



## Implementation guidelines for U.S. Soccer's Player Safety Campaign: Concussion initiatives & heading for youth players

**CHARLESTON, S.C. (March 14, 2016)** – US Club Soccer is clarifying the following implementation guidelines for U.S. Soccer's [Recognize to Recover Player Safety Campaign](#), specifically as it relates to concussion initiatives and heading for youth players:

- **The Federation is recommending, and US Club Soccer is requiring immediately, new rules as it relates to heading, as follows:**
  - Players in U-11 programs and younger shall not engage in heading, either in practices or in games.
  - Limited heading in practice for players in U-12 and U-13 programs. More specifically, these players shall be limited to a maximum of 30 minutes of heading training per week, with no more than 15-20 headers per player, per week.
  - Clubs should be aware of circumstances in which individual consideration is needed. For example:
    - A 10-year-old playing at U-12 or older should not head the ball at all.
    - An 11- or 12-year-old playing at U-14 or older should abide by the heading restrictions in practice.
  - Referees should enforce these restrictions by age group according to the specified rules. Referees will not be assessing the age of individual players on the field; they will enforce the rules for the age group.
- **Leagues and organizations are free to set their own standards, as long as the minimum requirements outlined above are met.**
- **In adherence to these new requirements, referees have been instructed by U.S. Soccer of the following rule addition:** *When a player deliberately heads the ball in a game, an indirect free kick (IFK) should be awarded to the opposing team from the spot of the offense. If the deliberate header occurs within the goal area, the indirect free kick should be taken on the goal area line parallel to the goal line at the point nearest to where the infringement occurred.*
- **Modified substitution rules also took effect Jan. 1, 2016, as follows:** *Any player suspected of suffering a head injury may be substituted for evaluation without the substitution counting against the team's total number of allowed substitutions during the game.*
- **US Club Soccer strongly recommends that all coaches, staff members, parents and players watch [U.S. Soccer's concussions in soccer overview video](#).**

### **RESOURCES:**

As previously communicated, other player safety guidelines and mandates have been implemented by U.S. Soccer, such as guidelines regarding the number of healthcare professionals at major tournaments. For more details, please review the resources linked below.

- [Recognize to Recover web page](#)
- [U.S. Soccer Player Safety Campaign FAQs](#)

### **ABOUT US CLUB SOCCER:**

A National Association member of the U.S. Soccer Federation, **US Club Soccer** fosters the growth and development of soccer clubs in order to create the best possible development environment for players of all ages.

US Club Soccer offers youth and adult registration, league- and cup-based competition platforms at the recreational and competitive levels, and a variety of other programming and services. Anchored by **Players First**, US Club Soccer supports all facets of youth soccer through the five pillars of Players First: Club Development, Coaching Development, Player Development, Parent Engagement & Education and Player Health & Safety. Other programming elements include National Premier Leagues, the id<sup>2</sup> Program and Player Development Program, and the National Cup.

US Club Soccer is sponsored by Nike and is supported by LaLiga through a technical partnership.