19      | U-20      |           |           |           |           |
| 1997       | U-19      | U-20      |           |           |           |           |           |
| 1996       | U-20      |           |           |           |           |           |           |
| 1995       |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |
| 1994       |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |





# Player Development Initiatives

USSF BOD Approved - 07/05/2015



# Small Sided Standards



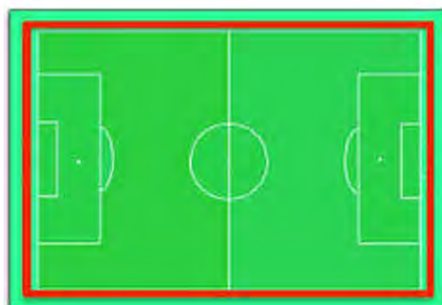
# Small Sided Standards



- Objective
  - Develop more confident, skillful and smarter players at an early age

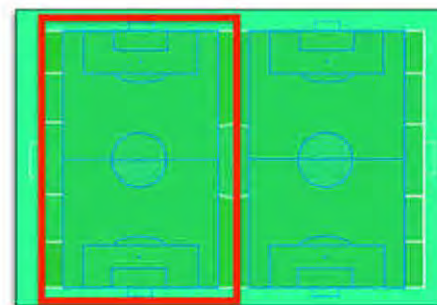


# Field Types and Progression



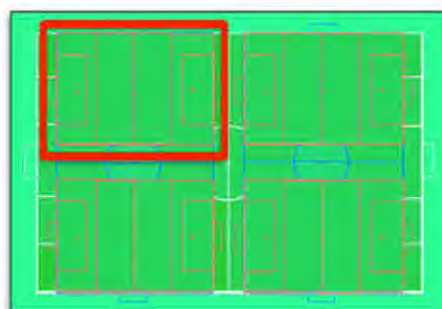
## FULL SIZE FIELD

1. 112x75 yards
2. 11v11
3. U13 onwards
4. White lines
5. One field



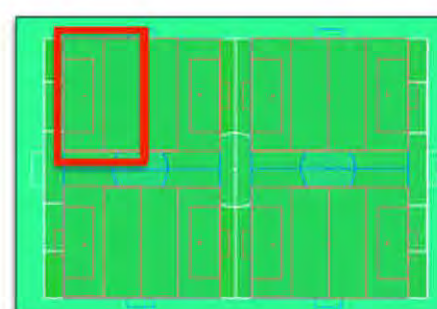
## SMALL SIDED FIELD

1. 75x47 yards
2. 9v9
3. U11 and U12
4. Blue lines
5. Two fields



## DEVELOPMENT FIELD

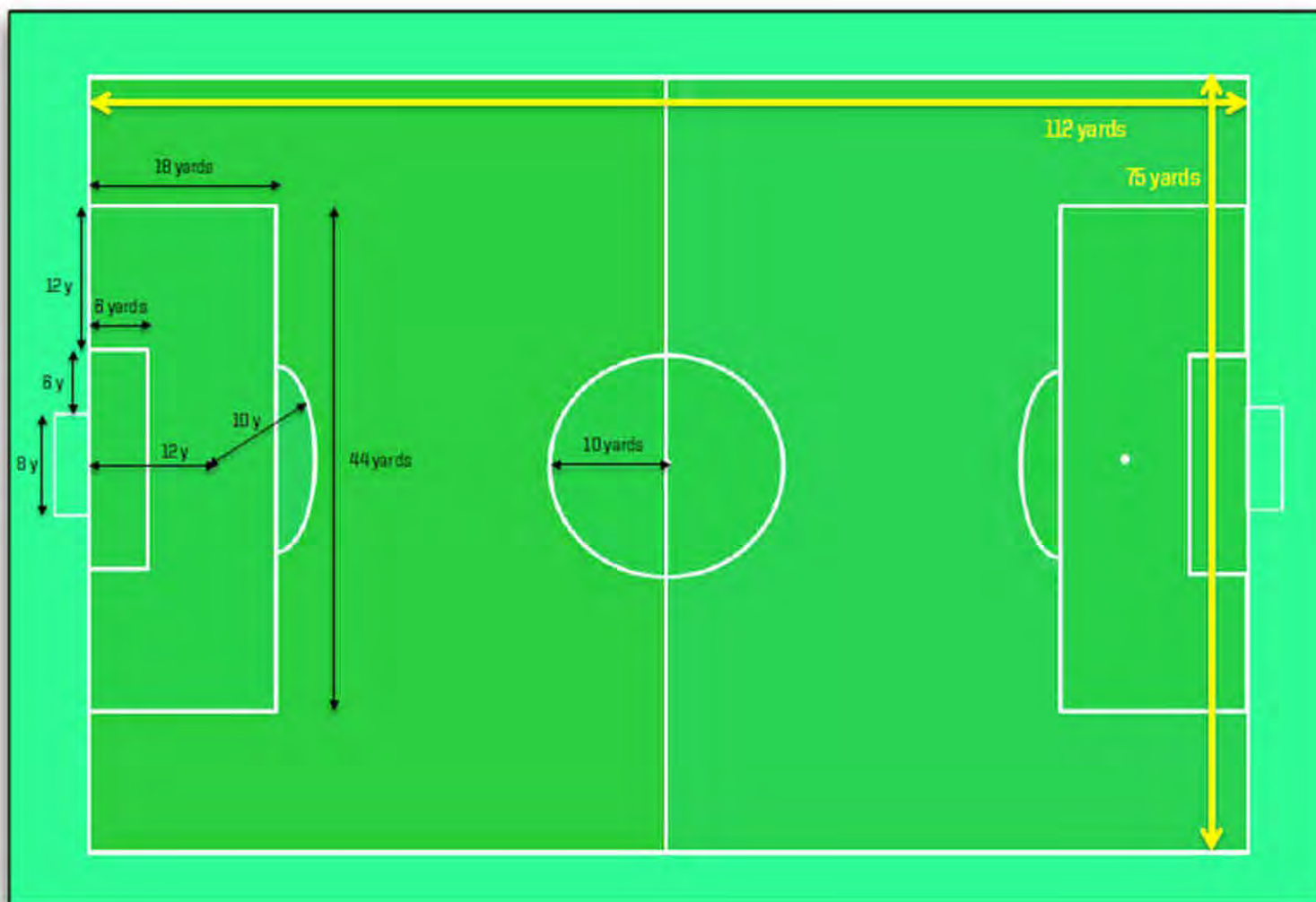
1. 47x30 yards
2. 7v7
3. U9 and U10
4. Red lines
5. Four fields



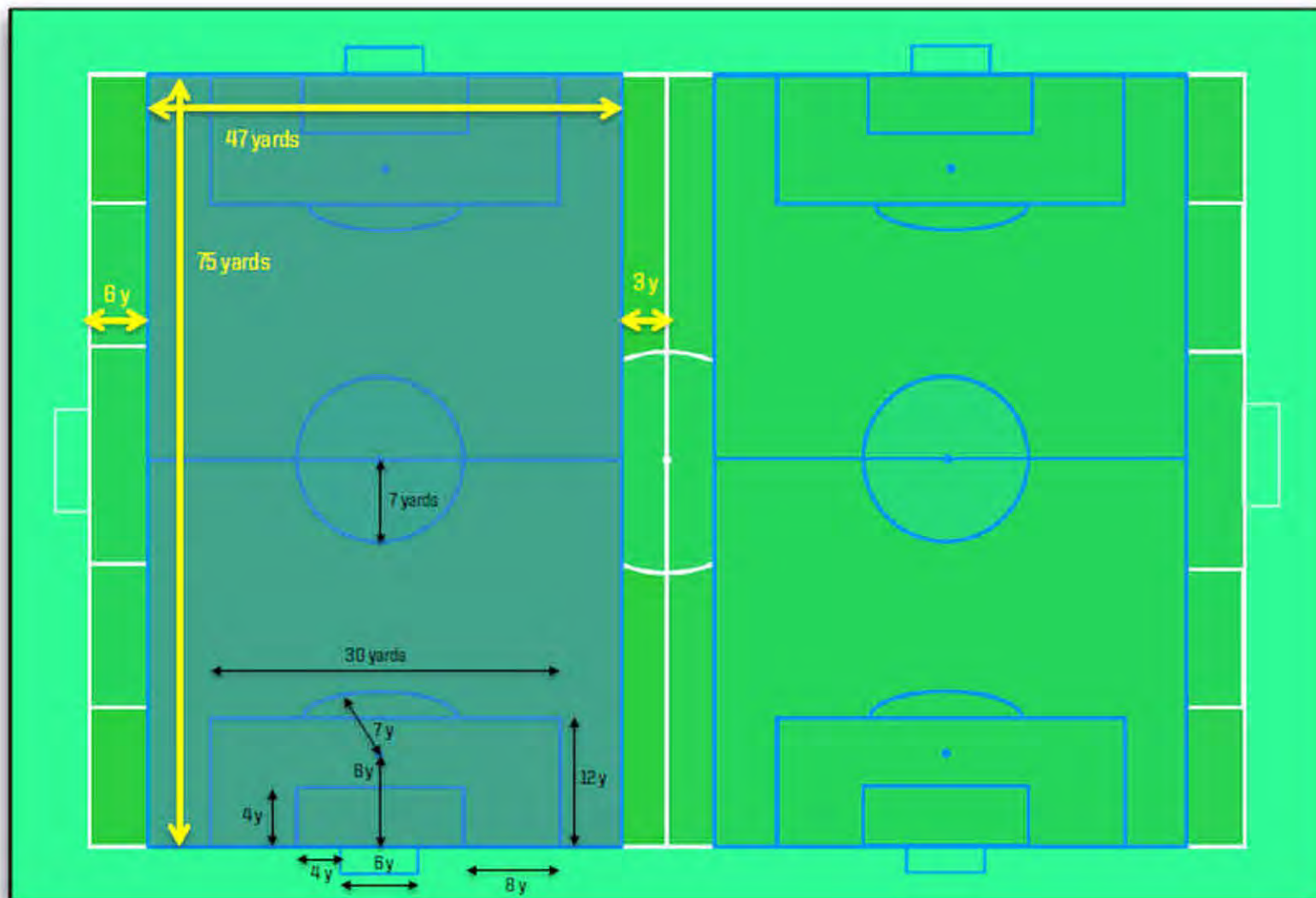
## MINI FIELD

1. 30x20 yards
2. 4v4
3. U6, U7 and U8
4. Red lines
5. Eight fields

# Full Size Field - 11v11

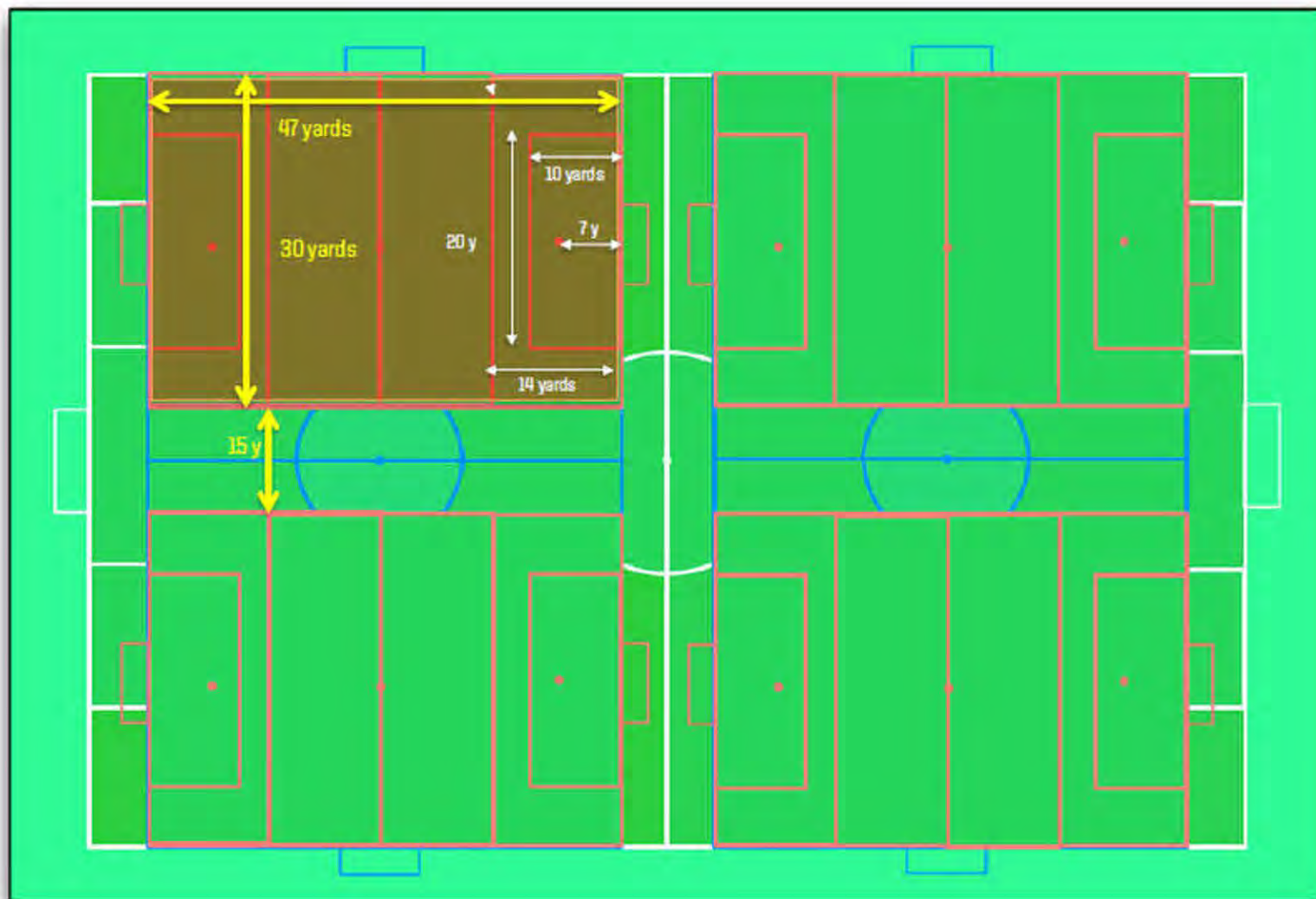


# Small Sided Field - 9v9

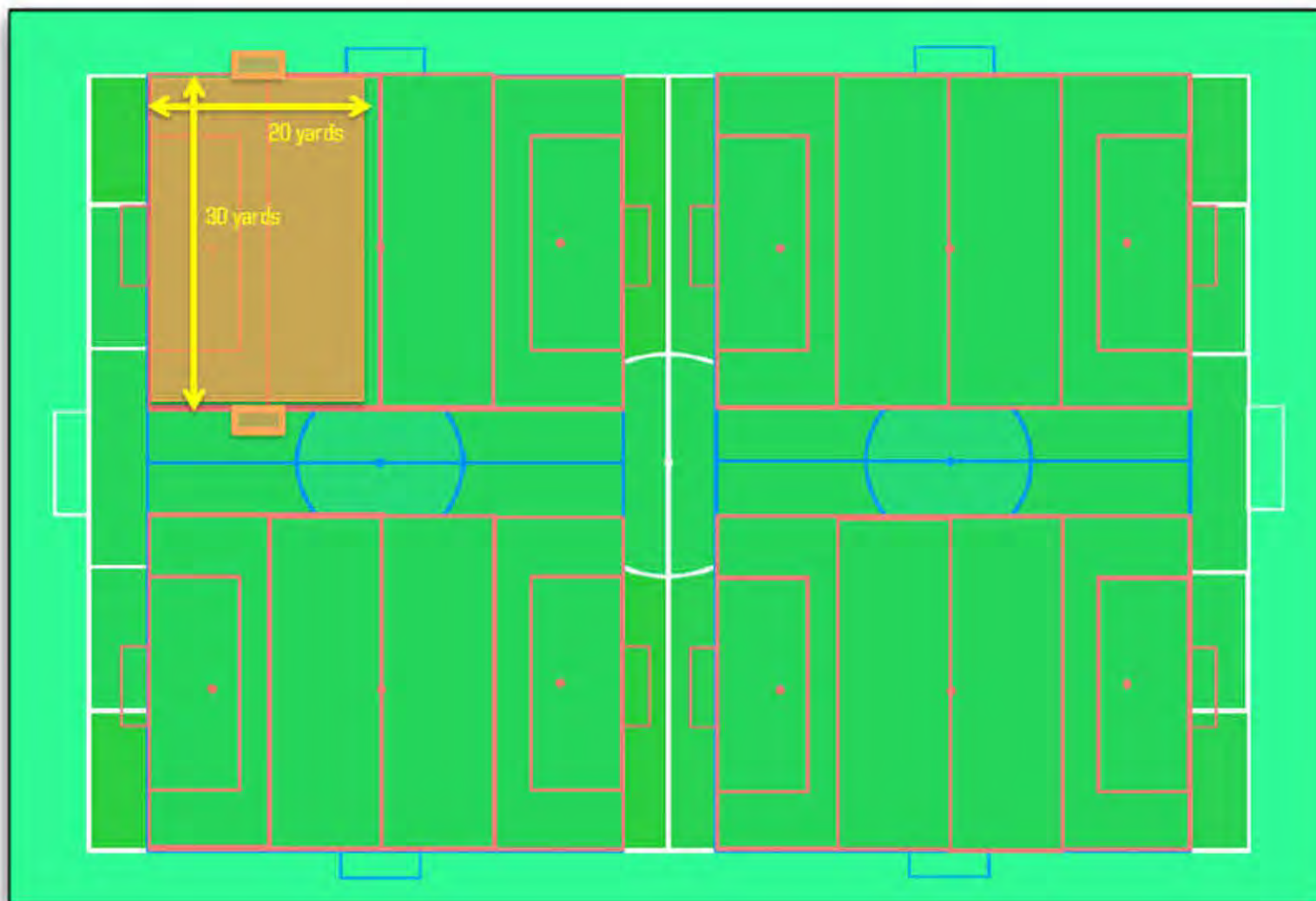




# Development Field - 7v7



# Mini Field - 4v4



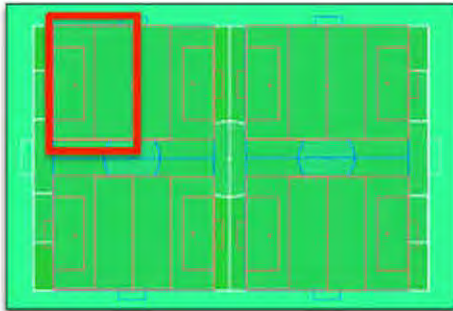
# Standards Chart



|                      | U6          | U7          | U8           | U9           | U10          | U11          | U12          | U13          |
|----------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| <b>Field Size</b>    | 30x20 yards | 30x20 yards | 30x20 yards  | 47x30 yards  | 47x30 yards  | 75x47 yards  | 75x47 yards  | 112x75 yards |
| <b># of Players</b>  | 4v4         | 4v4         | 4v4          | 7v7          | 7v7          | 9v9          | 9v9          | 11v11        |
| <b>GK</b>            | No          | No          | No           | Yes          | Yes          | Yes          | Yes          | Yes          |
| <b>Playing Times</b> | 4x<br>8 min | 4x<br>8 min | 3x<br>15 min | 2x<br>25 min | 2x<br>25 min | 2x<br>30 min | 2x<br>30 min | 2x<br>35 min |
| <b>Break Times</b>   | 5 min       | 5 min       | 5 min        | 10 min       | 10 min       | 10 min       | 10 min       | 15 min       |
| <b>Ball Size</b>     | 3           | 3           | 3            | 4            | 4            | 4            | 4            | 5            |
| <b>Goal Size</b>     | 4'x6'       | 4'x6'       | 4'x6'        | 6.5'x18.5'   | 6.5'x18.5'   | 6.5'x18.5'   | 6.5'x18.5'   | 8'x24'       |
| <b>Offside</b>       | No          | No          | No           | Yes          | Yes          | Yes          | Yes          | Yes          |



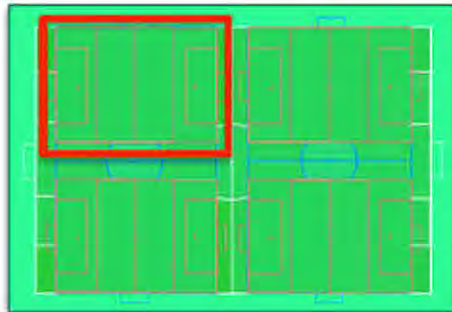
# Rationale



## MINI FIELD - 30x20 yards

- U6, U7 and U8 - 4v4

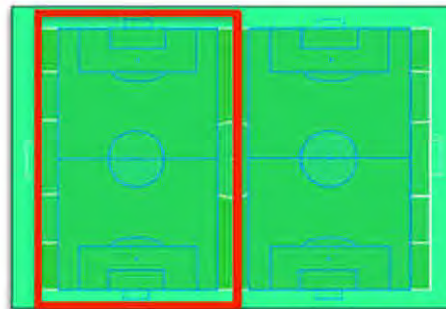
Players at this age need to develop basic motor skills such as walking, running and changing direction. A smaller space will help them to develop these skills while also providing more interaction with the ball, teammates and opponents.



## DEVELOPMENT FIELD - 47x30 yards

- U9 and U10 - 7v7

Players at this age are need to develop speed and agility. For this reason we promote play on a bigger field. Players will have more space to move in control of the ball and face 1v1 situations against an opponent in different parts of the field.



## SMALL SIDED FIELD - 75x47 yards

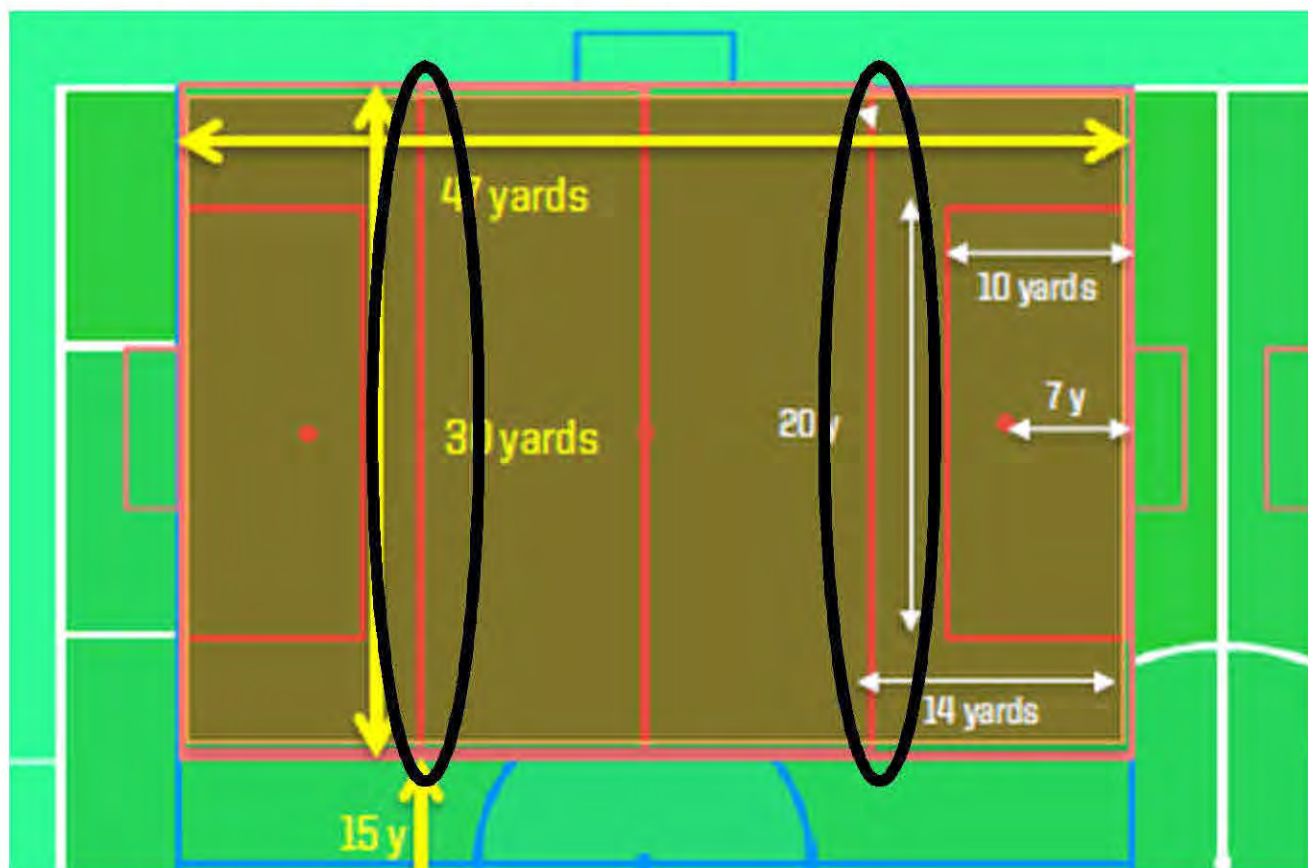
- U11 and U12 - 9v9

Players at this age are sensible to develop coordination, balance and visual awareness. Increasing the number of players requires faster decision making so players can develop partnerships and game intelligence.

# Development Rules for 7v7



- Build out lines





# Development Rules for 7v7



- The build out line is used to promote playing the ball out of the back in an unpressured setting
- When the goalkeeper has the ball, either during play or from a goal kick, the opposing team should move behind the build out line

# Development Rules for 7v7



- Once the opposing team is behind the build out line, the goalkeeper can pass or throw/roll the ball to a teammate (no punting)
- After the ball is put into play by the goalkeeper, the opposing team can cross the build out line and play resumes as normal



# Calendar Birth Years



# Calendar Birth Years



- Objective
  - Align with international standards and Youth National Team program



## 2015 / 2016 Middlesex Age Group Scenarios

When the new calendar year mandates from US Soccer go into affect, town-based leagues can maintain existing roster and tryout processes using school grades **AND** comply with the mandates *simply by allowing kids to play-up.*

|                                                                                                                                                                          | CURRENT MYSL/TOWN RANGES           | NEW US SOCCER MANDATES              | SUGGESTED MYSL RANGES TO MAINTAIN CURRENT ROSTERS <b>AND</b> ACCOMMODATE NEW MANDATES |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>U6</b>                                                                                                                                                                | August 1, 2009 - July 31, 2010     | January 1, 2009 - December 31, 2009 | January 1, 2009 - July 31, 2010                                                       |
| <b>U7</b>                                                                                                                                                                | August 1, 2008 - July 31 2009      | January 1, 2008 - December 1, 2008  | January 1, 2008 - July 31, 2009                                                       |
| <b>U8</b>                                                                                                                                                                | August 1, 2007 - July 31, 2008     | January 1, 2007 - December 31, 2007 | January 1, 2007 - July 31, 2008                                                       |
| <b>U10</b>                                                                                                                                                               | August 1, 2005 - December 31, 2007 | January 1, 2005 - December 31, 2006 | * January 1, 2005 - December 31, 2007                                                 |
| <i>* Note: Middlesex would need to decide whether it wishes to continue granting extended eligibility to U8's for them to play up on U10 (through December 31, 2007)</i> |                                    |                                     |                                                                                       |
| <b>U12</b>                                                                                                                                                               | August 1, 2003 - July 31, 2005     | January 1, 2003 - December 31, 2004 | January 1, 2003 - July 31, 2005                                                       |
| <b>U14</b>                                                                                                                                                               | August 1, 2001 - July 31, 2003     | January 1, 2001 - December 31, 2002 | January 1, 2001 - July 31, 2003                                                       |
| <b>U16</b>                                                                                                                                                               | August 1, 1999 - July 31, 2001     | January 1, 1999 - December 31, 2000 | January 1, 1999 - July 31, 2001                                                       |
| <b>U18</b>                                                                                                                                                               | August 1, 1997 - July 31, 1999     | January 1, 1997 - December 31, 1998 | January 1, 1997 - July 31, 1999                                                       |
| <b>U19</b>                                                                                                                                                               | August 1, 1996 - July 31, 1997     | January 1, 1996 - December 31, 1996 | January 1, 1996 - July 31, 1997                                                       |

# Implementation



# Implementation



- Adopted as Best Practice
  - August 2016
- Mandated
  - August 2017

# Player Development Initiatives

May 31, 2015

