

***MSYSA***  
***Olympic Development Program***  
***Policy Manual and Handbook***



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# Maryland State Youth Soccer Association ODP Policy Manual and Handbook

## I. Introduction

The Olympic Development Program ("ODP") is a United States Soccer Federation ("USSF") program run by US Youth Soccer, established to help identify and develop the best youth soccer players in the United States. The process identifies players in each of the National State Associations ("NSA") and promotes qualified players to the respective regional teams and age-appropriate U.S. national teams, which represent the United States in such international competitions as the Youth World Cup and the Olympics.

The main objective of the ODP is to evaluate, identify and develop outstanding male and female youth soccer players. As a part of this national effort, the Maryland State Youth Soccer Association ("MSYSA") is the responsible NSA body for administering the ODP in Maryland.

At the national level, ODP is dedicated to developing the highest level of youth soccer. In fulfilling its role in the national program, the primary objectives of the Maryland ODP are to identify the best youth players in Maryland and to assist them in developing their talent to the highest level possible.

To meet these objectives, the Maryland ODP endeavors to:

1. Evaluate and select players in each age group for a state pool of players.
2. Enhance and develop soccer skills, techniques and tactical sense in each age group. Each age group is expected to achieve a certain level determined by the coaching staff, consistent with regional and national goals.
3. Support participation in each of the following age groups: U-13, U-14, U-15, U-16 and U-17. Also, encourage teams to take part in Region I and nationally sponsored activities.
4. Instruct and instill in players in the program the philosophies, methods and tactics of ODP to be carried back to their team and clubs with the hope they will instill in others ideas of creativity and the desire to expand their knowledge and ability to play the game.

In selecting state ODP players, coaches look for many of the following attributes: physical speed, strength, endurance and agility; technical mastery of the ball in a variety of situations; good tactical decision-making; and proper attitude, reactions to adversity, good sportsmanship and concept for the game.

The procedures used to achieve these objectives are approved by the MSYSA Executive Board in consultation with program officials and will not conflict with any USYS or USSF policies. MSYSA makes every effort to ensure ODP participation is achievable for everyone, regardless of cost. Limited funding is available every ODP season for families whose child otherwise could not participate. In special cases, MSYSA provides an installment payment plan or scholarships to those who can and do demonstrate the need for such financial assistance. The Scholarship Committee is responsible for overseeing applications for financial assistance.

## **II. Organization**

### **A. General Information**

The Olympic Development Program, as a part of the Maryland Player Development Program, is subject to the jurisdiction of MSYSA and its Executive Board, Region 1, US Youth Soccer and USSF. The program is organized in age-specific teams (age groups). The age groups are based upon calendar year birth years (January 1–December 31) rather than the August 1–July 31 used by club teams. For year-to-year consistency purposes, the age groups are designated as U-13, U-14, U-15, U-16 and U-17. With the exception of the youngest and oldest age groups, players cannot play “up” with an older age group and must try out in their birth-year age group. Players born later than the youngest ODP age group birth year may try out with the youngest age group.

Players are required to participate in the Olympic Development Program in the NSA in which they reside. The only exception to this requirement would be if the player attends boarding school outside the NSA in which they reside. If a player whose permanent residence is outside Maryland wishes to try out for the Maryland ODP, that player must have the approval from the Director of Coaching (DOC) for both States involved. ***Additionally***, this approval must be attained prior to the first day of try-outs. Concurrently, Maryland players who wish to participate in an ODP outside of Maryland must obtain prior approval from the Maryland DOC. A player who permanently resides in Maryland cannot try out for another ODP outside the state of Maryland without forfeiting all opportunities to try out and participate in the Maryland ODP.

### **B. Coaches, Administrators and Assessors**

#### **1. Appointment**

In the late summer of each year, the MSYSA DOC will submit a list of recommendations with resumes for the positions of Head Coach and assistant coaches for the Boys ODP and the Girls ODP to the MSYSA Board. All nominations shall be accompanied by a résumé or summary of experience, together with a disclosure of all present and past club team affiliations, listing years of affiliation. Each appointment is subject to a background check through the Maryland Criminal Justice Information Service

(CJIS). Each proposed coach must complete the required forms and materials for submission to CJIS in a timely manner.

## **2. Qualifications and Responsibilities**

### **a. Age Group Coaches and Assistants**

- Possess a minimum of a "D" license or NSCAA equivalent prior to the start of the season or have submitted an application to take the "D" license course prior to the first age group training session or other demonstrated equivalent coaching experience to be determined by the DOC. MSYSA strongly encourages individuals in coaching positions to attend and complete a licensing course indicating a willingness to better one's self and examine other styles and philosophies of teaching our youth. Exceptions to policy will be determined by the MSYSA Director of Coaching.
- Possess and exhibit good communication skills.
- Possess and exhibit an understanding of regional and national levels of play.
- Possess and exhibit leadership qualities.
- Be a positive role model.
- Provide specific age group goals to players prior to the start of training.
- Attend all regional and team-specific activities including but not limited to: ODP Staff Meeting, Tryouts, Parent Meeting, Training Sessions, Training Matches, Virginia Friendlies, Region I tournament, ID Camp.
- Select and train players in their respective age group.
- Inform the head coach in writing of his or her club affiliation and age group conflicts prior to any ODP tryouts.
- Must be 2 years removed from coaching an ODP age group at which he/she is currently coaching at the club level.

**b. Assessors**

- Volunteer position.
- Understand the game and have an eye for a talented player and his/her potential.
- Must have an appreciation for the next level of play.
- Possess and exhibit good communication skills.
- Inform the head coach in writing of his or her club affiliation and age group conflicts prior to any ODP tryouts.
- Must be 2 years removed from coaching an ODP age group at which he/she is currently coaching at the club level.

**c. Liaison**

- A liaison shall be appointed by the Executive Director/Director of Coaching/2<sup>nd</sup> MSYSA Vice President to aide in administration of both Boys and Girls ODP. The liaison's position shall be a paid position and the liaison shall perform his/her responsibilities with consultation and oversight by the MSYSA office staff.
- Responsible for the administration of the program and the communication between the MSYSA Program Administrator and the ODP teams.
- Maintain regular communication w/ Team Managers, Coaches and MSYSA Administration.
- Collect and account of all program fees.
- Ensure compliance with the *MSYSA ODP Policy Manual and Handbook* by ODP staff and participants.
- Possess and exhibit good communication skills.
- Possess and exhibit leadership qualities.
- Be a positive role model.
- Be familiar with the program and understand the operation and intent of the ODP program.

d. **Team Managers**

- Volunteer position.
- Maintain regular communication w/ ODP Liaison.
- Collect and account for all fees, if applicable.
- Collect and keep accurate player information.
- Coordinate with other parents.
- Collect and disseminate information.
- Distribute uniforms.
- Attend all practices and events or ensure adequate substitute is present.

3. **Policies Relating to Coaches**

MSYSA recognizes that the integrity of the ODP is of utmost importance. Consequently, the MSYSA Executive Board has established a series of policies that relate to individuals participating in the ODP as coaches. The intent is to avoid both actual and perceived conflicts between the coach's club team responsibilities and activities—past, current and future and the business/personal interests of the ODP coach and his/her team and parents. Individuals holding an MSYSA ODP coaching position are required to adhere to all policies set by the MSYSA Executive Board including, but not limited to, the following policies:

- a. An ODP coach shall not coach an ODP age group of the same age group birth year for more than two consecutive years (i.e., a coach who has coached the U-14 team in Year 1 and the U-15 team in Year 2 shall not coach the U-16 team in Year 3). Exceptions to this policy may be made on a case-by-case basis by the board.
- b. An ODP coach shall not be permitted to coach an ODP age group at which he/she is currently coaching at the club level, or at any time during the previous two seasonal years has coached or trained, a club team composed of players born in the same birth year as the ODP age group.
- c. As a condition of appointment as an ODP coach, all individuals agree that for a period of one seasonal year after they cease coaching a particular ODP age group birth year, they will not accept a coaching or training position with a

club team composed of players born in the same birth year as the age group they coached as an ODP coach.

- d. ODP coaches will report any new club coaching or training position or affiliations to the Director of Coaching, in writing, who shall forward such information to the MSYSA board
- e. ODP coaches are not permitted to promote, endorse or communicate **non-ODP** activities to Maryland ODP players via email, text, phone, or verbally. Email or other communication must be for ODP purposes only. These activities include but are not limited to the following: camps, clinics, participation on a club or other team, etc.
- f. All coaches and administrators, upon accepting a position with the MSYSA ODP, must sign an acknowledgement that they have received the *MSYSA ODP Policy Manual and Handbook*, they understand its contents and agree to comply fully with the provisions thereof, including the above policies relating specifically to coaches.

*Failure to comply with the above policies shall result in the offending individual being removed from their position with ODP and in the case of an individual violating item c. above, the refusal by MSYSA to issue an Adult Official Pass to such individual.*

#### **4. Stipends for ODP Coaches and Administrators**

MSYSA shall pay the following stipends to ODP coaches and administrators, who shall be independent contractors and not employees of MSYSA:

Head Age Group Coach—\$3,000 per year  
Age Group Assistant Coach—\$1,500 per year  
Goalkeeper Coach—\$2,700 per year  
Liaison—\$1250 per year  
\* U-13 – U-17 age groups

The above stipends are intended to establish the maximum to be paid to an individual coach. They also are intended to represent a maximum to be allocated to an individual age group coaching staff. For example, in an age group with a head coach and one assistant coaching position, the maximum aggregate stipend for the age group is \$4,500. For an age group with a head coach and two assistant coaching positions, the maximum aggregate stipend for the age group is \$6,000. Should the ODP Director propose to have more coaches than the number prescribed (see C3), the stipend for the positions affected shall be apportioned among the coaches as

determined by the ODP Director and the MSYSA Program Administrator, but in no case can the total aggregate stipend for the age group exceed the totals set forth in this paragraph. The specified stipend amounts are to be reduced by the ODP Director and the MSYSA Program Administrator, as they deem appropriate, when an individual coach has failed to participate in required ODP activities.

## **C. Players, Player Selection, Composition of Age Groups and Expectations**

### **1. Player Eligibility**

To be eligible to participate in the MSYSA ODP, a player must be in good standing with MSYSA and reside in Maryland. See Section II A. above relative to the state in which players must or may try out for ODP.

### **2. Selection Process**

Players are identified and selected for the ODP by observation and assessment of ODP coaches and assessors which includes, but is not limited to, a tryout process. It shall be the duty of the MSYSA Program Administrator to actively advertise tryouts sufficiently in advance of the start of each year's ODP. A tryout fee will be charged. Each player must submit a completed application form along with the appropriate tryout fee in order to participate in tryouts. The tryout fee may be variable based upon the time and format in which a player submits their tryout application to MSYSA as determined by the Program Administrator and approved by the MSYSA Executive Board in order to encourage timely registration.

A schedule of tryouts shall be proposed by the Director of Coaching for approval by the MSYSA Executive Board and tentatively two month prior to the scheduled try out dates. Tryouts are to be conducted during the fall season and ideally should commence early enough to ensure completion before winter weather impedes outdoor sessions. When necessary, tryouts may be completed indoors. Tryout locations shall, whenever possible, be scheduled at sites reasonably convenient to the majority of players trying out; however, the quality and number of fields available at potential sites shall be given priority to geographic convenience. Care shall be taken to schedule tryouts to minimize conflicts with players' club team activities, including league and tournament play. Schedules shall be coordinated to provide players a minimum of two opportunities to be assessed. The Director of Coaching and the ODP Coaching Staff

shall arrange to have sufficient assessors at each tryout session to ensure all players receive a proper evaluation. Players are expected to attend sessions when scheduled; however, players that are injured or provide advance notice of their inability to attend a scheduled tryout session for an appropriate reason will be permitted an additional opportunity to attend a tryout session. Once the player pools are established at each group, a player may be added if referred by USSF staff coaches or identified through other means (such as club play, RTP, etc.) by an ODP staff coach, or if the player was injured and is given an opportunity to try out when fit to play. In the latter case, a physician's certification of injury and fitness to play (release) is required. In all cases the exception must be approved by the Director of Coaching.

Tryouts shall be conducted in such a manner as to ensure all players receive a complete assessment. The format for the tryouts shall be established by the Director of Coaching. The tryout procedures will be consistent with regional and national goals and procedures approved by the MSYSA board. Players will be given a numbered T-shirt to wear for identification purposes during tryouts. During tryouts, players will not be permitted to wear any apparel identifying their club teams or club affiliation, or previous year's ODP apparel, and will be strongly discouraged from wearing such apparel to the tryout sessions.

In addition to the ODP staff coaches, tryouts will be observed by volunteer assessors selected by the Director of Coaching and ODP Staff Coaches. Such assessors may not have personal or team conflicts with the age group they will be assessing. Assessors shall make their assessments honestly and without prejudice to a player, coach, team, club or prior affiliation. The individual ODP age group head coach is ultimately responsible for the selection of the players for their respective age group.

Players will be notified regarding selection for an ODP player pool in a fashion approved by the MSYSA board.

### **3. Composition of Age Group Player Pools and Coaching Staffs**

The following guidelines have been established by MSYSA with respect to numerical composition of the various age group pools:

#### *U-13 and U-14 teams*

Minimum # of players - 32; Maximum # of players - 40.

One (1) age group head coach and two (2) assistant coaches

*U-15 through U-17 teams*

Minimum # of players - 22; Maximum # of players - 26.

One (1) age group head coach and one (1) assistant coach.

***NOTE:*** *It is important to remember that these are guidelines/ranges and are subject to change based on USSF and MSYSA Executive Board decisions.*

#### **4. Expectations of Players and Parents**

##### **a. Players**

- i. Players chosen for an MSYSA ODP team pool are expected to attend all training sessions and be available for the minicamp, tournaments, regional camps and other ODP activities.
- ii. Each player is expected to fulfill financial commitments in a timely fashion. Failure to pay all ODP fees will result in the player being unable to participate in further ODP activities and may result in the player being declared “not in good standing” with MSYSA and thereby ineligible to participate in club team activities.
- iii. As representatives of Maryland and Region 1, each player must sign a behavior contract that specifies the expectations when they are participating in ODP Team activities.

##### **b. Parents**

- i. MSYSA understands the commitment and effort parents make on behalf of the players and ODP officials will do everything reasonable to minimize conflicts.
- ii. When traveling to ODP events, parents need to realize that a player’s accessibility is limited while they are participating with the Maryland ODP team.
- iii. There may be times that parent chaperones are needed to ensure the safety of the players at camp and tournaments.
- iv. Parents selected as chaperones must complete the proper forms required by MSYSA and be cleared for travel with the team by the MSYSA board.

## **D. ODP Activities, Calendar and Costs**

The activities included in the MSYSA Olympic Development Program include, but are not limited to, the following: training sessions, training games, tournaments, Region 1 ODP Tournament, Region 1 Identification Camp and international trips. Other activities may be added as determined appropriate by the Director of Coaching and approved by the MSYSA board. All players will be given an equal opportunity to participate in all ODP activities. With the exception of ***the ODP tournament and international travel***, in which participation either is limited by numbers or optional, all players will be expected to participate and attend all ODP activities.

### **1. Activities**

#### **a. ODP Tournament and ID Camp**

The youngest two age groups (U-13 and U-14) may, if permitted by Region 1, enter two teams in the Region 1 ODP Tournament, depending on the quality and number of players in the age group pool, as determined by the age group head coach and the ODP Director. The composition of the respective teams to be in the best interests of the players in the age group pool shall be as determined by the age group head coach and the ODP Director. When competing or going to camps, a maximum of 22 players per team will be selected from the respective age group pools to participate, unless Region 1 policies and procedures permit larger roster size for the Region 1 ODP tournament or a larger number of players to attend camp.

#### **b. International Trips**

International travel can be advantageous to the overall development of players by exposing players to other cultures and styles of play and training. MSYSA supports incorporating such travel into the Olympic Development Program activities. While the international trips are a significant part of the overall ODP, they are an **optional** part of the program. No player can be required to go on a trip or shall have their status within the ODP adversely affected if they are unable to participate in the trip or not interested in participating. As an optional part of the program, MSYSA does not have funds to

cover the costs for players who shall be unable to travel because of financial or other constraints. However, MSYSA strongly encourages players to seek opportunities to earn money or solicit contributions on their behalf to permit their participation in this part of the ODP. MSYSA also may work with players and their families to establish an installment payment plan to facilitate players' participation if they do not have the funds to pay for such travel fully in advance.

With respect to international trips, the following guidelines have been adopted by the MSYSA Executive Board:

- **Boys' ODP:** With respect to the boys' ODP, international trips for the U-13, U-15 and U-17 age groups are approved, with destinations to be recommended by the DOC and approved by the MSYSA Executive Board. In determining appropriate destinations, the MSYSA Executive Board has established the following criteria, purpose and format for each respective age group:

⇒ *U-13 age group:* Trip to be designed to provide training and match experience, with some focus on training sessions conducted by professional foreign coaches.

*Players: Minimum of 16*

*Coaches: At least one (1)*

*MSYSA Administrator or Liaison: One (1)*

*Adult chaperones: At least two (2)*

⇒ *U-15 age group:* Trip to be designed to expose players to a professional club's youth team environment, with a combination of training sessions with foreign coaches and match play with appropriate local teams.

*Players: Minimum of 16*

*Coaches: At least one (1)*

*MSYSA Administrator or Liaison: One (1)*

*Adult chaperones: Minimum of two (2)*

**NOTE:** Players in U14/U16 will be invited as space allows.

⇒ *U-17 age group:* Trip to be designed to put players in an environment as close as possible to that of a professional club. Training sessions with foreign coaches and matches against appropriate age group teams of professional clubs shall be the focus of the trip. Accommodations shall be arranged consistent with what a professional team might experience in a training camp environment.

*Players:* Minimum of 16

*Coaches:* At least one (1)

*MSYSA Administrator or Liaison:* One (1)

*Adult chaperones:* Minimum of two (2)

**NOTE:** Players in U16 will be invited as space allows.

- **Girls' ODP:** With respect to the girls' ODP, international trips for the U-14 and U-16 age groups are the goal with destinations to be recommended by the DOC and approved by the MSYSA Executive Board.

**NOTE:** The training and match experiences for the girls' teams are expected to match the plans for the U-15 and U-17 boys' teams with regard to number of players, coaches, administrators and chaperones.

The groups for international trips have been established with emphasis on the safety of the players and the consistency of the purposes of the trip. One of the purposes of the international trips is to provide players with the experience of traveling as a TEAM; therefore, beyond the specified number of chaperones, parents are not permitted to travel with the ODP age groups and are strongly discouraged from traveling on their own to the same destination as the ODP team.

## 2. ODP Calendar

Ideal scheduling guidelines for MSYSA ODP activities include:

*August:* Director of Coaching submits coaching staff names to include resumes to Board for approval.

*August–September:* First advertisement for tryout applications

*September–October:* Approval by MSYSA board of age group and assistant coaches

*October–December:* ODP tryouts (a minimum of three tryouts and possibly four shall be scheduled in this time period)

*January:* Conclusion of ODP tryouts

*January–July:* ODP training typically once a week on Mondays, with Saturdays as an option. Club team participation in sanctioned league play and tournaments takes precedence on Saturdays. Club training has priority on all weekdays except Monday.

*Spring:* International trips (typically over spring break for public high schools)

*June–Aug. 15:* MSYSA State Cup activities and ODP training have priority, with ODP training permitted on Monday and other weekdays. Weekend activities permitted, except when there is club participation in sanctioned league play and tournaments, which take precedence. ODP shall schedule activities to accommodate and encourage full participation of players in training of club teams advancing to Region I competition.

## 3. Program Costs

ODP is a self-sufficient program that is required to meet all of its obligations with little or no financial help from MSYSA. It is the policy of MSYSA that no qualified player shall be deprived of the opportunity to participate in the ODP because of financial need. Therefore, scholarship funds are available from monies allotted to MSYSA from Region I for players with demonstrated needs. Scholarship funding, to cover basic ODP costs (funds for international travel are not included), can be obtained by completing an application available from the ODP administrators. Funding grants will be based strictly upon determination of need and determined by the Scholarship Committee.

The projected costs associated with participation in ODP are as follows:

- a. **Tryout fee: \$45–\$50**, depending upon time and method of application. All players trying out for ODP will receive a numbered tryout T-shirt.
- b. **Uniform/equipment costs:** The basic ODP player kit consists of a primary and secondary jersey, shorts, two pairs of socks, warm-up and backpack. Goalkeepers receive a keeper jersey and shorts in lieu of the primary jersey and shorts. The estimated cost per player is approximately **\$175–\$200**.
- c. **Coaching and administrative fees:** Players making an ODP age group pool will be assessed an amount to cover coaching and administrative costs. This amount is estimated to be **\$350–\$425** per player.
- d. **Training Field Rental fees:** Artificial turf fields are used whenever possible to ensure that session can be held in inclement weather. The estimated fee is **\$200–\$275** per player.
- e. **ODP Region I Tournament (Rider Cup):** Players selected to participate in the ODP tournament will be assessed a fee to cover the costs associated with the tournament. These include tournament entry fee, housing and meal costs. The estimate of this fee is **\$150–\$200**.
- f. **Virginia Friendlies Tournament:** All players participate in the Virginia Friendlies tournament. Costs include: tournament entry fee, staff housing/meals/travel. The estimate of this fee is **\$100–\$150**.
- g. **Region 1 ODP Camp:** Players selected to attend the Region 1 ODP identification camp will be assessed a fee to cover the costs associated with the camp. Because of different formats and structures of the camps for the various age groups, the fee may be different for individual age groups. The per-player estimated fee is **\$350–\$450**. In addition, depending upon the location of the camps, bus transportation may be provided by ODP, for which there will be an additional charge.

In addition to the above items and activities, should such additional costly ODP activities as additional tournaments or matches occur, such costs will be apportioned among the players who participate. All costs associated with international trips shall be apportioned among the players who elect to participate in the trips.

In addition to state ODP activities, Region 1 conducts activities, including camps and trips for players selected to the Region 1 player pools. Players selected to the regional teams are responsible for all expenses associated with participation in regional team activities, practices, tournaments and travel.

#### **E. ODP Relationship with Club Teams**

1. MSYSA is committed to the proposition that the club system is the foundation for player development, and in a broader sense, clubs and leagues are the foundations for the development of the game.
2. ODP will make efforts to avoid conflicts with traditional periods of club activity (see ODP Calendar), Section II D. 2.
3. ODP coaches shall communicate with their players' club coaches in a timely manner to minimize conflicts in training dates and other activities. All correspondence concerning ODP activities and scheduling provided to players shall be provided concurrently to their respective club coaches.
4. Some conflicts are inevitable, and the choice to participate in one event or another must be left to the individual player and his/her family. A player shall not be penalized for electing to participate in a club activity that conflicts with an ODP activity.

### **III Additional Information**

#### **A. Prohibition Against Recruiting**

The integrity of the ODP program is essential for the program to accomplish the goals and purposes set forth at the beginning of this *Policy Manual*. Nothing has as great an adverse affect on this integrity as players being recruited to switch club teams as a result of their selection and participation in ODP. Consequently, MSYSA opposes any form of recruitment associated in any way with the ODP. It shall be a violation of this policy for anyone associated with the ODP—a coach, a player or a parent of a player—to recruit, solicit or encourage an ODP player or the parent(s) of an ODP player currently rostered to a club team to switch or transfer to another club team. Further, it shall be a violation of this policy for a club coach, whether they have a child in the ODP or not, to recruit, solicit or encourage ODP players or the parent(s) of an ODP player currently rostered to a club team to switch or transfer to another club team. Incidents involving alleged violations of this policy shall be referred to the MSYSA Adjudication Committee for investigating and hearing, if deemed appropriate. Penalties for individuals

found to have violated this policy shall be as determined by the Adjudication Committee in accordance with Article VIII, Adjudication, of the bylaws of MSYSA, and may include: in the case of an ODP coach, dismissal from the program; for the parent of an ODP player, being banned from attending any ODP activity or event, and should they refuse to comply with such penalty, removal of their child from the program; for a player, dismissal from the program; for a club coach, with or without a child in the program, a ban on attending any ODP activity, as well as other disciplinary action pertaining to their ability to appear on a roster of an MSYSA team.

**B. Contacts**

1. 2nd Vice President – Player Development Program Liaison at [pdpvp@msysa.org](mailto:pdpvp@msysa.org)
2. MSYSA Programs Administrator – [programs@msysa.org](mailto:programs@msysa.org)
3. Adjudication Committee Chair can be found on the MSYSA website.

**Appendix**

- A. ODP Staff Acknowledgment Form