



PLAYER MOVEMENT AND MANAGEMENT

Preface

The Canada Soccer Player Movement and Management framework presents a rights-based approach to guide player movement between amateur youth clubs. It highlights values, principles, policies, and procedures to promote positive youth development aligned with the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (UNCRC). The UNCRC confirms that all children have the right to play (Article 31) and the right to a voice in decisions that impact them directly (Article 12). Moreover, play is a natural laboratory for development and the child's right to education (Article 29). Through play, children engage in problem-solving, critical thinking, and abstract reasoning, all essential for growth and development. Play also develops social skills like teamwork, communication, and conflict resolution, and research has consistently demonstrated that playing sports in childhood promotes short-term and long-term physical and mental health. Therefore, a rights-based approach is important when managing the movement of players in amateur youth soccer.

In the current model, soccer clubs control the movement of players through contractual relationships and player recruitment, which often includes incentives to players and their families to choose one club over another or to leave their current club for a new one. This player movement model poses significant questions when viewed through a rights-based lens. Does the practice of incentive-based recruitment violate the UNCRC by commodifying the player? How is player development impacted when the behaviour of clubs and within organizations is not player-centred and, rather than prioritizing a child's right to play, decisions are driven by economic and results-based considerations? Are the players treated as children in a developmental space, or as property of the club, who kick the ball to entertain their parents (the paying customers) and for content production needed to promote the club on social media?

Additionally, the movement of groups of players or entire teams to follow a coach between clubs, which is prevalent within the Canada Soccer ecosystem, presents a significant safety risk. When a team becomes more connected to an individual coach than to the club they represent, it has the potential to become a risk for Safe Sport based on abuse of power and subjective decision-making. Further, personal connections to individual children and their parents can create an environment where the coach can do no wrong and inappropriate behaviours are normalized. To mitigate potential concerns, clubs should always follow coach recruitment practices connected to the Canada Soccer Player Movement and Management Values. A club should never bring a coach in only because "they win". Ethical recruitment based on the Canada Soccer Player Movement and Management Values and fit of the coach is critical.

While clubs are responsible for the recruitment and behaviour of their coaches, individual coaches also have a responsibility in the movement and management of players. The coach-athlete relationship is a privileged one and plays a critical role in the personal and athletic development of the player. Coaches must recognize the power imbalance inherent in the position and respect and promote the rights of all participants. Like teachers, coaches are developers of young people and should be focused on keeping the players they coach playing for as long as possible while supporting their development both on and off the field. Recruitment of players from other teams and clubs is prohibited and should be viewed through the lens of the child. What message does it send to a young person when they are replaced in a team by a player from another club who is further along in their developmental journey to win more games?



In contrast, the Canada Soccer Player Movement and Management framework draws on the existing model in school boards nationwide. For example, in many areas of Canada, parents and students have the right to choose the school they attend, with most children attending the closest school to where they live. While schools promote their people, programs, and services, and in some cases, even specialized programs they may offer, in most cases, the promotion is without active solicitation or recruitment of individual students. In fact, it would be viewed as inappropriate for an individual school or teacher to actively recruit students from another school to join their classroom to improve the overall class average, test scores, or perceived learning environment.

The Canada Soccer Player Movement and Management framework presents the following values and principles as a rights-based guideline for policies and procedures for managing player movement in amateur youth sport.

Values

Values are a set of core beliefs that provide purpose and direction and set the tone for behaviours and interactions. The following values have been identified as the core beliefs that should underpin the behaviours of clubs and organizations when managing player movement.

Player-centred

The individual needs of the player must come first when considering any player movement.

Collaborative

Organizations must work together in the best interest of the player's needs and not in opposition or competition between organizations.

Respectful

All interactions between clubs, players, coaches, referees, and parents should demonstrate regard and value for the abilities, feelings, and views of all stakeholders.

Transparent

All interactions between clubs, players, coaches, referees, and parents should be open, honest, and accessible to all stakeholders.

Accountable

Organizations and individuals have an obligation to support the young people involved and are responsible for the behaviours and actions of all stakeholders.

Equitable

All individuals should be treated fairly, and policies applied equally, regardless of physical characteristics, ability, age, ancestry, colour, race, citizenship, ethnic origin, place of origin, creed, family status, marital status, gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation.

Principles

Principles provide direction but not detailed prescription and are designed to guide the behaviours of individuals and organizations within the Canada Soccer ecosystem. The following principles underpin the Policies and Procedures of Player Movement and Management:



The Player

- Players have a right to play soccer.
- Players have the right to participate in the organization of their choosing.
- The movement of amateur players cannot be unreasonably restricted.
- Players are encouraged to play as close to home as possible, especially at the grassroots stage.
- Assuming an appropriate stream, age, and stage of participation is available, players should play for their local organization, especially at the grassroots stage.

The Coach

- Coaches must act in the best interest of player's development as a whole person.
- Coaches must refrain from the use of power or authority to coerce another person to engage in inappropriate activities.
- Coaches are responsible for ensuring a safe and respectful environment in which players may participate, including, training and match environments, travel, and any other activity associated with coaching.
- Coaches are responsible for maintaining and enhancing the dignity and self-esteem of other participants by:
 - Treating players with fairness, honesty, respect and integrity;
 - Focusing comments or criticism appropriately and avoiding public criticism of athletes, coaches, officials, organizers, volunteers, employees, or other participants;
 - Consistently demonstrating the spirit of sportsmanship, sport leadership, and ethical conduct; and
 - Ensuring adherence to the rules of the sport and the spirit of those rules.
- Coaching behaviours must align to the [Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport](#), [Canada Soccer Code of Conduct and Ethics](#), and [NCCP Code of Ethics](#).
- Coaches must communicate and interact with players in a manner that is open and observable and in alignment with the [Rule of Two Guidelines](#).
 - Virtual interactions should be in an open and observable environment (i.e., avoid bedrooms) and initiated by the coach from an appropriate location (i.e., avoid bedrooms or "overly personal"/unprofessional settings).
 - Parents/guardians should be required to consent to all virtual interactions.
 - Coaches are prohibited from one-on-one texting, emailing, or online contact with minor-aged athletes. Any texting, emailing, or online contact should be limited to group text/email that includes at least 2 adults (2 coaches or 1 coach and 1 adult (parent, guardian, volunteer, club administrator), and limited to coaching (non-social) matters. Parents of minor athletes should be provided the opportunity to receive all texts/emails.
 - Social media contact by coach to a minor athlete is prohibited (including the sharing of memes, non-training video, etc.).
- Coaches must provide players (and the care givers of a minor) with the information necessary to be involved in decisions that affect the player.
- Coaches should focus on the development and retention of players.
- Coaches may not recruit a player from another team or club with the intention of enticing them to leave their current organization under any circumstances.



The Organization

- Organizations are expected to act as good corporate citizens using ethical business practices.
- The deliberate persuasion or recruitment of a player by any person associated with a club, including coaches, team or club officials, parents/guardians, or other players, with the intention of enticing them to leave their current organization is not permitted under any circumstances at any time.
- Organizations are responsible for the behaviours of all those affiliated with the organization, including staff, coaches, team personnel, volunteers, parents/guardians, and players.
- There is zero tolerance for the use of incentives to encourage movement of players. This includes incentives related to fees, equipment or apparel, player placement, and playing time, amongst others.
- Organizations may not recruit coaches or team personnel with the intent to entice players to follow the coach.
- Organizations should focus on team building through the development and retention of players within their organization rather than recruiting players from outside their organization.

The Process

- Individual player movement should be considered differently from group migration of players between organizations.
- Organizations should work collaboratively to manage player movement in the best interest of the player.
- The needs of the individual player should be prioritized over those of the team, club, or coach with consideration of the impact on the remaining players on the team and any players who may be displaced on a team by the movement of players from another club.
- The timing of player movement (pre-season, during season, post-season) should be considered. Whenever possible, players should not move between organizations during a playing season.
- Payment and Refund Policies should not be used as a tool to restrict player movement; however, it is appropriate to require outstanding fees to be reconciled prior to a player registering with another organization.

The principles of the Canada Soccer Club Licensing Program provide excellent insight into the reasons why a player may choose to move clubs while at the same time demonstrating how to manage player movement from a rights-based approach.

Emphasize Physical, Mental, and Emotional Safety

All soccer spaces must be physically, mentally, and emotionally safe for the players. This is foundational and non-negotiable. Furthermore, all discussions around player movement must be free of coercion, bullying, harassment, and abuse.

Prioritize Player Enjoyment

The primary reason children play sports is to have fun. The enjoyment of the child, or “what does the child want?” must be at the centre of any discussions around player movement.

Focus on Participant-Centred Decision Making – when considering player movement requests, the primary focus should be on the player’s well-being not on the needs of the team, club, or coach. For



example, as players move through the Canada Soccer ecosystem, this may necessitate movement between clubs.

Provide Developmentally Appropriate, High-Quality Programs

Individual players may require specific or specialized programming at different points in their soccer development. While all clubs must meet the minimum standards as a “Quality Soccer Provider,” clubs with a higher licence may appeal to different players at different times. This leads to natural movement between clubs with varying Club Licence levels and services provided, and this movement should be encouraged when in the players’ best interest.

Foster Accessible, Inclusive, and Welcoming Environments

Clubs are responsible for encouraging children to play soccer, providing a safe and positive environment for them to play in, and helping them to improve while playing. Discussions around player movement should highlight a sense of belonging, holistic personal development, progression, retention, and long-term engagement of the individual player.

Maximize Attraction, Holistic Personal Development, Progression, Retention, and Long-Term Engagement

At its foundation, clubs are responsible for getting children to play soccer, providing a positive environment so that they continue to play, and helping them to improve. As players move through the Canada Soccer ecosystem, this may necessitate movement between clubs.

Act as a Good Corporate and Community Citizen

Soccer clubs should work well with other clubs and governing bodies, avoiding unethical recruitment and solicitation tactics of players (i.e., poaching). They should also portray themselves and soccer positively within the community and seen to be contributing to its betterment.

Policies and Procedures

Member Associations are responsible for developing the policies and procedures that govern player movement and management within their jurisdictions, however, these must be aligned to this guiding document and include, at minimum the following:

- Definitions
- Criteria and Considerations (why should a player move between clubs?)
- Timelines (when is a player permitted to move between clubs?)
- Procedures (how should player movement occur?)
- Communications Protocol (what standard of communication must occur between organizations?)
- Reporting and Disciplinary Processes for violation of the Principles, Policies, and Procedures.
- Appeals Process for player movement decisions.

Member Associations should also have the capacity and capability to track player movement. Canada Soccer has developed a template which includes the above and can be adopted or adapted by Member Associations. **All Member Association documentation governing player management and movement must be reviewed and approved by Canada Soccer.**