

2023 NORTH ANDOVER SOCCER ASSOCIATION TRAVEL TEAM POLICY

Approved May 7, 2023

1. Definitions and NASA Philosophy

- Travel Policy: This document has been drawn up and approved by the North Andover Soccer Association (NASA) Board of Directors and will be implemented by the Travel Directors. It serves as our official policy governing all aspects of the NASA Travel Soccer program.
- Definitions: The following abbreviations will be used throughout this document.
 - i. “NASA”: North Andover Soccer Association
 - ii. “Board”: NASA’s Board of Directors, who oversees the NASA program (see the NASA Bylaws for a complete description of the Board of Directors’ duties.
 - iii. “TC”: Travel Committee, a sub-committee appointed by the Board.
 - iv. “TD”: One of both (Boys and Girls) of NASA’s Travel Directors, who implement this Travel Policy.
 - v. “All Grade Team(s)”: Travel teams assembled out of any age group where all of the players on the roster are in the same school grade. There is at least one “All Grade Team” in both the Boys and Girls divisions for grades 5 - 8.
 - vi. “Select Team(s)”: The top All Grade Team in each grade. There are eight Select Teams in total in the program: one for each grade from 5th to 8th in both the Boys and Girls divisions.
 - vii. “ECYSA”: Essex County Youth Soccer Association. All NASA Travel teams participate in the Essex County Youth Soccer League.
 - viii. “MYSA”: Massachusetts Youth Soccer Association governs soccer for the entire state of Massachusetts.
 - ix. “Season”: The annual soccer season comprising both Fall and Spring.
- NASA Philosophy: NASA provides recreational and competitive soccer programs for the children of North Andover in the fall and spring seasons. NASA is dedicated to the belief that any player, regardless of ability, has a place on a soccer team. The in-town programs provide the opportunity for children to learn the game and develop soccer skills, while our Travel teams play in the ECYSA and compete at appropriate competitive levels.

2. Travel Committee

- Purpose: The Travel Committee is not autonomous. NASA's Board has the final say over the operation and management of NASA's soccer program. The TC reviews the travel program and makes recommendations to the Board. The goals of the TC are to insulate the Board from claims of conflict of interest and to unburden the Board from problems and issues unique to this area. It should also be recognized that this Travel Committee - and NASA generally - has the responsibility to act openly, fairly and effectively upon every situation pertaining to NASA's Travel program that may arise.
- Duties: The scope of the TC's responsibilities include (but are not limited to) the following:
 - i. Interview coaching candidates for the Select Teams;
 - ii. Make recommendations to the Board regarding the choice of head coach for the Select Team;
 - iii. Make recommendations to the TD with regard to the candidates who applied for, but were not chosen as, the Select Team head coach position for filling other Travel team coaching positions;
 - iv. Provide guidance to the Board and TD on coach and player disciplinary issues;
 - v. Handle any Travel program-related issues on which the Board requests assistance; and
 - vi. Advise the Board as requested.
 - vii. The TC will be active participants in the annual travel team evaluations in May.
- Composition and Qualifications:
 - i. The Travel Committee shall be composed of four non-Board members plus two co-chairs, who are the respective Boys and Girls Travel Directors.
 - ii. All four TC members should be current or prior Travel coaches with at least two years of coaching experience at the Travel team level; or individuals with extensive knowledge of soccer and the NASA programs.
 - iii. All TC members must be nominated by the Board President and approved by the Board.
 - iv. If a Travel Committee member is currently a Travel coach or the parent of a child participating in travel soccer, they must recuse themselves from decisions pertaining to their teams.
 - v. No TC member shall serve more than four total years in this position.
 - vi. All members of the Travel Committee must be familiar with the highest level of Travel league play (preference will be given to candidates with ECYSA MTOC coaching experience) and are aware of the coaching, playing and overall situations unique to this level.

- vii. They will be asked to provide sound advice to the Board and act as an independent voice removed from some of the conflicts that may arise.
- Meetings
 - i. *Attendees*: No sitting Board members, apart from the President and respective Boys and Girls Travel Directors, shall attend any Travel Committee meeting except at the specific request of the TD.
 - ii. *Voting Procedures*: The President shall sit as a non-voting member. However, in the event of a tie vote, the President may cast the tie-breaking vote.
- Removal of a Travel Committee Member
 - i. The NASA Board reserves the right to remove any TC members who do not properly fulfill their duties and obligations at any time during their tenure.
 - ii. Removal will be by a majority vote of the Board members after presentation and discussion of the issues causing the motion for removal.

3. G6/G8 Select Team Coach Selection Process

- Application: Coaches interested in applying for the Select Team coach position must apply in writing to the Travel Committee by February 15th preceding the Fall season in which they hope to coach. Application letters must be a maximum of two pages not including any letters of recommendation that may accompany the letter.
- Requirements: Select Team Coaches will be chosen by and recommended to the NASA Board by the four-person Travel Committee. Applicants will be assessed on the following qualifications:
 - i. Personal qualities, including but not limited to the following: integrity, leadership, organizational and communication skills, fairness, dedication, commitment, understanding, sensitivity, etc.;
 - ii. Coaching experience;
 - iii. Coaching licenses: Select Team Coaches are encouraged to have - or be in the process of obtaining - their age-group Grassroots Soccer certification or current MYSA formatted coaching program.
 - iv. Recommendations from other coaches, coordinators, NASA board members, parents or other individuals who can attest to applicant's relevant personal and coaching qualifications.
 - v. Playing experience; and

- vi. Other factors deemed appropriate by the Travel Committee.
- Travel Committee Interview: The Travel Committee will interview every applicant for a Select Coaching position. Interviews will be completed during the month of March and ahead of the start of the Spring Soccer season. In the event that a sufficiently qualified applicant is not found for the position, the TC may seek additional applicants following the February 15th submission deadline.
 - Candidate Observation: During the month of April, members of the TC will observe each applicant in a coaching environment (e.g., practice and/or game) to complete their evaluation.
 - Travel Committee Recommendation: Following an internal discussion and vote, the TC will recommend coaches for the 5th Grade Boys and Girls Select Teams and any other Select Team position being contested to the NASA Board. Should the TC vote end in a tie, the NASA President will serve as the tie-breaker. Should there be a conflict of interest with the President casting the deciding vote in a tie from the TC, the vice-president shall cast the tie-breaking vote. The Travel Committee should be prepared to discuss the specific criteria they used to assess the applicants and how each of the applicants fared against their framework. The Travel Committee's final recommendation will occur ahead of the NASA Board Meeting in early May.
 - NASA Board Approval: The Board has the option to approve or reject the TC recommendation. To minimize conflict of interest, Board members who are candidates for Select Team positions may not be present or participate in the discussion or vote for the coaching position for that Select team. If the Board rejects the Travel Committee candidate, they may accept a candidate not recommended by the TC. The secondary candidate must have applied for the position and have been interviewed and evaluated by the TC. If no secondary candidate is available or qualified, the Board may ask that a new search be conducted for a suitable candidate at the TC's discretion.

g. Notification: Upon approval by the Board, the applicable TD will communicate the outcome to all applicants.

4. Expectations of Travel Coaches

All Travel coaches are subject to evaluation, review and scrutiny by the Travel Committee, the appropriate Travel Director, NASA's Director of Coaching, and the NASA Board at all times. Coaching positions may be terminated at any time and are not automatically renewed from season to season.

The following are expectations for all Travel coaches:

- **Commitment:** All Select Team coaches must make a commitment to coach their teams in both the Fall and Spring seasons in a given year. Moreover, all Select Team coaches are expected to coach for all four years (Grades 5 - 8) unless there are disciplinary or other reasons for their removal or replacement. It is preferable that all Select Coaches make this commitment.
- **Sportsmanship:** All Travel coaches must display the highest level of sportsmanship, fair play and respect for their players, opponents and officials at all times.
- **Playing Time:** All coaches are expected to make their best effort to play each player a minimum of 50% of every game.
- **Regular Season Practice:** It is expected that travel team coaches will be available to coach two 90 minute practices a week throughout the duration of the season. Travel coaches may not officially begin practicing more than two weeks before their first regular season game without prior approval from the TD.
 - i. *Pre-season Practices:* If a coach wishes to practice on town fields earlier than two weeks before the start of the season, then he or she is required to get approval from the TD. Parents and players should be notified that the practices are optional.
 - ii. *Field Availability:* Coaches are prohibited from using town fields at the start of the season until they are formally released by the Fields Director. Coaches should not practice on fields that would be considered unplayable for matches to avoid damaging them.
- **Off-Season Activities:** Coaches may enter indoor leagues, offer foot skills clinics or have optional practices over the winter. These activities are not under the supervision of NASA and are completely independent of NASA. NASA does not set terms or conditions for coaches involved with teams during the off-season other than to indicate no off-season participation by a NASA-rostered player as a prerequisite to continuing on the NASA roster or in determining playing status during the official NASA - ECYSA seasons.
- **Tournaments:** If North Andover hosts a local tournament, all travel coaches are strongly encouraged to participate. Additionally, all Travel Coaches are encouraged to enter their teams in other regional tournaments.
- **Selection of Assistant Coaches:** NASA strongly recommends the appointment of at least one assistant coach, which will be chosen by the head coach, for each team. The TD may also support the head coach in identifying assistants. The announcement of assistant coaches may not happen prior to the team placement notifications. Assistant coaches are subject to the same terms, conditions, reviews, standards of behavior and discipline as head coaches.

5. Renewal of Coaching Status

- All Travel Coaches are subject to the review of the Travel Committee, the appropriate Travel Director, the Director of Coaching and the NASA Board at all times. Coaching status is not automatically renewed year-to-year.
- Any person interested in applying for a Select Team coaching position - even if already occupied - may do so by February 15th of the year preceding the Fall season in which they hope to coach.
- Incumbent Select Team coaches need not reapply unless they are notified by the TD that there is another applicant for their position.
- If a TD deems it appropriate, he or she may bring a recommendation to the Travel Committee and the Board for not renewing a coach's status.
- The Travel Committee will review the qualifications and performance of every Select Team and All Grade Team coach every year.
- The Travel Committee may request a meeting with a current Select Team or All Grade Team coach if there are concerns about the coach or team performance. The TC may decide not to renew a coach's position as coach of a Select or All Grade Team.
- The TC may seek additional applicants if there are no qualified candidates.

6. Removal of Travel Coaches

In the event that Travel Coaches violate NASA guidelines, policies or league rules, then that coach may be sanctioned or removed by the TC with Board approval. The removal process would include the following steps:

- Notifying the Travel Director: Issues may be brought to the TD directly by any member of the NASA community.
- Investigation by the Travel Director: Accusations of wrongdoing against Travel coaches will be investigated thoroughly by the TD with input sought from all knowledgeable parties, including parents, players, league officials, referees and the coach themselves. The appropriate TD will initiate the investigation and serve as the liaison between parents, players, the TC and the NASA Board. Once the important details have been established and corroborated, the Travel Director will present the details to the Travel Committee.
- TC Removal Review Meeting: Once the TC has reviewed pertinent details, it will offer the coach an opportunity to address the issue with the TC in a private meeting. Similarly, the parents, players or league officials bringing the complaint

will also be afforded the opportunity to meet privately with the TC to address their concerns. Once the TC has heard from both parties, it will discuss the matter privately and recommend a course of action for the NASA Board. The TC may recommend no action, an admonishment, a more formal warning that includes explicit provisions and a probationary period for the coach, or dismissal.

- **Board Meeting:** The NASA Board will consider the TC recommendation. The Board may either on the recommendation directly or take another course of action it deems in the best interest of the players, the families, the coach and NASA. The parties may request an appearance at a Board meeting to have their positions heard directly by the Board. The Board's course of action will be communicated to all parties and the matter will be closed.

7. Selection of Players for the Select Teams

Each May, NASA holds evaluations to select players for the Select Team and for the remaining teams that will compete in each age group (G6/G8). There is one Select Team for each grade.

For the incoming fifth graders, the evaluations will occur over two days, while the incoming sixth, seventh and eighth grade teams will be evaluated over the course of one night.

With input from the Select Coaches, NASA's Directors of Coaching an on-field evaluation program will be developed and managed that consists of a series of small- and large-sided games unless restrictions (e.g., Covid-19 social distancing protocols) are in place. Select Team Coaches, Directors of Coaching and independent evaluators will all be present at tryouts to perform evaluations.

The Select Team coach and evaluators will consider a variety of sources in the evaluation and selection of players.

- **Player Observations:** During the Spring season following his / her appointment, the Select Team coach should begin observing players in their grade pool multiple times in advance of formal player evaluations. Attempts should be made by the newly appointed coach to observe players both during games and practices.
- **Coach Assessments:** The Select Team coach should consult with the existing coaches of players under consideration for the Select Team to augment his / her observations. In person discussions with the coach should be in addition to

existing coaches completing strength forms on each player after their spring season.

- Player Evaluations: Evaluations are intended to create an opportunity to evaluate players' skill sets in a number of small- and large-sided game formats. Players may perform individual drills, as well as the small- and large-sided games over the 1 to 2 days of evaluations. What players are asked to do may depend on the number of players being evaluated as well as other factors that are determined by the Select Coach as well as the other evaluators. Players are scored individually during all drills and games to get the best, most well rounded view possible before any decisions are made.

8. Expectations of Players

- NASA expects all of its players to conduct themselves appropriately at all times on and off the field. Players are expected to attend practices and games or communicate to their coaches when attendance is not possible.
- Select Team Expectations: Because placing a player on a Select Team roster, by definition, prevents another player from making that team, there is an implied commitment for Select Team players. As a result, the TC and Board have established the following formal expectations for Select Team players:
 - Practices: Each Select Team player is expected to participate in at least one of the two scheduled practices each week and be available to play in every ECYSA game. Only compelling reasons will be considered acceptable excuses for not meeting this requirement. Compelling excuses are defined as situations that are beyond the player's control. For instance, an important family, school or religious commitment or responsibility would be considered a "compelling" reason. However, a club soccer conflict or practice for another sport would not.*
 - Seasons: Each Select Team player is expected to play both the Fall and Spring seasons to be eligible to play on a Select team.*
 - Off-Season: Participation in off-season activities is entirely voluntary.*
 - Tournaments: If North Andover hosts a tournament, participation is strongly encouraged for travel team players. Participation in other tournaments is recommended, though not required.*
 - Coach's Expectations: Coaches are free to communicate their own requirements and expectations for Select Team players prior to the selection process, as long as they do not contradict those stated above.*
 - Handling Conflicts*

1. *Club: Refer to the [MYSAs rules](#) regarding handling Club v NASA Conflicts.*
2. *ODP: Refer to the [MYSAs rules](#) regarding handling ODP v NASA Conflicts.*
3. *Players are expected to abide by the rules of these conflicts. Accepting a spot on the Select Team indicates a willingness to abide by these agreements.*

vii. Removal of Players: Failure to meet the Select Team Expectations may result in the player losing his/her place on the Select Team.

- Between Seasons: Players may be placed on or off a Select Team between seasons. Any existing player who is not selected for the next season's Select Team must be notified by phone or in-person by the Select Coach. The parents of the player will be personally notified and then the child in a mutually acceptable manner to the parents and the coach. The Select Travel Coach should be communicating with at-risk players during the season so that the final decision will not be a surprise.
- In-Season: Players may be suspended during a season for disciplinary reasons or for any conduct unbecoming of a NASA soccer player as determined by the coach and/or ECYSA. The TC will review and approve all suspension requests initiated within the NASA community.

9. Assembling Teams

- TDs will determine the number of teams that can be assembled based on the number of player registrations.
 - i. There will be one boys and one girls Select Team for each grade from 5th - 8th, creating a total of eight Select Teams.
 - ii. NASA will assemble as many All Grade Teams as possible, provided there are enough qualified players to field these teams.
 - iii. The remaining teams will be Mixed Grade Teams, balanced between the two grades in each G6/G8 level (i.e., 5th-6th Mixed Grade Team, 7th-8th Mixed Grade Team).
- Non Select Team Coach Selection: This document previously detailed the selection and appointment process of the Select Team Coach. The TD will assign qualified coaches to the remaining teams. The coaches who formally applied, but were not selected for, a coaching position will be given preferential treatment. However, applying for a coaching position does not guarantee a coaching assignment. In the event that no qualified coaching candidates are available for a Travel team, the TD will be responsible to obtain a coach for the team.

- Player Selection: Please see Section 7 for the selection process for the Select Teams. Players are evaluated in the spring each year and will be considered for more competitive teams as their skills improve.
 - i. The TDs will assign the remaining registered players to teams, using input from the Player Evaluations, feedback from previous coaches and player history. The TDs will field competitive teams at all levels and attempt to place the teams in appropriately competitive ECYSA brackets.
 - ii. *Roster Balance for Mixed Grade Teams*: NASA strongly recommends an even roster split between grades as long as:
 1. The skill level is deemed comparable between players of both grades, and
 2. There are sufficient registrations to support this approach.
 - iii. *Roster Size*: NASA adheres to ECYSA rules on roster sizes for G6 and G8 teams.
 1. For G6, the minimum number of players is 9 and the maximum is 18.
For G8, which uses an 11v11 format, the minimum number increases to 11 with a cap of 22 players.
 2. TDs will recommend roster sizes per team based on the overall number of registrants. At the request of the TD, rosters may be increased to the maximum number of players to ensure that the maximum number of players can participate. This includes Select Teams.
 - iv. *Notification*: All players attending evaluations must be advised of their team assignment via email no later than July 15th. No commitment can be made to any player prior to, during, or after the evaluations until the TD informs the players of their placement. The Select Teams coaches should not discuss the team selection with players or parents until placements have been communicated to the players through this channel. At no time should individual player evaluation rankings or specific results be discussed with players or parents. Overall player performance, areas of development and the player's potential may be discussed with parents and players seeking feedback. The specific data and results are to be shared only among Select Team coaches, the TDs, the DOC and the TC.
 - v. *Movement Between Teams*: It is possible that there is movement between teams prior to, during or between seasons. Player movement will be determined primarily to fill gaps of departed players and will be at the discretion of the TD and the affected team coaches.

vi. Dual Rostered Players: In order to maintain eligibility to the Massachusetts Tournament of Champions (MTOC), NASA will adhere to MYSA limits on dual-rostered players. Per MYSA, “a player may be rostered with no more than two (2) Mass Youth Soccer affiliated organizations during a playing season, regardless of age”. Each Select Team coach along with their respective TD is responsible for informing players and parents upfront on the situation and keeping track of the number of dual-rostered players on their teams. Coaches are encouraged to monitor the impact club players may have on their team and the potential for conflicts that may arise.

vii. Right of Appeal: If player selection is accomplished by the guidelines stated in this Policy, appeals should be unwarranted. However, if a parent wishes to make an appeal about player placement, it must be done in writing to the Travel Committee stating the specified and objective reasons why their child should have been selected to a particular team. As with all Travel Committee decisions, the TC decision regarding the appeal is subject to Board approval.

d. Team Placement in ECYSA: Coaches and the TD are required to complete Team Strength Reports after each season.

1. Each TD makes recommendations to ECYSA regarding team strength and potential placement.
2. ECYSA ultimately makes all final decisions regarding team placement.

10. Travel Uniforms

To ensure uniformity of all NASA players, all G6 and G8 teams will wear the NASA-approved uniforms, chosen by the Board. Any exception to this policy must be approved by the Board.

11. G10/PG Travel Teams

The Travel Policy stated in this document does not specifically apply to the G11 and GPG teams. These teams are unique and depend upon the number of available players prior to ECYSA roster submission deadlines.

- Coach Selection: Coaches interested in coaching a G11/GPG team need to notify the TD that they are putting together a team for the specific age group.

- Player Selection: Coaches provide lists of players that are interested in playing for their team. Additional registrants will be placed on teams if there is room available.
- Roster Size: See ECYSA guidelines for roster size (minimum: 11, maximum: 22).
- Number of Teams: NASA will field as many teams as possible in these age divisions.
- Team Strength Report: Coaches will provide the TD a description of the players, specifically the number of Varsity, JV, Freshman Team players and other relevant information to ensure the teams are grouped in ECYSA accordingly.
- Team Placement: Team placement will be determined by ECYSA based on the number of teams registered in a given season and the relative strength of each team.
- Non-Resident Players: If a roster has openings prior to the ECYSA roster submission deadline, coaches may recruit non-resident players. Recruiting non-resident players must be done in accordance with ECYSA rules and regulations. Each year, the non-resident player must wait the submission deadline to determine if there is an opening on the roster to be named to a given team, even if the player was on the team the previous year.
- Moving players up in order to field a team is done as follows:
 - i. In a manner that does not severely handicap the original age group teams;
 - ii. In a process that will allow only players with significant varsity experience to be considered for movement to the U19;
 - iii. In a way to ensure as many teenagers as possible are playing soccer in each age group; and
 - iv. In a manner to never allow an older player to be denied the opportunity to play because a younger player is taking a position on the U19 team.

12. Travel Policy Changes

Any changes to this Policy will require full affirmation by the NASA Board of Directors according to NASA By-Laws.

Updated and approved on May 7, 2023 by the NASA Board of Directors.