



Bedford Athletic Club (BAC)

New Age Group Formation, Fall 2026 — Parent FAQ

Fall 2026 Transition | Updated March 23, 2026

The BAC Board approved this policy to guide the transition to the New Hampshire Soccer Association (NHSA) / New Hampshire Soccer League (NHSL) age-group formation cycle. Below are the most Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) parents may have, along with BAC's position based on Board-approved policy.

Note: This FAQ may be updated from time to time as new information becomes available or additional questions arise. Please check bedfordac.com for the most current version.

1. What is changing about age groups for Fall 2026?

NHSA and NHSL are adopting the USYS (US Youth Soccer) age-group formation cycle. Starting Fall 2026, age groups will be based on **August 1 – July 31** instead of the previous January 1 – December 31 calendar year. BAC is adopting this change for both Travel and Recreational programs. For full details, see the [Board-approved BAC Policy](#). You can also reference the [full decision from U.S. Soccer on player registration](#).

2. Why is this change happening?

National youth soccer bodies (USYS, AYSO [American Youth Soccer Organization], US Club Soccer) are aligning to a seasonal-year cycle that better matches school-year cohorts. NHSA confirmed this change at its January 31, 2026, Annual General Meeting. This is a league-wide decision, not a BAC-only decision.

3. Does this affect the Spring 2026 season?

No. Spring 2026 is completely unchanged. The new age bands take effect starting with Fall 2026 tryouts.

4. How do I know which age group my child will be in?

BAC follows the official USYS/NHSA age chart, which is the definitive source of truth for all age band placements. You can look up your child's age group using the [BAC Age Group Matrix](#).

5. My child's age-group label changed. Did they get moved up or down?

No one was "moved." The cutoff date changed, which means some players will have a different age-group label. Most age groups now include two birth years. This is a labeling change, not a developmental or skill judgment.

6. Will my child's current team stay together?

BAC's Board-approved principle is: age-appropriate placement first, team continuity second, no guarantees. All players are placed into their correct age group before any continuity considerations. For U12 and below, the Board is firm on this with no exceptions. For U13 and above, there is some flexibility depending on player numbers and coaching capacity, but age-group placement still comes first.

7. Can my child play up to stay with their current team?

Play-up is not available simply to maintain team continuity. BAC allows play-up only through a formal exception process: school-grade alignment or rare special cases. All exceptions require Board approval. Coaches cannot approve play-up requests.

8. What is a school-grade alignment exception?

This applies when a player is in a higher school grade than is typical for their birthday (for example, an August/September birthday in Bedford, started kindergarten early, or skipped a grade). It is specifically about school-grade placement, not soccer ability. "My kid is advanced at soccer" is not a qualifying reason for a school-grade alignment exception. If approved, the player may try out with the older group, but it does not guarantee placement.

9. How do I request a play-up exception?

Submit a request before tryouts with supporting documentation (report card, school portal screenshot, or school letter). All requests are reviewed and approved by the Board. Coaches cannot approve exceptions at any level. For questions about the process, email TravelProgram@BedfordAC.com.

10. Can my child play down to a younger age group?

No. Play-down is not allowed for NHSL travel per league rules. BAC will support players through appropriate team tiering, coaching support, and recreational options where applicable.

11. How will tryouts work under the new age bands?

BAC uses a pod model: all players in an age group participate in one pool tryout and are evaluated on technical skills, coachability, and effort. Coaches run the tryout sessions and designated BAC volunteer coaches make the final roster placements. A Pod Lead/Head Coach is assigned for each pod with multiple teams.

12. Who decides which team my child is placed on?

Designated BAC volunteer coaches make roster placements based on tryout evaluations. Head coaches provide input and run sessions. Roster size targets with an acceptable range are set prior to tryouts.

13. What do the team tier names mean?

For U10 and below (developmental focus): Red (Tier 1), White (Tier 2), Black (Tier 3), messaging emphasizes development and appropriate challenge. For U11 and older (competitive): Elite (Tier 1), Premier (Tier 2), Select (Tier 3), aligned with league formats including State Cup, which begins at U11.

14. Can my child be moved between teams during the season?

Placements are one-way for the season. Exceptions are limited to injury, safety, or administrative reasons only. Guest play and dual rostering is coach-managed with parent notification and Travel Director visibility and must comply with all NHSL/NHSA rules.

15. What happens with jersey numbers?

Players retain their current jersey numbers through the existing two (2) year uniform cycle. Duplicates are permitted generally permitted through Spring 2027. A new uniform cycle will begin Fall 2027. Coaches and the league will have flexibility during this transition period.

16. Can I appeal my child's placement?

A one-time appeal may be submitted within 72 hours of the placement offer, only with new, relevant information (for example, an administrative error or missed documentation). Appeals based on evaluation judgment, player comparisons, or convenience are not accepted. The Board's decision is final.

17. What if NHSL does not offer a younger division for my child's age group?

When NHSL does not offer a younger division (for example, no U7/U8 divisions), those players register and are evaluated within the next available pod. They may be placed on any tier, including Tier 1, based on evaluation. This is standard tier placement, not a "play-up" exception.

18. What is the timeline for this transition?

On February 18, 2026, Board approved all policy decisions. Early March: Coach info session. March-April: Family communications including a heads-up email, FAQ page on bedfordac.com. May 2026: Tryouts under the new age bands using the pod model. May–June: Roster placements and offer letters. August 2026: Fall season begins under Aug 1–Jul 31 age groups.

19. Where can I get more information or ask a question?

BAC will publish and maintain an FAQ on bedfordac.com and update it as needed. Please start with your coach for general questions. If it's not covered in the FAQ or your coach can't answer, email TravelProgram@BedfordAC.com.