

## Major Change Mandated by US Soccer: How calendar year registration could impact your child from a team formation standpoint (beginning this Fall 2017 season & beyond)

Last year US Soccer, the national entity which governs soccer in our country, established a mandate which requires all soccer organizations in the US to use a player's calendar birth year to determine his/her soccer league's age group. Based on that, this document is intended to help you understand the implications of that change, and to provide answers to some questions that may come up.

### Key Things to Know and Understand:

1. US Soccer has mandated that all soccer leagues in this country must register players using a calendar year system, not a school year system.
2. Teams that have been formed in the past can remain together, but it possibly would require some players on the team to play up into an older division (something which may be extremely common throughout the league but may have developmental implications).
3. Although MTsc U has been opposed to this change from the time it was made known, the deadline for complying with this mandate is the Fall of 2017. Whereas most clubs made the change in the Fall of 2016, MTsc U has waited until the last possible moment to comply. Our Club had hoped that all the national attention and petitions that were made by many clubs when this rule was first announced would cause US Soccer to make a change to their original mandate as it applies to recreational players. However, this has not happened. So although we do not agree with this change, we must ultimately conform. As a result, MTsc United is the last known club in eastern Oklahoma to comply.

**Again, this change is mandated by US Soccer, and all regional and community soccer clubs in Oklahoma and around the country are obligated to comply.** Accordingly, we want to make it very clear that this is not an MTsc U decision, but rather a national rule that our club is forced to follow, just like all the other soccer club leagues in the Tulsa area and throughout Oklahoma.

All that being said, we believe it is important that you understand the implications this change could have on your player and his/her team. Therefore, the following questions and answers are intended to provide an understanding about the change, including the impact it will have on how teams will be formed in the future, starting with registrations for the Fall 2017 season.

### **Q1: What is the US Soccer Age Group Mandate?**

**A:** US Soccer has moved to calendar birth years for determining a player's age group to be aligned with international standards and Youth National Team programs. According to US Soccer, the use of the school calendar year for age group determination has been practiced only in the United States and Canada, as all other FIFA members throughout the world go by the regular calendar year. Accordingly, both the US Youth Soccer and the US Club Soccer entities are requiring all clubs to implement the calendar year age grouping for player registration. Clubs were given the option to implement this change beginning with the 2016-2017 soccer year, but had the obligation to comply by no later than the 2017-2018 soccer year. As a result, league age groups that in the past have been determined based on players having birth dates within the same school calendar year (i.e. Aug. 1 through July 31) will now change to be age groups that are based on players having birth dates within the same regular calendar year (i.e. January 1 through December 31). However, players will continue to be allowed to "play up" (i.e. play in an older age group).

**Q2: How does this impact my child?**

**A:** Specifically, the birth year mandate means there will be no difference for players born between January 1 and July 31, as they will continue to move up one age group for the Fall 2017 season (for example, current U8 players born between January 1 and July 31 will move to the U9 league). However, if your player was born between August 1 and December 31, he/she will now be reclassified to a different age group than where they would have been classified under the previous school calendar year age grouping (e.g. those players who were currently in U8 will now move to U10).

**Q3: Is my son or daughter still going to be able to play with his or her friends and classmates?**

**A:** Yes. However, your child may have to play up (to an older age group) if he/she wants to continue to play with his or her friends, depending on the exact birth dates of all the players on the team.

**Q4: Does this mandate cause my team to breakup?**

**A:** No, although it may cause some of the players on your team to need to play up (to an older age group) in order to keep the team together.

**Q5: Why is birth year registration going into effect for all levels of play and all age groups?**

**A:** According to US Soccer, having players train and play according to their birth year age supports the developmental objectives of the small-sided standards by focusing on the physiological and developmental needs of the player. In their opinion, this change is meant to better safeguard the development of youth players at all ages and levels.

**Q6: What is "playing up" and are players able to "play down?"**

**A:** Players can "play up" with teammates in older age groups. However, players cannot "play down" with teammates at younger age groups. This is consistent with the current rules and how most youth sports are organized.

**Q7: My child wants to play up / stay with their existing team. Is that allowed?**

**A:** Yes. In MTsc U, any player may play up a maximum of 2 age groups with parent or guardian approval and a signed Play-Up Waiver (in accordance with Section 2, page 19 of the MTsc U White Book). Parents or guardians of a player playing up must sign and submit the signed Play-Up Waiver to the MTsc U main office in south Tulsa by the first game day of the season in order for that player to be added to a roster. Play-Up Waivers are available online at [www.MetroTulsaSoccer.com](http://www.MetroTulsaSoccer.com) under "Forms and Links" tab or through the MTsc U main office. If your child is part of a Friendship Team, then checking the "APPROVAL to play up" box on the Friendship Team Request form will also allow your child to play up.

Specifically, MTsc U's "play up" rules are as follows:

If a player is on a Friendship team: 1.) Every player on a Friendship Team that plays up must be clearly identified on the Friendship Team Form. 2.) Any Player on a Friendship Team may play-up to 2 age groups provided the Friendship Team is limited to 30% of its players playing up 2 age groups (i.e. a U10 playing up to U12 is 2 age groups as is a U8 playing up to U10). MTsc U reserves the right to expressly waive this limitation ONLY in the event the team's prior season's performance results demonstrated that they generally dominated their age group and in such cases, MTsc U may request that team to play up to the next age group for the benefit of all teams to better balance competition, development and fun regardless of the resulting play-up age group difference. In such instances, the team's parents through their coach must consent to do so, which is at their sole discretion.

An entire Friendship Team may play up 1 age group if all the parents so desire and signify such by signing on the Friendship Team form. This means that by the team playing up, it cannot result in any

more than 30% of the team's players playing up 2 age groups. Signature on the Friendship Team form is the parents' means of communicating that desire. MTsc U expects parents to keep the players' best interests in mind when making this selection. If a team playing up results in any players playing up, all such players' parents or guardians must check the "APPROVAL to play up" check box on the Friendship Team form or submit signed Play-up Waivers in advance of the first game day of the season to the MTsc U main office in South Tulsa.

**Q8: How do I determine the birth year used for team formation?**

**A:** Birth year is the calendar year in which a player was born. For example, a player born between January 1, 2006 and December 31, 2006 would have the birth year "2006", and therefore would be classified as a U12 player for the 2017-18 soccer season. The age group your child falls in can be found on MTsc U's website ([www.metrotulasoccer.com](http://www.metrotulasoccer.com)) under the link entitled "FAQs & League Ages". The chart on that link's web page shows the following:

**Eligible age groups and birthdates for Fall season 2017 and Spring season 2018**

U2 - M&M Only	Jan. 1st, 2016	Dec. 31st, 2016
U3 - M&M Only	Jan. 1st, 2015	Dec. 31st, 2015
U4 - M&M, SNL and REC/FT	Jan. 1st, 2014	Dec. 31st, 2014
U5 - SNL and REC/FT	Jan. 1st, 2013	Dec. 31st, 2013
U6 - SNL, REC/FT, SAC and PDP	Jan. 1st, 2012	Dec. 31st, 2012
U7 - SNL, REC/FT, SAC and PDP	Jan. 1st, 2011	Dec. 31st, 2011
U8 - SNL, REC/FT, SAC and PDP	Jan. 1st, 2010	Dec. 31st, 2010
U9 - SNL, REC/FT, SAC and PDP	Jan. 1st, 2009	Dec. 31st, 2009
U10 - SNL, REC/FT, SAC and PDP	Jan. 1st, 2008	Dec. 31st, 2008
U11 - SNL, REC/FT, SAC and PDP	Jan. 1st, 2007	Dec. 31st, 2007
U12 - SNL, REC/FT, SAC and PDP	Jan. 1st, 2006	Dec. 31st, 2006
U13 - SNL, SAC and REC/FT	Jan. 1st, 2005	Dec. 31st, 2005
U14 - SNL, SAC and REC/FT	Jan. 1st, 2004	Dec. 31st, 2004
U15 - SNL and REC/FT	Jan. 1st, 2003	Dec. 31st, 2003
U16 - SNL and REC/FT	Jan. 1st, 2002	Dec. 31st, 2002
U17 - SNL and REC/FT	Jan. 1st, 2001	Dec. 31st, 2001
U18 - SNL and REC/FT	Jan. 1st, 2000	Dec. 31st, 2000
U19 - SNL and REC/FT	Jan. 1st, 1999	Dec. 31st, 1999

**Q9: Why can't there be different standards for recreational and competitive teams?**

**A:** According to US Soccer, there is no universal definition of what separates recreational from competitive soccer. In addition to supporting the overall objectives of player development, U.S. Soccer believes that having separate registration systems based on undefined levels of play would create unnecessary confusion, and this would not provide a consistent approach across the soccer landscape.

**Q10: Why doesn't MTcs U just do their own thing?**

**A:** One of the key factors to the US Soccer initiative is standardization. Everyone in a given age group will now be playing under the same set of rules. Should MTsc U not follow the new guidelines, we jeopardize our Club's sanctioning through US Club Soccer, which would have a negative impact on the players and teams by causing a significant increase in costs. Additionally, if our Club continued under the school calendar year format for age groups, our Club's teams would be playing a different format/age group than all the other soccer clubs, thereby making it very difficult for any MTsc U team to participate in any outside soccer activity. Likewise, it would make it hard for any non-MTsc U team to move over to or visit to participate in MTsc U activities, including leagues, tournaments, etc.

**Q11: Who made this decision? Are other clubs doing it?**

**A:** US Soccer made this decision, and it requires all soccer clubs to adhere to it. MTsc U waited until the last possible moment to comply with this mandate in the hope that all the national attention and petitions would cause US Soccer to initiate a change for recreational programs. ALL OTHER KNOWN CLUBS IN EASTERN OKLAHOMA HAVE BEEN DOING THIS FOR THE LAST YEAR. MTsc U has held out as long as possible, and is the last known club in Oklahoma to comply with this mandate.

**MTsc U feels it is important for our families to understand what the mandate means for team formation regardless of where you play soccer. The following are three examples of how this mandate may affect the makeup of your team, its players, and which age group it would play in, showing the differences between the previous "school calendar year" team formation versus the new "birth/calendar year" team formation:**

1. If all your team's players' birthdates fall within August 1, 2010 to July 31, 2011, then under the:
  - (a) Previous "school calendar year" team formation, the entire team would be: U7 playing 4v4 with a maximum team of 8 players.
  - (b) New "birth/calendar year" team formation, the team will be: (i) for the players born in 2010, they will be U8 and (ii) for those born in 2011, they will be U7. Therefore, to keep your team together, all players would need to be in U8, playing 4v4 with a maximum team of 8 players (there is no difference in format, rules or field size between U7 and U8).
  
2. If all your team's players' birthdates fall within August 1, 2009 to July 31, 2010, then under the:
  - (a) Previous "school calendar year" team formation, the entire team would be: U8 playing 4v4 with a maximum team of 8 players.
  - (b) New "birth/calendar year" team formation, the team will be: (i) for the players born in 2010, they will be U8 and (ii) for those born in 2009, they will be U9. Therefore, to keep your team together, all players would need to be in U9 playing 7v7 with a maximum team of 12 players. Also, the field for U9 is twice the size of a U7/U8 field, the team would begin using a goalkeeper, and would follow the new US Soccer build-out line rule.
  
3. If all your team's players' birthdates fall within August 1, 2007 to July 31, 2008, then under the:
  - (a) Previous "school calendar year" team formation, the entire team would be: U10 playing 7v7 with a maximum team of 12 players.
  - (b) New "birth/calendar year" team formation, the team will be: (i) for the players born in 2008, they will be U10 and (ii) for those born in 2007, they will be U11/12. Therefore, to keep your team together, all players would need to be in U11/12 playing 9v9 with a maximum team of 16 players, playing on a field that is slightly bigger in size than a U10 field with no build out lines.

We hope the above information helps all MTsc U families gain an understanding of the impact of the recent US Soccer mandate, and that it also provides you with the knowledge you and your team will need to plan accordingly in a timely manner for next season. We appreciate your continued patronage, and ask for your patience and understanding as we all work together through the major transition that will come about this coming Fall season with the implementation of the required US Soccer birth year mandate.