



IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES FOR U.S. SOCCER'S PLAYER SAFETY CAMPAIGN: CONCUSSION INITIATIVES & HEADING FOR YOUTH PLAYERS

The following are 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:

U.S. Soccer is recommending, and NMYSA 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 following specified rules:

- Referees will not be assessing the age of individual players on the field; they will enforce the rules for the age group.
- 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.

RESOURCES:

For more details, please review the resources linked below.

- [U.S. Soccer Player Safety Campaign FAQs](#)