



US Soccer's Heading Initiative Guidelines for Iowa Soccer Members and Referees

Effective immediately, in accordance with the recommendations in [US Soccer's Player Health and Safety Program](#), Iowa Soccer Association prohibits heading for players age 10 and younger participating in 4U-11U age groups. This includes all Iowa Soccer programs, including but not limited to league play, tournaments, festivals and practices.

Concussion Initiatives

As part of US Soccer's Recognize to Recover Campaign, the Federation introduced guidelines for preventing and handling head injuries. Iowa Soccer adopted the guidelines effective with spring 2016 competition and practices, and again updated its guidelines in summer 2016 after additional Federation clarification.

The information contained in the campaign is intended to give US Soccer Organization Members (i.e. Iowa Soccer Association), as well as players, parents, team/club staff and coaches and referees, guidance and direction when dealing with head injuries and potential head injuries during soccer participation. The guidelines and rule changes as noted below will be in effect for Iowa Soccer members starting fall 2016.

Heading Rule:

Included in the US Soccer Concussion Initiative are specific changes to rules for heading in certain age groups. The guidelines are:

4U-11U Age Groups:

- **Ages:** 10 years and younger
- **Games:** players are **not** permitted to head the ball in games in the 4U-11U age groups.
- **Training:** There is **no** heading during training for children in the 4U-11U age groups.
- **Rule Modification:** There has been a rule modification. When a player deliberately heads the ball in a game, an indirect free kick (IFK) should be awarded to the opposing team from the spot of the offense. If the deliberate header occurs within the goal area the indirect free kick should be taken on the goal area line parallel to the goal line at the point nearest to where the infringement occurred. If a player does not deliberately head the ball, then play should continue. The referee will make the decision of whether the header was deliberate or not.
- **Play-ups:** If a player age 10 or younger is playing up in an older age group, they should **not** be heading the ball regardless of what is allowed in the age group in which they play.

12U-14U Age Groups:

- **Ages:** 11 years through 13 years
- **Games:** Players **can** head the ball during games



- **Training:** There is a **limit** to the amount of heading in practice for children in the 12U-14U age groups. Training is to be limited to a maximum of 30 minutes per week with no more than 15-20 headers per player, per week.
- **Rule Modification:** there are **no** rule modifications to the 12U-14U age groups for heading during games. At the 12U-14U age group players are permitted to head the ball in games.

15U-above Age Groups:

- **Ages:** 14 years through 19 years
- **Games:** No restrictions
- **Training:** No restrictions

For additional information about head injuries and concussions, visit the [Concussion Management webpage](#) on the iowasoccer.org website.