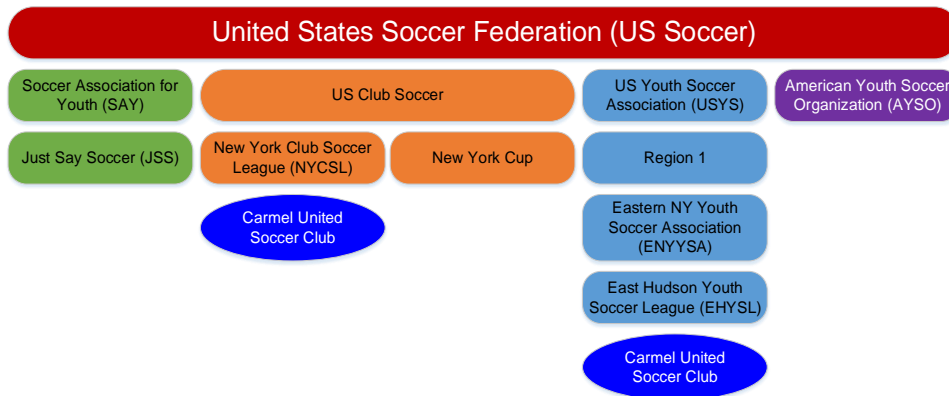




March 1, 2016

Carmel United Soccer Families:

As some of you may have heard, the U.S. Soccer Federation (US Soccer) has recently announced significant changes to the youth competition environment. For those unfamiliar with the hierarchy, US Soccer is the official governing body for our sport in the United States, as is illustrated in the following graphic. As you can see, all youth soccer organizations ultimately fall under the US Soccer umbrella.



The changes offered by US Soccer have been made in the interests of safety and long term player development, and can be placed into three major categories:

- Player safety campaign
- Small-sided games
- Birth year registration

Carmel United...as well as pretty much every other youth soccer club in the country...will be required to adopt these new mandates. Some of these changes take effect immediately, some will not happen until next year, and still more will likely happen at a later date (TBD). This communication is provided to help you understand what these changes are and what they specifically mean to Carmel United.

---

### Player Safety Campaign – EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2016

In early December of last year, US Soccer announced they were initiating a safety campaign called “R and R” (Reorganize to Recover) to educate referees, coaches, and administrators regarding injury prevention. A major part of this initiative surrounds concussion awareness and prevention, which is a very hot topic at the moment. **US Soccer has NOT said that heading causes concussions.** However, as a result of a proposed class action lawsuit last year, they have implemented the following changes which took effect as of 1/1/2016:

- **U10 and under** age groups are no longer allowed to head the ball...period. This includes practices and games. Intentionally heading the ball during a game will result in an indirect free kick for the opposing team at the spot of the offense. This change immediately impacts the Cougars, Xtreme, Blue Storm, and Pumas, as well as Inhouse.



- **U11 to U13** age groups are allowed to head the ball during games, but heading during practice is to be limited to no more than 30 minutes per player each week and no more than 20 headers by a single player in a week. This change has less of an impact but does still affect the Rangers, Mavericks, Patriots, Cobras, Rampage, and Spartans, as well as Inhouse.
- **U14 and up** age groups are allowed unlimited heading in both practices and games. This is only relevant to the Chaos.

Eastern New York Youth Soccer Association (ENYSSA) has already announced their compliance with this policy. While US Club Soccer has not formally announced the adoption of these changes yet, I fully expect them to do so before the start of the spring season.

In addition to the heading changes, referees are now allowed to remove players from a game if they suspect a potential concussion. If a player is removed by the referee, they will not be allowed to return to that game or play in any future games until they have been cleared by a medical doctor.

---

#### **Small-Sided Games – EFFECTIVE AUGUST 1, 2016**

Earlier in 2015, US Soccer announced mandates involving the size of the playing field and the number of players on the field from U-6 through U-12 age groups. These changes are designed to create a better development environment by providing players more touches on the ball, more involvement in the game, and more opportunities to make decisions.

Historically, the U-12 age group for travel has played full-sided games (11 v 11). Beginning with the fall 2016 season, this age group will now remain small-sided (9 v 9) on a modified field just like U-11. At the moment, this change really doesn't impact Inhouse but it will affect next year's U-12 travel team(s).

Other changes pertaining to field size and number of players for the U-10 and younger age groups are likely to be implemented the following year. As those changes are rolled out, we will adopt and modify our travel and Inhouse programs to comply accordingly.

---

#### **Birth Year Registration – EFFECTIVE AUGUST 1, 2016**

The biggest change coming down the pike is a shift in team formation policy. Youth soccer teams at all age groups will now be formed using a new age group cut-off date of January 1<sup>st</sup>. This will result in significant changes in team composition for all youth teams and age groups in the future. While US Soccer is not requiring compliance with this until 8/1/2017, ENYSSA has opted to implement this change with all of their affiliated leagues effective 8/1/2016:

- Currently, teams are formed based on the August 1<sup>st</sup> through July 31<sup>st</sup> year...players born within that range are eligible for that age group. Though not relevant in our area, this was designed to keep teams on a school-year basis – so that teams were generally comprised of players within the same academic grade. For this reason it was referred to as “school-based” registration.
- Going forward, teams will now be formed based on calendar year...January 1<sup>st</sup> through December 31<sup>st</sup>. This is consistent with the dates used internationally in forming youth teams. This cut-off is referred to as “calendar-based” registration. With this change, players born in a given calendar year are eligible for that age group.



This shift has required all youth soccer clubs to make decisions regarding how to implement this policy with their existing teams. There were basically two primary options:

- Realign teams by birth year OR
- Keep teams together and have the younger players on those teams “play up”

For Inhouse, this is not really an issue. We can easily realign our Inhouse age groups based on birth year starting next Fall...and that is our intention. For travel teams, however, this required a larger conversation. Several scenarios were considered but, due to our size and the complexities involved, it really became an all-or-nothing choice...at least on the boys' side. The girls' landscape is a little more complex because we don't currently have a team for every age group.

After much consideration, the Club has decided to try to keep teams together as much as makes sense and is possible. That said, this does not guarantee that all existing travel players will stay on their current team, nor does it guarantee all current travel players a spot on a team next year. There are many variables at play that need to be considered and we just don't have all the information yet. We are confident, though, that the majority of players will not be impacted significantly.

So what exactly does this mean? Beginning with the fall 2016 season (tryouts in the spring), these are the guidelines we will be following when forming teams:

- Because of the way teams have been formed up until now, all existing travel teams are currently comprised of players spanning at least 2 calendar years...those born between August and December of one year and those born between January and July of the following year.
- Teams will move into the age group appropriate for their oldest retained players. Because of the way the new process is designed, in many cases, teams will seemingly skip an age group. The reason for the jump is due to the soccer season spanning two years...the fall of one year through the spring of the following year. The year in which the season ends is the year that determines the age groups (*see Appendix A for a grid of birth years and their appropriate age groups*).
- Younger players on existing travel teams (those born January through July of the later year) will be grandfathered in and treated as age-appropriate players for that team. They will still have to try out and make the team, but they won't need to be in the top 5, which is normally what is required for players to play up a year. These same players also have the option to try out for their age-appropriate team instead of, or in addition to, their current team should that be their preference.
- There are some teams at the moment who have players spanning 3 years. To keep these teams entirely intact would require allowing players to play up two years. As a general rule, this is not something we want happening if we can avoid it...and we can avoid it with the boys. The Club and coaches will evaluate situations on a case-by-case basis to determine whether playing up makes sense or if there is an alternative option available to those players. If not, we'll have to decide whether those players would be better served trying to find an age-appropriate team.
- If a team only has a few players born in the older year, it probably wouldn't be in the team's best interest to have everybody play up a year just to make those players eligible for that team. Again, decisions will need to be made in these cases as to what makes the most sense. If it is decided to keep the team down by removing those older players, those players would then be eligible for the team one year older and would be treated as age-appropriate players...they would need to try out and make the team, but they would not need to be in the top 5.



- New players (those not currently in our travel program) will try out for their age-appropriate team unless one does not exist, in which case they will be eligible to try out for the age group one year older and still be considered age-appropriate (don't need to be top 5). This scenario is more likely to occur with the girls' teams because we don't have a team for every year.
- If a player wants to play up by choice, meaning they are on an existing age-appropriate team or they are a new player but think they should play up for some reason, they can try out for an age group one year older but they will need to rank in the top 5 of the older team to be considered. Exceptions could possibly be made in cases where a team needs players to stay afloat.
- New travel teams will be formed based on calendar year. Two adjacent age groups can be combined if there are not enough players to form a team for either age group individually. In that case, the younger players would have to play up in the older age group.
- NOTE: You shouldn't get too caught up in the "U-whatever" age group names since every age group will be shifting. For example, the U-12 division next year is really going to be what otherwise would have been called U-11 had nothing happened. Just the name for the division will be different. So even though teams may technically skip a group, in many cases they will still be playing the same teams they have always played since other clubs are facing the same issues we are and many are handling it the same way. The only disadvantage of this shift is that some younger teams would end up going full-field a year earlier than originally expected, but since U-12 will now be staying small-sided, even that is less of an issue.

Here are some examples to help illustrate these points:

- Our current U-10 team is comprised of players born in the last 5 months of 2005 and the first 7 months of 2006. Per US Soccer's new guidelines (*Appendix A*), players born in 2005 fall into the U-12 age group for the 2016/17 season...because those players will all turn 12 in 2017, the year in which the season ends. Even though this team will move to an age group called U-12 next year, in all likelihood, they will be playing many of the same teams they've been playing.
- The players on this team that were born in 2006 will technically be U-11 players next year, but they will be considered age-appropriate for, and will be allowed to play on, the U-12 team as long as they try out and make the team again (don't need to be top 5). This option only applies to existing players already on the team.
- Those 2006 players also have the option to try out for the U-11 team if they prefer to play age-appropriate next year. These players can also opt to try out for both teams...if they don't make one, they could still be considered for the other.
- If this team also happened to have a player born in 2007, that player would only be U-10 next year. Having him/her play up two years may not be appropriate. If we have another option available (i.e., a U-10 or U-11 team), we may place that player on the younger team. If there is no other option available, we would have to decide whether it is in that player's best interest to stay with their existing team or if it would be better for them to look for an age-appropriate team.
- If this team only had two players born in 2005 (U-12) and the rest of the team were all born in 2006 (U-11), we may remove the two U-12 players and have the team play age-appropriate (U-



11) instead of having the whole team play up a year. In this scenario, those U-12 players would then be considered age-appropriate for the U-13 team and could try out with no restrictions. If we do not have an alternative option for those players, they may need to look for a more age-appropriate situation.

- New 2005 players will try out for the U-12 team; new 2006 players will try out for the U-11 team. If a U-11 team does not exist, those players would then be eligible to try out for U-12 with no restrictions.
- If a U-11 team does exist but a new 2006 player (or an existing 2006 player already on the team) wants to try out for U-12 by choice, they would need to be one of the top 5 players trying out to be considered. Exceptions could be made if the U-12 team needed players to stay afloat.
- Our new U-8 and U-9 team(s) next year will be formed with players born in the appropriate years (2009 and 2008 respectively). If we do not have enough players to form a team for each age group, we would combine the groups to form a single U-9 team. This combined group could later be split back into two age appropriate teams should enough players eventually become available.

As you can see, this is a very complex issue and there are a lot of variables. At the end of the day, our intentions are to displace as few players as possible. At the moment, we can only make preliminary assessments using our current travel teams and rosters. Based on what we know right now, we expect all existing teams to return next year and we hope to have a few new teams (*see Appendix B for our current plan, subject to change*). But we won't know the full scope of changes and we won't be able to make final decisions until we have actual information for next year, which will not be available until tryouts commence this spring.

While we are confident that the majority of players overall will not be impacted significantly, there will be a few players who will need to change teams next year. There may also be a few who, unfortunately, will not have a viable option with us.

-----  
We recognize this is a lot of change seemingly all at once. Please remember that Carmel United has no control over the mandates set forth by US Soccer or how our state association and league choose to implement them, but we are required to comply with these mandates. We will do our best to implement these changes as seamlessly as possible with the best interest of our players and teams in mind.

Over the next month or so, coaches should be reaching out to their teams with more team-specific information and to those individual families who may be directly impacted. In the interim, if you have any questions about any of this, please feel free to speak with your child's coach or contact me directly. Just please keep in mind that we don't have all the answers right now.

Thank you for your time.

Best regards,

Joe Matera  
President  
Carmel United Soccer Club



APPENDIX A: Birth Year Grid by Season

Season	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
<b>Birth Yr</b>							
<b>2020</b>							
<b>2019</b>							
<b>2018</b>							<b>U05</b>
<b>2017</b>						<b>U05</b>	<b>U06</b>
<b>2016</b>					<b>U05</b>	<b>U06</b>	<b>U07</b>
<b>2015</b>				<b>U05</b>	<b>U06</b>	<b>U07</b>	<b>U08</b>
<b>2014</b>			<b>U05</b>	<b>U06</b>	<b>U07</b>	<b>U08</b>	<b>U09</b>
<b>2013</b>		<b>U05</b>	<b>U06</b>	<b>U07</b>	<b>U08</b>	<b>U09</b>	<b>U10</b>
<b>2012</b>	<b>U05</b>	<b>U06</b>	<b>U07</b>	<b>U08</b>	<b>U09</b>	<b>U10</b>	<b>U11</b>
<b>2011</b>	<b>U06</b>	<b>U07</b>	<b>U08</b>	<b>U09</b>	<b>U10</b>	<b>U11</b>	<b>U12</b>
<b>2010</b>	<b>U07</b>	<b>U08</b>	<b>U09</b>	<b>U10</b>	<b>U11</b>	<b>U12</b>	<b>U13</b>
<b>2009</b>	<b>U08</b>	<b>U09</b>	<b>U10</b>	<b>U11</b>	<b>U12</b>	<b>U13</b>	<b>U14</b>
<b>2008</b>	<b>U09</b>	<b>U10</b>	<b>U11</b>	<b>U12</b>	<b>U13</b>	<b>U14</b>	<b>U15</b>
<b>2007</b>	<b>U10</b>	<b>U11</b>	<b>U12</b>	<b>U13</b>	<b>U14</b>	<b>U15</b>	<b>U16</b>
<b>2006</b>	<b>U11</b>	<b>U12</b>	<b>U13</b>	<b>U14</b>	<b>U15</b>	<b>U16</b>	<b>U17</b>
<b>2005</b>	<b>U12</b>	<b>U13</b>	<b>U14</b>	<b>U15</b>	<b>U16</b>	<b>U17</b>	<b>U18</b>
<b>2004</b>	<b>U13</b>	<b>U14</b>	<b>U15</b>	<b>U16</b>	<b>U17</b>	<b>U18</b>	<b>U19</b>
<b>2003</b>	<b>U14</b>	<b>U15</b>	<b>U16</b>	<b>U17</b>	<b>U18</b>	<b>U19</b>	
<b>2002</b>	<b>U15</b>	<b>U16</b>	<b>U17</b>	<b>U18</b>	<b>U19</b>		
<b>2001</b>	<b>U16</b>	<b>U17</b>	<b>U18</b>	<b>U19</b>			
<b>2000</b>	<b>U17</b>	<b>U18</b>	<b>U19</b>				
<b>1999</b>	<b>U18</b>	<b>U19</b>					
<b>1998</b>	<b>U19</b>						



## Appendix B: Proposed Age Groups by Team for 2016/17 Season

Team	Gender	Current Age Group (2015/16)	Proposed Age Group (2016/17)	Team Birth Year (2016/17)	Eligible Players** (Birth Years)
<b>New*</b>	Boys	NA	U-08	2009	New 2009s
<b>New*</b>	Boys	NA	U-09	2008	New 2008s
<b>Cougars</b>	Boys	U-08	U-10	2007	All 2007s & existing 2008s
<b>Xtreme</b>	Boys	U-09	U-11	2006	All 2006s & existing 2007s
<b>Blue Storm</b>	Boys	U-10	U-12	2005	All 2005s & existing 2006s
<b>Rangers</b>	Boys	U-11	U-13	2004	All 2004s & existing 2005s
<b>Mavericks</b>	Boys	U-12	U-14	2003	All 2003s & existing 2004s
<b>Patriots (US Club)</b>	Boys	U-12	U-14	2003	2003s & below by invitation
<b>Cobras</b>	Boys	U-13	U-15	2002	All 2002s & existing 2003s
<b>Girls</b>					
<b>New*</b>	Girls	NA	U-08	2009	New 2009s
<b>New*</b>	Girls	NA	U-09	2008	New 2008s
<b>Pumas</b>	Girls	U-09	U-10	2007	All 2007s & existing 2008s
<b>Rampage</b>	Girls	U-11	U-12	2005	All 2005s & 2006s
<b>Spartans</b>	Girls	U-13	U-15	2002	All 2002s & 2003s
<b>Chaos (Spring)</b>	Girls	U-15	U-16	2001	All 2001s & existing 2002s

*Note: The age groups proposed for next year have been made based on assumptions using current rostered players only. These assumptions are subject to change based on the actual number of players for next year.*

*\* New teams could combine age groups if the number of players do not support separate teams at this time. Teams would be a combined U8/9 group which would play in the U-09 division.*

*\*\* Eligibility for a team does not guarantee a spot on the team. All players, new and existing, must try out and be selected for the team. "Existing" refers to players born in that year who are currently on that team.*



## APPENDIX C: Summary of Team Formation Guidelines

<p><b>1. Existing Teams:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Will fall into the age group (birth year) of their oldest retained players</li> <li>b. May remove older players if majority of team falls into younger age group (see item 3d, below)</li> <li>c. May remove younger players if they are 2 years younger than team age group (see item 3c, below)</li> </ul>	<p><b>2. New Teams:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Will be formed based on birth year</li> <li>b. Age groups could be combined if there are not enough players for a team in a single age group</li> <li>c. Combined age groups could eventually be separated as more players become available in those age groups</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Existing Players on Team:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. If player has same birth year as team's age group, player would try out for same team</li> <li>b. If player was born the following year, they would be grandfathered in and allowed to play up on the team: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Player must still try out and make the team</li> <li>ii. Top 5 rule would not apply</li> <li>iii. Player could also try out for their age-appropriate team (if one exists)</li> </ul> </li> <li>c. If player is younger by &gt;1 year: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Player would be considered for a younger team (if one exists)</li> <li>ii. If not, the Club and coaches would have to decide what is best for the player (case-by-case)</li> </ul> </li> <li>d. Players removed from a team because they were in the older minority: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Player would be eligible to try out for the team 1 year older (if one exists)</li> <li>ii. Top 5 rule would not apply</li> <li>iii. No other options are available</li> </ul> </li> <li>e. If player wants to play up by choice (already on age-appropriate team): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Player could try out for age group 1 year older</li> <li>ii. Must be one of top 5 players trying out to be considered</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>4. New Players:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Will try out for their birth year age group</li> <li>b. If age group does not exist: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Player could try out for age group 1 year older</li> <li>ii. Top 5 rule would not apply</li> </ul> </li> <li>c. If player wants to play up by choice (age-appropriate team exists): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Player could try out for age group 1 year older</li> <li>ii. Must be one of top 5 players trying out to be considered</li> </ul> </li> <li>d. This pertains to all players not currently playing on a Carmel United travel team for the 2015/16 season</li> </ul>

*Note: Exceptions could be made to these guidelines if deemed appropriate and necessary by the Club based on team- and player-specific situations.*