

## CONNYS PRESS RELEASE

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### CONNYS Changes 2020 Player Age Eligibility Cutoff Dates

In order to keep as many players as possible with their grade classmates, without compromising safety by encouraging too wide age spreads, the CONNY Executive Committee has moved the oldest birthday permitted for each year group from the September 1st to the July 1st preceding the season (except 14U Seniors for which the birthday eligibility date remains the March 1st preceding the season to accommodate very old-in-grade 8<sup>th</sup> graders who would not otherwise have a place to play in the spring). Thus, the 2020 player segmentation birthday cutoff dates will be:

<u>CONNYS</u> <u>Age Division</u>	<u>US Lacrosse</u> <u>Age Designation</u>	<u>Born On Or After:</u>
Senior	14U	01 MAR 2005
Senior	13U	01 JUL 2006
Junior	12U	01 JUL 2007
Junior	11U	01 JUL 2008
Lightning	10U	01 JUL 2009
Lightning	9U	01 JUL 2010
Bantam	8U – 6U	01 JUL 2011

All teams are organized by birth year, with single birth year teams strongly preferred. Where numbers or other circumstances don't allow that, two birth year combined teams are permitted within a CONNY Age Division (e.g. Junior, Senior).

**Background:** As strongly recommended by US Lacrosse, our sport's National Governing Body, CONNY competitive divisions have been organized since 2017 by birth year (with an explicit or implicit grade consideration). CONNY has used the US Lacrosse recommended birthday cutoff of the September 1st preceding the season (except 14U for which the birthday cutoff is the March 1 preceding the season to accommodate old-in-grade 8<sup>th</sup> graders who would have no place to play).

US Lacrosse's recommendation to organize activity by birth year results from extensive research by its Science & Safety Committee which determined that excessive age spreads in contests and practices increase risk of injury and compromise player development. Further analysis revealed that in much of the country a single grade sometimes contained a birthday range of up to thirty months, and that birthday spreads within a grade were increasing. Nevertheless, recognizing that keeping as many children as possible together with their grade classmates is a significant social benefit, US Lacrosse chose the September 1 preceding the season as the birth year cutoff date to mirror August and September kindergarten entrance dates (date on which a child is age 5 or older) prevalent across most of the country.

However, in Connecticut the kindergarten entrance date is January 1 of the school year...the only state with such a late entrance date. As a result, many Connecticut parents whose children would enter kindergarten as young five year olds hold their children back until the next school year. This is especially a consideration if they believe they might later move somewhere with a more conventional entrance date, making their child by far the youngest in their grade. Due to this and other factors, Connecticut has perhaps the highest percentage of old-in-grade students in the nation. For CONNY, that means that such held back children must play with the next higher grade, though the Eligibility Committee does have an appeals process for such cases. Such appeals petitions have been numerous and often contentious over the last three years. Therefore, the CONNY Board of Directors asked the Eligibility Committee to determine if a different birthday cutoff date would keep as many players as possible with their grade classmates without compromising safety by creating too wide age spreads.

**Analysis and Action:** The Eligibility Committee analyzed all appeals petitions from 2019 and earlier seasons and numerous team rosters to determine if another birthday cutoff date might better meet the CONNY schedule and conditions. They discovered that a cutoff date of July 1 preceding the season would eliminate virtually all appeals and allow almost all children to play with their grade classmates. July 1 has the additional benefit of coming after the end of the CONNY season. Therefore, the Eligibility Committee recommended, and the Executive Committee unanimously approved, moving the birthday cutoff date to the July 1 preceding the season.