



# FOOTBALL CLUB FREDERICK



## FC FREDERICK

### Youth Soccer Age Group Change: 2026–27 Season

*What Every FC Frederick Family Needs to Know*

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#### What Is Changing?

Starting with the 2026–27 season, youth soccer in the United States is shifting from a birth-year age group system (January 1 – December 31) to a school-year age group system (August 1 – July 31). This change has been adopted by US Youth Soccer, US Club Soccer, AYSO, the Girls Academy, and MLS NEXT Academy Division — the governing bodies that oversee virtually all competitive youth soccer in the country. The 2025–26 season is not affected. All current teams and age groups remain as-is through the end of this season.

#### Why Is This Change Happening?

The January 1 birth-year system was mandated by U.S. Soccer in 2017, replacing a school-year model that most clubs had used for decades. After years of feedback from clubs, coaches, families, and players — and a survey of more than 15,000 stakeholders — U.S. Soccer removed that mandate in late 2024, empowering governing bodies to return to the school-year model. The three largest youth soccer organizations acted in concert to make the transition as consistent as possible across the country. The primary reasons driving the change:

- **Reducing the “trapped player” problem.** Under the January 1 system, players whose birthdays fall between August and December can end up in a soccer age group older than their school grade — competing and training with kids a full year or more ahead of them socially and, in many cases, physically. These players were “trapped” in an older age band with no natural remedy. The August 1 cutoff dramatically reduces the number of players in this situation.
- **Aligning soccer with school life.** When players can compete alongside their school-year classmates and friends, research shows they are more likely to enjoy the sport, build stronger team bonds, and remain active in soccer longer. The school-year model makes youth soccer feel less like a separate world and more like a natural extension of a child’s daily social environment.
- **Improving college recruiting clarity.** When players of the same graduating class compete together, college coaches get a clearer picture of talent relative to the recruiting class they care about. This benefits all competitive players working toward a college opportunity.
- **Returning to a proven model.** The August 1 – July 31 remains the model used by the majority of youth sports in America. This transition is a return to what most families and coaches already know.



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## How Will It Affect My Player?

The impact depends on when your child was born:

Birth Window	What Generally Happens
August 1 – December 31	Most players move down one age group, now competing with their school-grade peers. Many families see this as the most beneficial change — their child has often been playing “old” for their grade.
January 1 – July 31	Most players shift up one age group, joining classmates they already know from school. The transition is typically smooth and socially natural.

The vast majority of players will not repeat an age year or skip one — they simply realign. FC Frederick’s coaching staff will evaluate every player in their new age group before rosters are finalized. Families with questions about their player’s placement may reach out to their program director.

## 2026–27 Age Group Reference Chart

Use the table below to find your player’s age group for the 2026–27 season (effective August 1, 2026).

Age Group	Birthdate Range	Approx. School Grade (2026–27)
U5	August 1, 2021 – July 31, 2022	Pre-K
U6	August 1, 2020 – July 31, 2021	Kindergarten
U7	August 1, 2019 – July 31, 2020	1st Grade
U8	August 1, 2018 – July 31, 2019	2nd Grade
U9	August 1, 2017 – July 31, 2018	3rd Grade
U10	August 1, 2016 – July 31, 2017	4th Grade
U11	August 1, 2015 – July 31, 2016	5th Grade
U12	August 1, 2014 – July 31, 2015	6th Grade
U13	August 1, 2013 – July 31, 2014	7th Grade
U14	August 1, 2012 – July 31, 2013	8th Grade
U15	August 1, 2011 – July 31, 2012	9th Grade (Freshman)
U16	August 1, 2010 – July 31, 2011	10th Grade (Sophomore)
U17	August 1, 2009 – July 31, 2010	11th Grade (Junior)
U18/U19	August 1, 2008 – July 31, 2009	12th Grade (Senior)

*Questions? Contact FC Frederick at [lhoppmann@fcfrederick.com](mailto:lhoppmann@fcfrederick.com). Full tryout schedules, the age group calculator, and parent information sessions will be announced in April 2026.*