



WESCO United Select Families,

Please read this important update about an upcoming change to youth soccer nationwide.

What's Changing and When

Starting fall 2026, youth soccer teams across the country will be organized by school grade age cutoff birth dates (August 1 - July 31) instead of birth year (January 1 - December 31).

Why Is This Change Happening?

The three major U.S. youth soccer organizations (*US Youth Soccer, US Club Soccer, American Youth Soccer Organization*) made this decision after gathering feedback from thousands of parents, coaches, and child development experts. They found that aligning teams with the school grade age cutoff dates (August 1 - July 31) creates a better experience because kids play with teammates in the same grade that are more likely to be at a similar social, emotional, and developmental stage.

Tom Condone, CEO of US Youth Soccer, explained: "After listening to families and our members, we believe this shift better aligns with school calendars, supports kids' social needs, and improves the overall soccer experience."

Why Is This Change Beneficial?

Playing with kids in the same grade also helps prevent players from getting “trapped” without a team during major transitions, such as the jump from 8th grade to high school or after high school when many players graduate. It also benefits college recruiting by ensuring players compete within their true graduating class, making it easier for college coaches to evaluate and track them over time.

This change also enables more players to spend an additional year competing in the 7v7 or 9v9 format, which is highly beneficial for player development. Extending time in small-format games gives players more meaningful touches, more decision-making opportunities, and greater involvement in the flow of play before transitioning to the full 11v11 game.

What Are The New Age Groupings?

Teams will no longer be referred to by the birth year. Instead, teams will be labeled by the age of the oldest players on the team. For example, U8 refers to “Under 8” and is a classification for children who are 8 years old and younger. Refer to the table below for the new age groups starting in the fall season of 2026.

Source: <https://usclubsoccer.org/age-group-cut-off-update-for-2026-27-season/>



Table: team age, birth date cutoffs, playing format, grade level for most players, tryout window

Team	2026-2027 Season and Beyond	Number of Players	Grade Level for Most Players	Tryout Window
U8	Aug 1, 2018 - July 31, 2019	7 v 7	2nd Grade	May 3 - 17
U9	Aug 1, 2017 - July 31, 2018	7 v 7	3rd Grade	May 3 - 17
U10	Aug 1, 2016 – July 31, 2017	7 v 7	4th Grade	May 3 - 17
U11	Aug 1, 2015 – July 31, 2016	9 v 9	5th Grade	May 3 - 17
U12	Aug 1, 2014 – July 31, 2015	9 v 9	6th Grade	May 3 - 17
U13	Aug 1, 2013 – July 31, 2014	11 v 11	7th Grade	May 3 - 17
U14	Aug 1, 2012 – July 31, 2013	11 v 11	8th Grade	May 3 - 17
U15	Aug 1, 2011 – July 31, 2012	11 v 11	9th Grade	May 18 - 29
U16	Aug 1, 2010 – July 31, 2011	11 v 11	10th Grade	May 18 - 29
U17	Aug 1, 2009 – July 31, 2010	11 v 11	11th Grade	May 18 - 29
U19	Aug 1, 2007 – July 31, 2009	11 v 11	12th Grade	May 18 - 29

How Will WESCO Transition To The New Age Format?

During the tryout window in May, WESCO will begin using the new school grade based age cutoff. All teams 2014 birth year and younger will fully transition into the new age format. Teams 2013 birth year and older will mostly remain the same given their longer history, team bond, and player availability. Players in these older age groups will have the option to play in their new age group and will be encouraged to do so when it makes sense for their development. Players with August birthdays may request to play up if doing so matches their school grade.

Our goal is to create teams that align as closely as possible with players' school grade levels, while also keeping roster sizes balanced and teams competitive.

Source: <https://usclubsoccer.org/age-group-cut-off-update-for-2026-27-season/>



What Factors Will Be Considered in Placing Players And Creating Teams?

Player Evaluation: WESCO Select coaching staff evaluate each player during tryouts based on current soccer skills, effort, and understanding of the game. Evaluations are conducted consistently to support fair and informed placement decisions.

Player Development: Players are grouped with others of similar skill level, social maturity, and physical development to support long-term growth. Emphasis is placed on maximizing time in age-appropriate small-sided formats (7v7 and 9v9), ensuring players are appropriately challenged, build confidence, improve skills, and enjoy the game.

Roster Balance and Team Composition: Teams are formed with balanced rosters, appropriate positional coverage, and sizes that support fair playing opportunities and effective training. Thoughtful roster balance and team composition help create positive, competitive, and development-focused team environments.

How Are Teams Formed When There Are Multiple Teams In An Age Group?

When there are enough players to form multiple teams within an age group, creating a top team, second team, and additional teams allows players to compete at a level that best supports their individual development. Grouping players by current competitive readiness helps ensure games are balanced and meaningful, while also creating opportunities for some players to *play-up* when they are ready for a greater challenge and faster pace of play.

This structure supports balanced player development by placing athletes in environments where they can build confidence, develop skills, and enjoy the game. Multiple teams create clear development pathways, promote well-balanced rosters, and provide flexibility for players to move or play up over time as they grow, ensuring placements reflect current readiness while supporting long-term development.

How Will Tryouts Be Held This Year?

Players born between 2014-2019 are required to attend tryouts for their designated school grade-based age group. Players born between 2013-2007 are encouraged to try out in the new school grade-based age group, but they may choose to continue trying out with their current birth-year age group. Players with August birthdays may request to play up if doing so matches their school grade.

Before, during, and after tryouts, WESCO coaching staff will coordinate closely to create draft rosters that balance the important factors listed above.

Team placement offers will be sent as soon as possible following tryouts. Due to the additional coordination required this year as we implement the new age format, the process may take a bit longer than in previous seasons. We appreciate your patience as WESCO coaches and staff work together to ensure thoughtful and appropriate team placements for all players.

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What if a Player Wants to Play for Another Team?

After tryouts and initial offers are made, players may request to play for another team by contacting WESCO's Director of Coaching. Player requests to play on another team will require review by the coaches from both teams, with the approval by the Director of Coaching and the WESCO Select Committee. Team placements are based on a holistic player evaluation that considers each player's current level of play and developmental readiness, along with overall team composition and roster balance, to ensure well-rounded teams and a positive development experience for all players.

What Can Parents Do To Prepare Players For This Change?

Change can feel uncomfortable, especially when it affects our kids. The shift to a school-year age cutoff is a big adjustment, but it's also a great opportunity for growth — both on and off the field.

Soccer journeys are long so let's keep the big picture in mind. This change isn't about ability, potential, or future success. It's simply a different way of grouping players. Every team, every age group, and every player will face new challenges — and that's a healthy part of development. This transition will bring new teammates, new challenges, and new opportunities to grow.

When parents embrace the change with positivity and perspective, kids will feel supported, more confident, and be excited for the change.

Bottom Line

WESCO United is excited about this change! We believe organizing teams that align with school grade cut off dates will offer players more development opportunities, make soccer more engaging, and create a better experience for families throughout our community.

Questions?

Contact our Director of Coaching, Brian Heacock, selectdoc@wescosoccer.org. We're here to help.

Sincerely,

WESCO United Select Committee