

What are PDIs?

The PDIs aim to create an environment for youth players to grow and develop their soccer abilities. The most notable PDI includes small-sided game standards. Small-sided standards are regulations for youth games played with less than eleven players on each team that include field and ball size, game length and special rules. Fewer players on the field will allow players to be more involved and provide more opportunity for development. The PDI for small-sided standards of play will be implemented across the country.

Why are PDIs Implemented?

The PDIs are designed to shift the focus of youth soccer from results based to individual player development. Tasked with advancing the sport at all levels, these initiatives are being implemented to create uniform standards with the primary consideration extended to the individual player at each age level based on their developmental needs. Currently, standards of play for youth games vary greatly across the country. Standardizing rules and regulations allows all youth players to develop on a level playing field. It also allows U.S. Soccer to better serve and educate players, parents, coaches and referees. The United States has historically been one of the only countries of FIFA's member nations to use a school calendar for age group registration. Now, U.S. players will develop in the same environment as leading soccer nations worldwide. Attached is a presentation that was created by our Director of Coaching, Adam Howarth. Some things to note while reviewing the attachment include:

BIRTH YEAR REGISTRATION - REGISTER PLAYERS ACCORDING TO A JAN. 1 TO DEC. 31 TIME FRAME

Focus moves away from the team and onto the individual player

- Development and winning do not have to happen independently from one another
- Our misguided desire to win at all costs at the youth levels often comes at the expense of individual player development

The focus moves away from bigger, faster, stronger

- Changing to birth year registration doesn't eliminate relative age effect (RAE) because whenever there is a defined age range, someone will be the oldest and someone will be the youngest; however, this change does help better understand and account for RAE
- Parents and coaches should have an increased awareness of a player's birth month relative to his or her peer group and level of performance
- This should help combat focusing on kids that appear to be better simply because they are up to 364 days older than a teammate or opponent

Uniformity across the country and across membership

- The current landscape is highly variable
- A uniform framework allows U.S. Soccer, and the programs of their members, to provide consistent messaging and education for parents, players, coaches and referees
- Having uniformity doesn't mean that all soccer will look the same in all places at all times

- It does mean that the soccer community can be better aligned with U.S. Soccer's player development objectives and we can collectively harness the advantage our nation's diversity and populations has to offer

SMALL-SIDED GAMES - DEVELOPMENT PHILOSOPHY AND PLAYING STANDARDS FOR PLAYERS 12 AND YOUNGER

Develop improved skills with the ball

- Players improve confidence and comfort with basic ball skills (dribbling, trapping, passing, etc...)

Develop intelligence with and without the ball

- Promote faster decisions and better awareness
- Develop partnerships within the team

Provide an age appropriate environment

- Standards align with physiological needs of players based on year of birth

Uniformity across the country and across membership

- Similar to the outcomes listed for birth year registration, having consistent standards allows U.S. Soccer and the programs of their members to provide more meaningful messaging and education for parents, players, coaches and referees

IMPLEMENTATION OF PDIs

All information about the Concussion Initiative is implemented with immediate effect

Birth year registration and the small sided standards will be mandated in August 2017

The Player Development Philosophy information is provided to encourage as best practices

- Although not currently mandated, U.S. Soccer believes members should adopt these principles to align with our values and objectives for player development

HOW TO BEST SUPPORT THESE CHANGES

- Have patience
- Communicate with and get answers from the Director of Coaching at Illinois Youth Soccer

Should you have any questions or concerns on how to best implement this for your program, please feel free to reach out to Adam Howarth at doc@illinoisyouthsoccer.org. He will be more than happy to discuss any of these PDIs with you.