



# *Program Overview*

# What is TOPSoccer

- TOPSoccer (The Outreach Program for Soccer) is a community based program that is designed to meet the needs of children and young adults that have physical and/or intellectual disabilities.
- The program is geared towards player development rather than to competition.

# Where are TOPSoccer Programs?

- Many US Youth Soccer Association affiliated leagues and clubs have TOPSoccer programs that are run in conjunction with their Recreation and Select soccer programs.
- Any such affiliated league or club can do the same.

# Why Should we have a program?

- US Youth Soccer purports to be the “Game for all Kids” this program allows us to include this largely overlooked segment of our population in our already established leagues/clubs.
- These children are already in your program ... they are sitting on sideline benches and chairs watching their siblings play!

# Is there a need for such programs ...

Age of Child	With one disability	With multiple disabilities
3-5	597,000	75,000
6-14	2,062,000	412,000
15-17	933,000	309,000
18-24	2,537,000	n/a

# Who administers/coaches the programs ...

- Any person that has an interest in starting such a program should be encouraged to do so!
- While it is helpful to have some experience with children that have disabilities it is not a prerequisite.
- The teams/groups are coached and administered in much the same way as any recreational team.

# Who can participate ...

- Any child/young adult with a disability.
- Disabilities might include:
  - Autism
  - Down Syndrome
  - Muscular Dystrophy
  - Cerebral Palsy
  - Sight or Hearing Impaired
  - Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

## What will the parents expect ...

- **That it will be a fun and meaningful experience for their child.**
- **That the games and activities will be adapted in ways that ensure the child will learn at his/her own pace.**
- **Practices and games will be organized.**
- **The program will improve the overall fitness, self-esteem and social skill of the child.**



# What are the benefits to the TOPSoccer athlete ...

- The TOPSoccer athlete will develop a sense of belonging to a community and will learn the value of being part of a team.
- The athlete will experience an increase in self-esteem, fitness and social skills.
- Success is based upon ability!

# Where will we find players ...

- Contact your local school district.
- If Adaptive PE is offered in your school system contact the teachers.
- **Contact local established groups for the disabled.**
- **Word of mouth, family and co-workers.**
- **Advertise in newspapers.**
- **Through the already registered siblings that are playing in your program!**

# Registration of TOPSoccer Players

- Procedures vary from state to state but costs are kept to a minimum so that they are affordable to all.
- **Registration fees include insurance and in most cases uniform and equipment costs.**

# How are teams formed ...

- Athletes are placed according to ability not by age.
- At first you may not have enough players to form full-fledged teams but this should not be considered an impediment ... there are ways to facilitate the needs of small groups too!
  - Use volunteers from the community and/or soccer teams from your league to form unified teams. These teams should include similar ratios of disabled and non-disabled participants.
  - Play small-sided games. For some children as many as 1 VS 1 is perfectly appropriate.

# What about practices and games ...

- Most TOPSoccer programs do not meet more than once per week. Many of the participants are in therapy or engaged in other activities.
- Schedule one 1 to 1.5 hour (depending on age) practice/games time per week, Sunday afternoons generally work best. Most TOPSoccer season run between 6 – 8 weeks.

## End the season ...

- End your season with a party including trophies for all!

# Resources ...

- Visit the US Youth Soccer website at [www.usyouthsoccer.org](http://www.usyouthsoccer.org)