



# Ready! Set!

# PLAYSOCCER®

## AREA 8C GUIDELINES

REVISED SPRING 2026



✓ *These guidelines shall cover Inter-Regional games organized and scheduled on an Area 8C Wide basis.*

AYSO matches shall be conducted in accordance with the current IFAB Laws of the Game and decisions of the International Football Association Board (IFAB) in effect on August 1 each calendar year and the US Soccer Player Development Initiatives, with the following exceptions and clarifications:

## Competition

- 1) The starting date and duration of season for Area play shall be established by the Area Director with the advice of all Regional Commissioners with teams participating in interregional play.
- 2) The home region is responsible for nets and corner flags for their fields.
- 3) Wherever possible, opposing coaches, teams and spectators must be on opposite sides of the field. The home team should be on the east or north side of the pitch.
- 4) Except for small-sided matches (Article I.H), a scheduled match shall not commence nor be continued unless both teams can field at least seven eligible players.
  - i) If a team arrives with less than the maximum number of fieldable players and another has a full roster, it is up to the coaches of both teams to decide how many players to field (either both playing short or not) then relay this to the referee.
  - ii) **Good Sportsmanship** dictates that while no team must agree to play with less than the maximum number of players for the age division, coaches should emphasize fair play when possible.
  - iii) If a team fails to show for a scheduled match or is unable to field the required number of players or is unable to play for any reason, that team shall forfeit the game 0-1
- 5) No games shall be played on a field deemed unsafe by the referee.
- 6) Rescheduled games shall be determined by mutual agreement of both Regional Commissioners with home region determining field availability.
- 7) If a game is terminated later than five minutes into the second half the score at the time of cancellation shall be final. If the game is terminated earlier, by a referee for other than weather, the Area Director will determine if the game shall be rescheduled.

## Duration of Games

- 1) Matches shall be of two equal halves, not to exceed the following maximum durations:

Division	Maximum Duration of Half
Playground Soccer	Not Applicable
Schoolyard Soccer	10 Minutes
6U	10 Minutes
8U	20 Minutes
10U	25 Minutes
12U	30 Minutes
14U/15U	35 Minutes
16U	40 Minutes
19U	45 Minutes

- 2) Half-time periods shall be a minimum of five and a maximum of ten minutes as designated by the referee.
- 3) Where necessary due to time constraints, the duration of the two halves may be reduced by an equal amount to ensure every player has the opportunity to play at least half the match.

## Officiating

- 1) All interregion matches must use a qualified badged referee in attendance or they are not to be played.
  - i) Coaches who are certified referees shall relinquish all coaching responsibilities if they referee the game.
  - ii) No game will be rescheduled because of lack of a referee.
  - iii) 6U and 8U coaches that play interregion must take the online course for “8U Official”
- 2) Referees shall officiate in accordance with the current versions of AYSO Rules & Regulations (the rules of competition), the IFAB Laws of the Game (AYSO Edition) and decisions of the IFAB.

- 3) Referees shall officiate in a manner inducing clean competition and good sportsmanship, placing great emphasis on the welfare of the players. If a player is injured, the referee, **at their discretion**, may stop play to ensure the welfare of the player even if the ball has not gone out of play.
- 4) The diagonal system of control (DSC) is the authorized three-official method (one referee, two assistant referees) for outdoor soccer, designed to keep play between the referee and at least one assistant referee.
  - i) Club linesmen may be used in the absence of AYSO certified Assistant Referees.
  - ii) AYSO club linesmen are typically untrained parent volunteers who assist the center referee by signaling only when the ball goes completely out of bounds (touchline or goal line). They are not certified Assistant Referees (ARs). They differ from certified ARs who handle offsides, fouls, and direction of play.
  - iii) The two-referee "dual" system (two referees with whistles on the field) is **not** an approved technique for officiating AYSO games. AYSO mandates the Diagonal System of Control (one referee, two assistant referees). If only two officials are available, one must be the center referee and the other an assistant referee.
- 5) The Laws of the Game are intended to provide that matches should be played with as little interference as possible, and in this view it is the duty of referees to penalize only deliberate breaches of the Law. Constant whistling for trifling and doubtful breaches produces bad feeling and loss of temper on the part of the players and spoils the pleasure of spectators.

## Size of the Ball

1. Ball size for each division shall be as follows:

Division	Size
Playground Soccer	Size 3
Schoolyard Soccer	Size 3
6U & 8U	Size 3
10U & 12U	Size 4
14U, 15U, 16U and 19U	Size 5

## Small Sided Matches

US Soccer has mandated for its member associations small-sided matches as part of the Player Development Initiatives. Match play shall be governed by the IFAB Laws of the Game as modified by AYSO (with permission), the AYSO National Rules & Regulations and the age appropriate AYSO Coach Manual.

Division	Players per side	Minimum players to play
6U	5 v 5	4
8U	5 v 5	4
10U	7 v 7	5
12U	9 v 9	6
14U and up	11 v 11	7

- 1) Regional Commissioners shall certify, in advance of scheduling, the age make-up of the divisions.
- 2) Teams shall be formed in compliance with the Regional Guidelines of each Region submitting a team for interregional play
- 3) All players must be registered AYSO players and be placed in divisions according to age as of July 31 in the year of the Region's first season.
- 4) Players may only play on one team during a season.
  - i) Registered players of one team may not act as substitute players for another team within their Region or any other Region.
- 5) Any player that plays in violation of the Area 8C rules and regulations will cause his/her team to forfeit that game.

## Proper Dress

- 1) Each chartered AYSO region shall provide for players to wear a matching team uniform consisting of jersey, shorts and socks.
  - i) Such uniform shall be properly marked with the AYSO logo on the left front of the jersey and otherwise conform to the markings as directed by AYSO.
  - ii) Players should have individual numbers or be otherwise distinguishable from each other player

- iii) If both teams have the same color uniform or in the opinion of the referee the uniform colors present a problem in telling the teams apart, the away team shall change to an alternate color jersey.
- 2) The Area shall determine the application of the dress code for competitive play within the area, and region within the region.
  - i) Regulation soccer shoes, gym shoes, or sneakers are permissible in all AYSO competitions.
    - (1) Baseball style cleats shall not be allowed.
- 3) Shin guards are mandatory at all times during games and practice and must be size and age appropriate.
  - (1) Players shall not be allowed to practice or participate in any game with any type of cast or splint. FIFA approved **braces** are allowed.
  - (2) Referee approval is needed prior to participation in a match.
  - (3) During cool weather gloves without metal and stocking caps are acceptable. Jackets, sweats, etc. are acceptable if worn under the uniform. Hoods must be tucked under the jersey.

## Substitution

The Area strictly follows the guidelines set forth by AYSO and US Soccer. The "Everyone Plays" philosophy dictates that every player on a team must play at least 50% of each match, excluding overtime. The substitution process is designed to ensure this, with specific procedures depending on the age group. The substitution process for 10U and 12U follow the procedures set forth in the AYSO Reference Book:

Substitutions will be allowed on 4 occasions:

- Approximately halfway through the first half
  - Halftime
  - Approximately halfway through the second half
  - as needed for Injuries
- 1) Approximately midway through each half the referee shall permit substitution. This normally occurs during a regular stoppage in play, and the match is resumed with the appropriate restart (i.e. throw-in, goal kick, corner kick, kick-off, free

kick, penalty kick or dropped ball). On occasion the referee may need to stop play for substitution while the ball is in play, in which case the match is resumed with a dropped ball.

- 2) Substitutions may also be made at half-time and at the start of any overtime periods.
- 3) When the referee signals for substitution, the coaches should have all substitutes entering the match immediately report to the referee or the designated assistant referees, who shall note on the lineup cards those team members substituting.
- 4) During such stoppages, the coach of each team may substitute as many team members, or none, including previously substituted team members, as long as all eligible team members meet the minimum playing requirements.
- 5) Signed line-up cards must be completed by the referee and returned to the coaches or Regional Referee Administrators for proper dissemination per region.
- 6) Substitution for injury:
  - i) If a player is injured, the coach may provide a substitute for the player, in which case the injured player may not return until the beginning of the next “quarter”. Only the player who is injured is credited with a “quarter” played regardless of the actual time played.
  - ii) The coach may choose to not substitute and “play short” thereby allowing the injured player to return during the “quarter” in which he or she was injured.
  - iii) The player must receive permission from the referee in order to return to the match.
- 7) Late arriving players shall be played according to the following:
  - i) If the player arrives during the first quarter, the player must play a minimum of two of the remaining three quarters.
  - ii) If the player arrives during the second or third quarter, the player must play a minimum of one quarter.
  - iii) If the player arrives during the fourth quarter the player has no guarantee of any playing time.
- 8) Monitored Substitution
  - i) Monitored Substitution will be permitted in 14U, 15U and 19U matches provided both teams have an Independent Monitor. If no Independent Monitor is available, the match reverts to the standard quarter substitutions.
  - ii) Substitution permitted by referee at any stoppage in play, per Law 3 of the IFAB Laws of the Game.
    - (1) The coach will notify the Referee or Asst Referee that a substitution is requested

- (2) The Referee will choose an appropriate stoppage in play
- (3) The Referee will permit the players being substituted to leave the pitch and upon doing so they become substitutes
- (4) The substitutes will enter the pitch and at this point they will become players
  - (a) This is important as now the player is eligible to take any restarts and also the way bookings are handled for players and substitutes is different
- (5) The referee will whistle for play to continue using the appropriate restart
- iii) Once the player(s) being substituted receive(s) the referee's permission to leave the field of play, they must leave by the nearest point on the boundary line unless the referee indicates that the player may leave directly and immediately at the halfway line or another point
- iv) The player(s) being substituted must go immediately to the technical area for their team
- v) If a player who is to be substituted refuses to leave, the substitution does not occur and play continues

## Misconduct

- 1) If it is necessary to caution (yellow card) a player, the player remains on the field and is not subject to a "time out". If, however, the player requests to be substituted or the coach requests a substitution, the referee will allow a substitution for the cautioned player only.
  - i) Any player substituted in this way cannot return until the next natural substitution opportunity.
- 2) If it is necessary to send off (red card) a player or substitute, the referee shall issue a written game report. This report shall be forwarded to the Area Referee Administrator within 24 hours. The player is also disqualified from their next playable match. The coach is responsible for notifying the Regional Commissioner. (AYSO game report form can be located on the AYSO Volunteer Website [https://www.aysovolunteers.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/AYSO\\_Referee\\_Report\\_20240827.pdf](https://www.aysovolunteers.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/AYSO_Referee_Report_20240827.pdf))
- 3) A player or substitute who is sent off (red card) becomes the responsibility of the coach and is regulated by Safe Haven requirements. No minor-aged player shall be forced to leave the vicinity without a parent or guardian or left alone.

- 4) If it is necessary for the referee to dismiss (red card) the coach, a written game report shall be forwarded to the Area Referee Administrator and Area Coach Administrator within 24 hours. The coach is also suspended from the next game.
  - i) Coaches or spectators (not minors) who are dismissed must leave the area immediately or the game shall be abandoned. If a coach refuses to leave the field and surrounding area, he/she could be permanently suspended from attendance by the Region/Area Staff.
  - ii) Any red card, before, during, or after the match means suspension from that game and the next match. The spring season is a continuation of the fall season for the purpose of determining the next game. Two yellow cards, to the same player, during the game results in a red card with the consequences of a red card.
  - iii) The Area may review all misconduct and determine any disciplinary actions, not limited to increasing the number of match suspensions.
- 5) AYSO and Area 8C adopted the US Soccer Referee Abuse Policy (RAP) which covers all coaches, team officials, players, volunteers and spectators. The full policy can be found at <https://www.ussoccer.com/rap>.

## Duties and responsibilities of the Coaches, Referees, Officials, Other Volunteers, Spectators, Team Members and Other Participants

- 1) It shall be the duty of each coach, referee, official, other volunteer, spectator, team member and other participant to:
  - i) Conduct himself/herself in a manner becoming a member of AYSO and consistent with the AYSO Six Philosophies and the highest standards of conduct.
  - ii) Work together as a team in support of the children playing the match and in alignment with the Stewards of the Game and Kids Zone programs to promote a safe, fair, fun environment.
  - iii) Comply with and promote compliance with the Bylaws, Rules & Regulations and policies, including those related to registration, certification and training.
  - iv) Encourage clean competition and good sportsmanship.
  - v) Prohibit and abstain from making negative comments and complaints about officiating.
  - vi) Present a healthy and safe athletic environment for team members, including but not limited to, refraining from consuming alcoholic beverages, using

tobacco products or smoking or simulating smoking or the use of tobacco products during practices or matches or in the immediate vicinity of the soccer fields.

- vii) Uphold the Rules and Regulations of AYSO, Area 8C and Regional Guidelines not in conflict with the above
- viii) Remember that there are no protests of games allowed.
- ix) Litter pick up is mandatory. Teams leaving litter may be refused inter-regional play.

2) It shall also be the duty of each coach to:

- i) Be trained consistent with the AYSO National Coaching Program standards for the age/skill level of the team he/she will coach; and train and coach the team to the best of his/her ability.
- ii) Remain within the coaches' technical area (Article I.G.2) during the match; a maximum of two coaches is permitted for each team.
- iii) Limit his/her sideline participation during AYSO matches to comments that are positive, instructional and/or encouraging, with limited supportive instruction.
- iv) Upon team formation, and during all subsequent team gatherings, practices, scrimmages, and (Regional, Inter-Regional, Area, Sectional, National and tournament play), have in his/her possession all signed forms, rosters, waivers and/or identification cards as may be required by AYSO policies so as to verify registration of team members or confirm volunteer qualifications.
- v) Each coach is responsible for presenting a game card that includes all players names and jersey numbers to the referee before the start of each match.

## Weather

AYSO generally operates under a "play in all weather" policy, meaning games and practices often continue during rain or snow. However, safety is the top priority, and cancellations or delays occur due to lightning, thunder, unsafe field conditions (such as excessive water), or extreme temperatures.

Key AYSO Weather Policies:

- 1.) Thunder & Lightning (30-Minute Rule): If lightning is seen or thunder is heard, all activity must stop immediately, and participants must seek shelter (not under

trees). Play cannot resume until 30 minutes after the last flash of lightning or clap of thunder.

- 2.) Rain & Snow: Games are generally played in rain or snow, provided the fields are not flooded or deemed dangerous.
- 3.) Extreme Heat: Referees may institute heat guidelines (e.g., above 95°F–100°F) that prompt extra water breaks, shortened quarters, or cancellations.

The final decision to cancel matches typically rests with the Regional Commissioner, Safety Director, or referees on-site.

## Pets, Service Animals and Emotional Support Animals

AYSO and Area 8C generally enforces a strict no-pet policy at all soccer games, practices, and related events to ensure the safety of players and comply with school/park permits. Only trained service animals (dogs or miniature horses) as defined by the ADA are permitted, while emotional support animals are not allowed.

Key details of the AYSO Pet Policy include:

- 1) No Pets on Fields: Pets are not allowed on the pitch, sidelines, or immediate, surrounding areas during any AYSO activity.
  - i) Many kids are either afraid of or allergic to animals. All of our fields and venues are an AYSO KidsZone.
- 2) Permit Safety: Many schools and local parks prohibit pets, and their presence can cause AYSO to lose the rights to use those fields.
- 3) Service Animals Exception: Properly trained service animals are permitted. Emotional support or comfort animals are not considered service animals under the ADA and are therefore not allowed.
- 4) Enforcement: Volunteers and Board Members will ask you to remove any pets from the field area.
- 5) Insurance Liability: The AYSO insurance policy does not cover animal-related injuries.