FAQ for VDA/VSA/PWSI Travel Parents: Youth Soccer Age Group Changes (Starting 2026-2027)

The US Soccer Federation in partnership with US Club Soccer (ECNL/ECNL-RL) and US Youth Soccer (NCSL) have made the decision to change age groups from birth year (January 1-December 31) to seasonal year (August 1-July 31) for the 2026-2027 season

Q1: Who is making this decision?

A: The US Soccer Federation in partnership with US Club Soccer (ECNL/ECNL-RL) and US Youth Soccer (NCSL) have made the decision to change age groups from birth year (January 1-December 31) to seasonal year (August 1-July 31) for the 2026-2027 season

- Important Note: VDA/VSA/PWSI did not make this decision, however we are mandated to implement this across all levels of our clubs for the 2026-27 season.

Q2: What is the specific change being made?

A: The primary change is the age group **cut-off date** for player registration.

- **Current System (Until 2025-2026 Season): Birth Year** format (January 1 – December 31).
- **New System (Starting 2026-2027 Season): Seasonal Year** format (August 1 – July 31).

Q3: Why is U.S.Soccer making this change?

A: The main goal is to align soccer age groups more closely with **school grade levels**. The January 1 cut-off often separated players from their school classmates. The August 1 cut-off is expected to:

- Increase **player retention** and social enjoyment / Reduce the number of **"trapped players"**

Q4: Why is the cut-off August 1 and not October 1 like the Virginia School cut-off?

A: The Federation and US Club Soccer reviewed all states' school-year cut-off data and made a balanced, data-driven compromise with the August 1 cut-off.

Q5: When will this new system officially start?

A: The change will take effect starting with the **2026-2027 season/registration year** (typically beginning in Fall 2026).

- **No changes** will be made during the current 2025-2026 season.

  *USL Y will use the new age group format for the 2026 summer season

Q6: How does this change affect my child's age group?

A: The impact depends on your child's birth month:

Birth Month	Likely Change for 2026-2027

January 1 – July 31	**Minimal change.** They will largely stay with their same cohort of players, as they were the older half of their birth-year team.
August 1 – December 31	**Most likely to shift.** These players will effectively join their grade-level peers, moving into a *younger* U-level age group than they would have been under the Jan-Dec calendar. They may stay with some of their current teammates.

Q7: Will my child's team break up?

A: Team reshuffling will happen as players born between August and December will move into a different age group. Clubs will need to restructure their rosters based on the new cut-off.

- VDA/VSA/PWSI will share specific transition plans well ahead of the 2026-2027 tryouts/registration.

Q8: Will registration now be based on their grade in school?

A: No, it is still based on the date of birth, but the date range has shifted to align better with the school year. Players are still required to register in the age group that corresponds to their birthdate (August 1 – July 31).

- A child held back in school will not be automatically moved to a younger soccer age group, as the birth date remains the determinant.

Q9: Can my child still "play up" with an older age group/team?

A: Yes, the option to "play up" based on skill level and developmental readiness will still be available, as determined by the club and coaches. However, we want to be clear that this will **not be based on request** but through the recommendations made by our coaches and technical staff directly to the player and family.

- **Important Note:** The decision to play up will be a **technical staff decision** based on a player's skill, maturity, and long-term development—not solely based on wanting to play with friends who are in a higher grade.

Q10: Will all major youth leagues follow this August 1 cut-off?

A: YES, this change will affect all clubs and organizations in the US Soccer eco-system

Q11: What should I expect next?

A: The club's technical staff will release the ID/Tryout protocols for 2026/27 that will follow the new age group ranges in early 2026. Players and families will receive guidance and updates ahead of registration to help promote clarity.

SAVE THE DATE for CLUB WIDE IN PERSON MEETINGS

VDA Membership Meeting - **Jan 26th** (Time and Location to be announced)

VSA/PWSI Membership Meeting - **Feb 5th** (Time and Location to be announced)