



# EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA *TOPSoccer*

## **EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA YOUTH SOCCER TOPSOCCER START GUIDE**

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- 1. Identify the need in your area.**
  - For what type of disabilities do you need to plan?
- 2. Connect with a soccer club/league**
- 3. Find a facility**
  - Check for any restrictions placed on the facility you plan to use.
  - Considerations:
    - Wheel chair accessible
    - Outdoor and indoor usage
- 4. Establish a start-up group committee**
  - Don't do it alone, there's probably someone else interested
  - Set goals
    - Establish a budget
      - Expenses
        - Uniforms
        - Team equipment  
(soccer balls, cones, pinnies, first aid kit, etc.)
        - Association fees (includes insurance)
        - Fields/Indoor facilities
      - Revenue
        - Registration fees
        - Sponsorships
        - Grants
        - Donations
- 5. Contact**
  - Your State Association –TOPSoccer Representative  
**Meridith Crowell, Program Manager**  
**mcrowell@epysa.org**
  - Existing programs



# **EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA YOUTH SOCCER**

## **Creating Your Program**

- 1. The unique thing about TOPSoccer is that each program is different and is created around the needs of the participants. Additionally, TOPSoccer athletes are placed on teams according to ability, not age.**
- 2. Determine the length of your program (6-8 weeks)**
- 3. Determine season of play – fall, winter, spring, summer**
- 4. Playing Rules:**
  - Create rules to fit specific needs.
  - Use the US Youth Soccer Under-6, Under-8 or Under-10 guidelines
- 5. TOPSoccer programs can have very modest beginnings.**
- 6. For those athletes not able to participate due to medical reasons, design a skills program that is rewarding, challenging and fun.**
- 7. Variety of choices:**
  - Small-sided games (3 v 3, 4 v 4, 8 v 8, etc.)
  - Full-sided games (11v11)
  - Unified teams (TOPS athletes and buddies)
  - Indoor program, Outdoor program
  - Camps
  - Skills only
- 8. Above all... keep it simple... KEEP IT FUN!**



# **EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA YOUTH SOCCER**

## **Advertisement, Recruitment, Costs**

### **Advertisement**

- 1. Flyers - emailed, mailed**
- 2. Local media**
- 3. Social media**
- 4. Centers of Influence**
  - Special Education Instructors
  - Medical Community (hospitals, doctors, therapists)
  - Word of Mouth

### **Recruiting Coaches & Volunteers (Buddies)**

**Contact local universities, schools and soccer clubs for volunteers. The State Director of Coaching is also a good source for coaches. No special training is required, however it is available:**

- To arrange a TOPSoccer Coaching Course or Buddy Training Course contact the State office

### **Finding Players**

Contact your local school district  
Contact local established groups for the disabled  
Spread the word among friends, family and co-workers  
Advertise through local media

### **Placement and Registration of Athletes**

- 1. Registration procedures is the same as those used for intramural players.**
  - Registration form should include a section for medical history.
  - Athletes with Down-syndrome should be required to have a current x-ray. If the x-ray is positive for their safety, it should be strongly recommended that they do not take part in team play.
- 2. Placement is made by ability not age.**

### **Costs Involved**

- 1. Eastern Pennsylvania Youth Soccer Intramural registration fees:**
  - Player fee = \$5.50 per Player
  - Team fees (Insurance/General and Administrative) = \$39 per Team
- 2. Uniforms - optional**
- 3. Costs should be kept low and affordable to all possible participants**
- 4. Grants are available through US Youth Soccer**
- 5. There are philanthropic entities, such as the Shriners which offer assistance. Research others in the local communities (Lions Clubs, Rotary Clubs, etc.)**
- 6. Approach local companies or corporations for cash or in-kind donations**



# **EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA YOUTH SOCCER**

## **First & Last Sessions**

### **First Session**

#### **1. Team Meeting**

- Hold buddy training before players arrive
- Players, parents, and coaches together
- Outline expectations
  - This is not a drop-off/pick-up program. A parent must stay with their child for the entire session.
  - We will have a buddy system, hopefully one on one or more with each child.
  - We will have coaches and assistant coaches to organize the sessions.
  - The child will be placed in groups according to their ability not their age.
- Set team rules
- Sessions are on \_\_\_ days from \_\_\_ at \_\_\_ field.
- “Foul” weather plan
- Praise ‘High Five’

#### **2. Helpful Hints**

- Strategically partner your buddies and players
- Use color coded goals or nets
- Have pinnies
- Have a ball for each athlete
- Have FUN!

### **Last Session Activities**

- 1. Individual recognition**
- 2. Team party**
- 3. Set group to plan following season**



# **EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA YOUTH SOCCER**

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Q. What exactly is a TOPSoccer player?**

A. Any youth player that has a physical or cognitive/intellectual disability that inhibits their ability to perform at the level of play at which they have chosen to participate.

### **Q. What is the TOPSoccer program?**

A. TOPSoccer is a **US Youth Soccer** program created to provide a caring environment in which to train and coach young people with disabilities to play soccer; to serve as a feeder program to recruit, assess and train players to participate in competition opportunities offered by existing sports organizations for people with disabilities; and to mainstream higher ability players onto regular youth soccer teams.

### **Q. How are TOPSoccer players covered by insurance?**

A. They are covered in the same way as any other registered player.

### **Q. What types of disabilities do the athletes in TOPSoccer have?**

A. Disabilities can range from minor to severe. Examples include children in wheelchairs, with Down syndrome, autism, learning disabilities, hearing impairments, etc.

### **Q. What type of playing rules are used?**

A. The rules are set by the Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) and US Soccer. Modifications are allowed to accommodate the skills and abilities of the players.