

# Rugby Texas Policies & Guidelines on Youth Competitions

## PLAYER ELIGIBILITY

### Preamble

The Rugby Texas Youth Committee has developed policies and guidelines for competitions that occur among participants in the eighth grade or below and who are under the age of 15. These guidelines and policies have been developed based on the following premises:

1. USA Rugby and Rugby Texas seek to facilitate the inclusion of rugby as a school sponsored sport, with particular acceptance for varsity and sub-varsity competition by the state's public and private athletic associations (i.e. UIL and TAAPS).
2. USA Rugby and Rugby Texas has placed an emphasize on:
  - a. The creation of single state competition structures that lead to state championships over geographical unions;
  - b. The use of school sports terminology such as varsity, sub-varsity, and all-star teams;
  - c. A shift towards grouping players by grade rather than by age at all levels of competition;
  - d. New coaching certification requirements to align with the National Federation of State High School Associations to bring parity with coaches employed by school districts;
  - e. The development of school-based (single-school) club teams with the vision of becoming varsity rugby teams; and,
  - f. Encouragement to separate school team competition and/or competition seasons from community (multi-school) clubs.

The Rugby Texas Youth Committee recognizes that a shift from a select-side club model to a scholastic based competition model brings changes in the status-quo.

The Rugby Texas Youth Committee believes that grade coupling and age equivalents within this document are consistent with the guidelines of the two major State Athletic Associations in Texas (UIL and TAAPS), as well as taking into account the oldest age permitted by law to enter kindergarten and allows for students that are retained for one year during their academic progression. The groupings do not provide for students that are held back multiple years due to grades or other causes. Such additional provisions would need to be developed as a separate policy after additional research on school law and practices.

The Rugby Texas Youth Committee has created guidelines that are consistent with the current IRB policy and educational case law on mixed gender play. It is recognized that separate competitive structures are preferred and should be created for female participants were feasible and as soon as possible. However, talented and capable females should not be hindered from competition because a separate competitive structure does not yet exist.

**AT NO TIME** shall an athlete **age 15 or above on September 1<sup>st</sup>** or in the **9<sup>th</sup> grade** be allowed to play in youth competitions, regardless of age, size or gender. These individuals must participate at the high school level and are subject to the policies and guidelines established by the Rugby Texas High School Committee.

## Rugby Texas Policies & Guidelines on Youth Competitions

### PLAYER ELIGIBILITY

#### Grade / Age Grouping and Mixed Gender Play

| Grade Group | Age Group                | Age on September 1 <sup>st</sup> |              | Mixed Gender Play  | Recommendations  |
|-------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------|--|--|
|             |                          | Typical                          | Oldest       |  |  |
| Pre – K     | Under-07<br>(6 & Under)  | 3, 4, 5                          | 6 years old  | Girls may play with/against boys without exemption.  | School- & Community-Based Clubs should make every effort to concurrently develop and support boys & girls teams above the 4 <sup>th</sup> grade (u11 age group) to provide girls with separate, yet equitable competitive opportunities. |
| Grade 1 – 2 | Under-09<br>(8 & Under)  | 6, 7                             | 8 years old  |  |  |
| Grade 3 – 4 | Under-11<br>(10 & Under) | 8, 9                             | 10 years old |  |  |
| Grade 5 – 6 | Under-13<br>(12 & Under) | 10, 11                           | 12 years old | Girls may play with/against boys if a girls' team does not exist locally and with: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Parent Waiver acknowledging and accepting the risk;</li> <li>2. Physician (MD/DO) clearance;</li> <li>3. Coach approval based on assessment of skills.</li> </ol> |  |
| Grade 7 – 8 | Under-15<br>(14 & Under) | 12, 13                           | 14 years old |  |  |

#### **Additional Policies**

- A player *may* compete at a level *above* their grade and/or age group at the discretion of the coach and with parent permission.
- A player *may not* compete at a level *below* their grade and/or age group without prior approval from the Youth Competitions Committee. Allowances are generally only allowed for:
  - A player that is “over-age but under-weight” (see policy); or,
  - A player that has skipped a grade and would be better matched playing down.
- A parental waiver to allow mixed-gender player may only apply for one-year periods (Sept 1 to Aug 31).
- A player should get a sports-physical from physician (MD/DO) every other year; annually is recommended. A medical history should be completed between bi-annual physicals.

#### **Proof of Eligibility to Play**

Coaches are expected to have proof of grade and age eligibility at all competitions. Proof may be in hardcopy or electronic (i.e. PDF copy):

##### Proof of Grade Level:

1. A photocopy of that portion of the athlete’s report card for the current school year which show name, grade and school; or,
2. Confirmation of grade level from a school administrator (counselor, principal, dean) on school letterhead.

##### Proof of Age:

1. Birth certificate or Passport

## Rugby Texas Policies & Guidelines on Youth Competitions

### PLAYER ELIGIBILITY

#### Over-Age, Under Weight (Older/Lighter) Waiver Policy

- All requests for an “over-age, under-weight” waiver must be submitted to the Youth Competitions Committee at least four (4) weeks before the player’s first competition.
  - The player’s weight must be certified at a physician’s office as part of the requests for a waiver. The player’s weight must be at or below the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile for boys at age 9, 11, or 13 according to the most recent growth chart published by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).
  - A player that has been granted a waiver may participate in one (1) match during the season in his/her grade/age appropriate division to determine which division he/she would prefer to compete.
  - Once the player participates in a second match in his/her grade/age appropriate division he/she may not compete in the low grade/age division, regardless of whether he/she was granted a waiver to do so.
  - Example: Josh is 11 years old and would normally compete in the Grade 5-6 (G5-6 / U13) Division. Since he is 65 lbs, and has not yet competed in this division, Josh is granted a waiver to compete in the Grade 3-4 (G3-4 / U11) Division. However, if Josh competes in the G5-6 / U13 Division for two or more matches, he relinquishes his waiver to play in the lower grade/age division.
- ❖ Players that are age 7 and under or age 14 and older on September 1<sup>st</sup> are not eligible for a waiver.

| Grade Group  | Age Group                | Weight Criteria for Above Age to Play Down |
|--|--------------------------|--|
| Pre – K  | Under-07<br>(6 & Under)  | <b>Not Allowed</b>                         |
| Grade 1 – 2  | Under-09<br>(8 & Under)  | <b>9 year old, &lt; 58lbs</b>              |
| Grade 3 – 4  | Under-11<br>(10 & Under) | <b>11 year old, &lt; 70lbs</b>             |
| Grade 5 – 6  | Under-13<br>(12 & under) | <b>13 year old, &lt; 90 lbs</b>            |
| Grade 7 – 8  | Under-15<br>(14 & under) | <b>Not Allowed</b>                         |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All weights must be certified by a physician’s office before each season</li></ul> |                          |  |

#### Waiver Application Process

- Attain a waiver – submit the appropriate application found at [www.rugbytexas.org](http://www.rugbytexas.org) with a copy of the player’s birth certificate and recent, clothed full body photo.
- Applicants should allow two weeks from submission for a decision; and, waiver if accepted.
- Applications for waivers will not be accepted until six weeks before any season.
- Since weight can fluctuate widely in youth, a waiver is only good for the season requested (i.e. fall, spring or summer). A new request must be completed for each subsequent competitive season (fall, spring, or summer), not competitive year.