

Fall/Spring | 2017-18

# Illinois Fire Juniors

## Parent Handbook

*Updated 8/18/2017*



---

***Winning is a habit, Success is a choice!***

---



Welcome to Illinois Fire Juniors! We have been involved in the Bloomington/Normal community since our inception in 2007. We are a “not-for-profit” 501(c)(3) association. Illinois Fire Juniors began when multiple soccer clubs dating back to the late 1990’s merged. As of June 1, 2017, Illinois Fire Juniors will be officially be part of the Chicago Fire Soccer Club and will be known as Illinois Fire Juniors. We provide training for boys and girls from ages 5 through 18. Our focus is on total player skill development in a competitive and fun environment. Our success can be seen through the accomplishments of our athletes at the high school and collegiate levels. We have many players who have advanced to NCAA Division I, II & III schools.

Illinois Fire Juniors is able to provide an exceptional experience at a reasonable cost through the volunteer support of our membership. We are staffed with coaches who have diverse experiences at the player, collegiate, and coaching levels. We strive to meet the needs of soccer athletes and their families who desire a competitive travel soccer experience combined with comprehensive player-focused soccer training in the central Illinois soccer community.



- ◆ [Club Mission](#)
- ◆ [Club Vision](#)
- ◆ [Illinois Fire Juniors Soccer Association Philosophy](#)
- ◆ [Contact Information](#)
- ◆ [Communication](#)
  - [Club Communication](#)
  - [Team Communication](#)
- ◆ [Club Structure](#)
- ◆ [Questions - Who do I ask for different issues?](#)
- ◆ [24-Hour Rule](#)
- ◆ [Club Policies](#)
- ◆ [Inclement Weather](#)
- ◆ [Player Fee Structure](#)
  - [Fees & Financial Assistance](#)
  - [Volunteering & Stewardship](#)
- ◆ [Uniforms, Spirit Wear, and Merchandise](#)
- ◆ [Safety](#)
  - [Risk Management and Guidelines for Appropriate Behavior](#)
  - [Practice and Game Safety](#)
- ◆ [Development of the Soccer Athlete](#)
- ◆ [Illinois Fire Juniors Soccer Programs](#)
  - [Academy Program "Under 8 thru Under 9" \(U8 - U9\)](#)
    - [Training](#)
    - [Competition](#)
    - [Playing Time](#)
  - [Travel Program "Under 10 thru Under 18" \(U10 – U18\)](#)
    - [Competitive Travel Program Vision](#)
    - [U10 – U18 Team Formation and Player Selection](#)
    - [Registration](#)
    - [Competition Types](#)
    - [Travel Team Philosophies](#)
- ◆ [Physical Training and Injury Prevention](#)
- ◆ [Camps, Clinics and Special Events](#)



### **Club Mission**

Illinois Fire Juniors provides competitive and comprehensive player-centric soccer programs for many Illinois athletes which include:

- Continual player development that maximizes individual athletic potential and focuses on technical aspects of soccer
- Providing the player with opportunities to continually refine and exhibit their skills in a competitive environment
- Development of the individual as an athlete, good citizen, and future role model; by teaching life lessons and the importance of dedication, self-discipline, honesty & respect.

All while having fun!

### **Club Vision**

Illinois Fire Juniors' vision is to provide top quality training that is continually enhanced and refined to meet the needs of our athletes. Our training will be delivered through excellent player-centric programs for all interested athletes who live in Bloomington/Normal and many surrounding Illinois communities.

We will encourage and provide opportunities for our coaching staff's ongoing professional development that complement their integrity, honesty, and excellent character while training our athletes. We will provide opportunities for all players to reach the highest level of ability they desire.

### **Illinois Fire Juniors Philosophy**

Our philosophy and focus is on total player and team development in a competitive environment appropriate to the age of the athletes. Each child matures and develops at different levels, and our philosophy is to provide technical, tactical, physical, and psycho-social training in accordance with each player's abilities.

### **Contact Information**

Illinois Fire Juniors  
 705 E Lincoln, Suite 115  
 Normal, IL 61761  
 Phone: (309) 451-5800

<b>Staff – Compensated</b>	
Club Administrator – Chrissy Mora	<a href="mailto:chrissy@illinoisfirejuniors.com">chrissy@illinoisfirejuniors.com</a>
Club Administrator – Amanda Esparza	<a href="mailto:admin@illinoisfirejuniors.com">admin@illinoisfirejuniors.com</a>
Director of Coaching - Myron King	<a href="mailto:myron.king@illinoisfirejuniors.com">myron.king@illinoisfirejuniors.com</a>
<b>Board of Directors – Volunteers</b>	
President - Brenda Seger	<a href="mailto:president@illinoisfirejuniors.com">president@illinoisfirejuniors.com</a>
Vice President/Sponsorship – Tim Koch	<a href="mailto:vicepresident@illinoisfirejuniors.com">vicepresident@illinoisfirejuniors.com</a>
Board Secretary/Policy – Kris Nutt	<a href="mailto:board@illinoisfirejuniors.com">board@illinoisfirejuniors.com</a>
Treasurer – Matt Frank	<a href="mailto:finance@illinoisfirejuniors.com">finance@illinoisfirejuniors.com</a>
Communications Director - Kris Nutt	<a href="mailto:communications@illinoisfirejuniors.com">communications@illinoisfirejuniors.com</a>
Technology Director – Scott Hargus	<a href="mailto:webmaster@illinoisfirejuniors.com">webmaster@illinoisfirejuniors.com</a>
Uniforms & Apparel Director – Chris Downing	<a href="mailto:uniforms@illinoisfirejuniors.com">uniforms@illinoisfirejuniors.com</a>
Fundraising & Marketing Director - Julie Hinman	<a href="mailto:marketing@illinoisfirejuniors.com">marketing@illinoisfirejuniors.com</a>
Volunteer Director – Kevin Byrd	<a href="mailto:volunteer@illinoisfirejuniors.com">volunteer@illinoisfirejuniors.com</a>
Operations Director – Teresa Dubravec	<a href="mailto:operationsdirector@illinoisfirejuniors.com">operationsdirector@illinoisfirejuniors.com</a>
Tournament Director – Alicia O'Malley Chaon	<a href="mailto:tournament@illinoisfirejuniors.com">tournament@illinoisfirejuniors.com</a>
Chicago Fire Representative - Paul Cadwell	

Contact information for coaches and individual teams are provided by the coach and/or team manager once teams have been formed.



### Communication

We feel it is important to have open and clear communication related to all aspects of your club. There are two main tiers of communication:

- 1) Club Communication
- 2) Team/Coach Communication

**Club Communication** - We have a number of resources used to communicate with our membership:

- **Our website** ([www.illinoisfirejuniors.com](http://www.illinoisfirejuniors.com)) is one of many good sources of information. We make every attempt to keep the site up-to-date. If you notice anything on our website that needs to be reviewed, please let us know about it! We also want to know about team or player accomplishments! Please share digital photos, including a brief caption, and email it to [myron.king@illinoisfirejuniors.com](mailto:myron.king@illinoisfirejuniors.com). We'll be sure to get it posted on the website!
- **Facebook** Illinois Fire Juniors Soccer - News, updates, and pictures of Illinois Fire Juniors players. Be sure to "like" us to get our Facebook Feed.
- **Twitter** "@ILFireJuniorsSoccer" - Be sure to follow us to get all the latest news!
- **YouTube** - Illinois Fire Juniors Soccer Association - There are a lot of great informational and educational videos on our page. Be sure to subscribe to get the latest updates!
- **Club Email** - Over the course of the season we will email club newsletters, and from time to time we may contact you directly. We use the email information you provided at tryouts. If you need to update your email information, please email the updates to [admin@illinoisfirejuniors.com](mailto:admin@illinoisfirejuniors.com). Please include your child's name(s), team(s), and updated information, so we can keep our records current.
- **Club Meetings** – When needed, the club holds a general meeting. This is a great event to attend as you will have an opportunity to hear from Board Members, administrative personnel, our Director of Coaching, coaches, and special guests. This meeting is a social gathering that provides great information about "what's happening" within your soccer club.
- **Private Meetings** - If you have a specific need or request, we are always happy to meet with you one-on-one to discuss any issues. Please contact the office to set up a meeting at [admin@illinoisfirejuniors.com](mailto:admin@illinoisfirejuniors.com).

**Team/Coach Communication** - Each team prefers different methods of communication. Once you have joined a team, your team manager and coach will be in contact with you regarding their methods.

- **Email** - Please ensure your team manager, coaches, and other team members have the email addresses you would like to be used.
- **Text Messaging** - Please ensure your team manager, coaches, and other team members have updated cell phone information for you, so you can receive important information about your team via text. Text messages are especially useful for last minute updates on game days.
- **Team Meetings** - Each team will meet at least once or twice per seasonal year (fall and/or spring). These meetings are to update the team members on important information for the upcoming season.

### Club Structure

As outlined in the "Contacts" section, the Illinois Fire Juniors Board of Directors consists of three (3) compensated positions (Director of Coaching and Club Administrators) and eleven (11) volunteers (President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Board Secretary, and several "Member-At-Large" positions), plus one member from the Chicago Fire, as listed on our organizational chart. A current organizational chart is listed on our [website](#).

### Questions – Who do I ask about different issues?

Our website provides information that answers a variety of questions. Also, team meetings held at the beginning of the fall and/or spring seasons, as well as ad hoc team meetings held during the season by your coach/team manager, provide specific information relevant to your child's team. Please make sure to attend all team meetings.



Your team manager can answer questions dealing with some non-coaching matters (game and practice times, schedules, etc.). If your individual team manager does not know the answer, he or she will either find out or direct you to the proper person to ask. Team managers cannot set or change Illinois Fire Juniors Policies, so questions in this area should be directed to the Policy Director for additional review and consideration.

Coaching questions and on-field concerns are first directed to the coach assigned to your particular team. The next in line is the Illinois Fire Juniors Director of Coaching (DOC) [myron.king@illinoisfirejuniors.com](mailto:myron.king@illinoisfirejuniors.com). If our DOC is unable to answer a question or satisfy a concern in unusual circumstances, the Board of Directors may be contacted.

### **24-Hour Rule**

When questioning your child's coach, please be observant of the coach's schedule.

- Often, your coach has only a few minutes between training sessions and/or games. When this is the case, an arrangement to speak at another time must be made.
- In addition, our experience has taught us that concerns about playing time and training techniques should take place a minimum of 24 hours after the game or session that prompted the concern.
- When possible, these conversations are most effective in-person. Emails to the entire team to complain are not effective and cause unnecessary churn.

When in doubt of who to contact, please send your question to our Club Administrator at [admin@illinoisfirejuniors.com](mailto:admin@illinoisfirejuniors.com)

### **Club Policies**

Please click [here](#) to view the current policies. These can also be viewed on our website. Current policies include:

- Guest Player Policy
- Fundraising Policy
- Team Manager Policy
- Illinois Fire Juniors Social Media Policy
- Tournament Refund Policy
- Partial Season Play Policy
- Safety Program Policy
- Lightning Policy
- Practice Cancellation Policy
- Training Player Policy

### **Inclement Weather**

Our teams train and play in inclement weather, with very few exceptions. If a practice or game is cancelled due to weather, we will make every effort to give as much advance notice as possible. The most efficient method of communicating cancellations is via email or text originating from your team manager and/or coach. Please check your email or text messages often if the weather is questionable.

Additional information is located in the following Club Policies:

[Practice Cancellation Policy](#)

[Lightning Policy](#)

Questions regarding Illinois Fire Juniors policies should be directed to the Policy Director at: [board@illinoisfirejuniors.com](mailto:board@illinoisfirejuniors.com).



## Player Fee Structure

The fees for Illinois Fire Juniors Soccer Association are made up of two components: Fees & Financial Assistance and Volunteering & Stewardship.

### Part 1 - Fees & Financial Assistance

Player fees are reviewed annually and are set to just cover our costs, which include league fees, tournament fees, field rental and maintenance, administrative expenses, the cost of training and coaching our players, etc. These costs are partially offset by money raised through our annual Spring Shootout Tournament, specific fundraisers, individual and corporate donations, and local business sponsorships. The balance of our costs after consideration of these other sources of income are then used to set player fees for the coming season. Player fees are approved by the Board of Directors after analysis and recommendations from the Finance Committee.

As of August 1, all remaining payments will be added to each player's account. If a player quits on or after that date, they are responsible for that balance.

No athlete should be denied the ability to play competitive soccer because of documented financial need. Scholarships are available for families in need. Applications can be submitted to the Finance Committee for review and consideration. A small subcommittee will review the applications and award scholarships based on need and merit. All applications are kept strictly confidential.

In general, scholarship requests are reviewed and awarded by August 1 of each year. If a player would like to join later in the year, it is possible our scholarship fund may not be able to sponsor the player at this time. Spring only players (high school boys' players) are highly encouraged to submit scholarship applications by the established deadline. The deadline for submitting a scholarship application is on or around June 10<sup>th</sup> of each year.

Additional information regarding Illinois Fire Juniors fees and financial assistance is located [here](#).

### Part 2 - Volunteering & Stewardship

Every family has the option to serve four (4) volunteer hours for each child playing on Illinois Fire Juniors teams, up to a maximum of eight (8) hours per seasonal year. Or, "opt out" of volunteering and paying \$200 per child per seasonal year. Volunteer hours not completely fulfilled by May 31 will result in a charge to your account of \$50 per volunteer hour not completed. Training Players are encouraged to volunteer but not required to.

There are many volunteer opportunities, such as:

- Illinois Fire Juniors Spring Shootout Tournament: This is our annual tournament. At this tournament, many volunteers are needed to assist with various tournament operations throughout the entire tournament weekend. Specific needs and shift times will be sent out to all club members approximately 2 weeks prior to the tournament weekend. *Please work with your team manager to ensure the organization has current and valid email information for you and your family.*
- Fundraising/Marketing: We continually strive to search for ways we can raise funds for the club. This money is used to supplement our player scholarship fund, buy new equipment, etc. Community fundraisers are also a great way to get our "brand" out into the public forum. Marketing in the community is an important part of bringing in new players and families.
- Team Managers: Each team has a manager who "takes care" of the team. The team manager helps with player cards, game papers, coordinate communications for the team, work closely with the Club Administrator, and when necessary the Volunteer Director. Please be kind!
- Information Technology Committee: Our website needs to be updated regularly to ensure our membership is accurately served with the correct information. If you are IT savvy, this is the group for you!
- Other Opportunities: Please let us know what you are good at doing, or if you have any recommendations on how we can improve general operations. We can definitely use your expertise and in many instances may even be able to help find a volunteer job for you!

If you have interest in serving on a committee, please contact our Volunteer Director at [volunteer@illinoisfirejuniors.com](mailto:volunteer@illinoisfirejuniors.com).



### **Uniforms, Spirit Wear and Merchandise**

Spirit Wear and merchandise generally include such items as caps, t-shirts, long sleeve shirts, hooded sweatshirts, etc. These items can be ordered directly through our website. Questions may be directed to our Uniform Director at [uniforms@illinoisfirejuniors.com](mailto:uniforms@illinoisfirejuniors.com).

#### Uniform Numbers

In order to make the uniform ordering and distribution process more efficient, and in order to eliminate the incidence of duplicate numbers on a team, the Illinois Fire Juniors Board utilizes the following:

- All players on a team will be assigned either an odd or even number based on the age group for their team (e.g., 01 boys & girls teams will be odd, 02 boys & girls teams will be even, 03 boys & girls teams will be odd, etc.).
- Players do not have the option on the uniform ordering website to request a number. The Uniform Director will assign a uniform number to each player.
- If two or more Illinois Fire Juniors teams combine to form a single team, and there are two or more players with the same uniform number on the newly combined team, the player with the most seniority within the Illinois Fire Juniors club will be allowed to keep his/her number, and the other player(s) will be assigned a number by the Uniform Director. If two or more players have the same seniority, then the older player will be allowed to keep his/her number, and the other player(s) will be assigned a new number by the Uniform Director.
- The Uniform Director will do his/her best to allow players to keep their uniform numbers from previous years. However, in order to meet the objectives set forth in this policy, no guarantee is made that players will always be allowed to keep their same uniform numbers.
- If the wrong size or number is ordered by the family, it will be the family's responsibility to remedy the situation at their expense.

### **Safety**

#### Risk Management

Given the importance of protecting youth soccer players, Illinois Fire Juniors has maintained a Safety and Background Check Program since its inception. Members of the Board of Directors, all coaches, assistant coaches, and team managers assigned to a competitive team are required to authorize and pass a background check. These individuals may not participate with a team until they have completed and passed the background check process. The risk application must be submitted semi-annually. Illinois Fire Juniors utilizes the services of a third party vendor to complete the background checks. The club administrator maintains this information. Additional information is included in the Illinois Fire Juniors [Child Protection Policy](#).

#### Guidelines for Appropriate Behavior

All players must read, sign, and abide by the Player Code of Conduct annually. All parents/guardians must read, sign and abide by the Parent/Guardian Code of Conduct annually.

#### Practice and Game Safety

The Illinois Youth Soccer Association (IYSA) has developed a "Concussion Policy" that includes education as part of any coach licensure. Anytime a student athlete is injured during a practice or competitive match, IYSA guidelines will be strictly adhered to.

The best interest of the student athlete is first and foremost, particularly after a collision with another athlete, the ground or a goalpost. No student who has been hurt or injured will be coerced or otherwise forced to continue participating or playing. The athlete's parent/guardian will be immediately contacted and if deemed necessary, an ambulance will be called to ensure the student athlete gets prompt and comprehensive evaluation and/or care for an injury.

### **Development of the Soccer Athlete**

Children do not learn in the same way as adults, especially when the learning process involves both intellectual and physical activity. Age conditions the way a person perceives and interacts with the world and with others. In any learning process, age is the key component in selecting appropriate content and methodology. Soccer is no different. For this reason we must not train 6-year-old players the same way as 13-year-old players. Training sessions must be adapted to the age of the players. Taking into consideration the characteristics of human and player development, we have structured the curriculum into four age groups:





### **INITIAL STAGE - 5 to 8 years old**

At this age, children do not have the same capacity as adults to analyze their environment. They explore and have an egocentric conception of the world. Children are still gathering the experience necessary to interact with their surroundings and with others. The capacity to consider the thoughts and feelings of others is not present yet. In order to help children build their own experience, many soccer exercises will be individual (e.g. each player will have a ball). The tactical component of the game will be reduced to small-sided games with basic explanations about space distribution.

### **BASIC STAGE – 9 to 12 years old**

At this stage, the structure (but not the content) of the training sessions will be similar to that of older players. The main component of the training session will be technical. It is sensible at this age to develop technique and basic tactical understanding. Therefore, with their increased capability to solve problems, players will begin working on basic and dynamic tactical scenarios. At this stage, it is imperative to recognize players are not fully developed and still have important physical limitations.

### **INTERMEDIATE STAGE – 13 and 14 years old**

Players at this age develop a good understanding of the game. However, these players are limited by their physical size and the significant changes that arise with puberty. Safety should be the number one priority for the coach. The coach must be cautious to avoid overtraining, and should focus more on tactical and technical elements of the game and less on the physical aspects. Tactical training plays an important role at this age.

### **ADVANCED STAGE – 15 to 18 years old**

Players at this age have completed most of their physical and mental development. All components of training can be combined and organized with the purpose of developing the highest potential of the player. The strength of the muscles helps to develop technique at high speed, and this speed helps the player to react faster to tactical situations. This stage is crucial for combining all the components of soccer in order to increase the players' soccer knowledge.

## ***Illinois Fire Juniors Soccer Programs***

The following sections will outline details of the many soccer programs we offer:

- Illinois Fire Juniors Academy “Under 8 and Under 9” (U8 – U9)
- Illinois Fire Juniors Travel Program “Under 10 thru Under 18” (U10 – U18)
- Physical Training and Injury Prevention
- Camps and Clinics

Age Divisions are based on birth year. Specifics can be found on the Illinois Fire Juniors website at [www.illinoisfirejuniors.com](http://www.illinoisfirejuniors.com).

### **Illinois Fire Juniors Academy - Under 8 and Under 9 Players**

The Illinois Fire Juniors Academy is designed with the latest youth development research from across the globe in mind. Our professional staff strives to create a positive environment where boys and girls can learn and experiment with new soccer skills in various activities and competitive match settings. We accept new Academy players throughout the season. Please contact the Illinois Fire Juniors office for further information on how to get your player registered at [admin@illinoisfirejuniors.com](mailto:admin@illinoisfirejuniors.com).

#### Training

Academy players will train twice a week for 1½ hours each session. Training will focus on teaching players the correct techniques to perform individual skills (dribbling, passing, shooting, etc.). Activities are designed to challenge the players to improve by allowing them to compete at a level appropriate for each player.

#### Competition

Academy players will have a variety of opportunities to test their skills in competition. Illinois Fire Juniors is part of the Central Illinois Youth Soccer League (CIYSL) and will compete with teams in the league for both Friendlies and Tournaments. CIYSL members include teams from cities like Peoria, Springfield, Champaign, and Decatur. Here is a further description of the types of competition in which Academy players will participate:

- League Play – Two to three times per season, Academy players will be divided into teams to play against other multiple CIYSL clubs for two to three games on a Sunday afternoon. Games will be 6v6 with twenty-five (25) minute halves. Teams may or may not be co-ed, and enough teams will be created to allow players to play without many substitutions.



- **Friendlies** - Players are divided into teams to play against another CIYSL club. Game format can be decided between the two clubs, but will not be bigger than 6v6.
- **Tournaments** - Players are divided into teams to compete for at least three games over the course of a weekend. The Academy will typically participate in one to three tournaments per season.
- **Play Days** - On weekends in absence of other competition, coaches may arrange a time when players can come to fields to play pick-up games amongst themselves. This is often one of the most enjoyed forms of competition we offer!

### Playing Time

It is our aim to get all Academy participants playing for at least half of each game. On occasions some players may get some additional time. Generally, our games are comprised of two twenty-five (25) minute halves. Placements of student athletes on teams are based in part upon their commitment to a full year of play. Student athletes making a commitment to Illinois Fire Juniors are expected to honor that commitment when placement is made on any team – irrespective of participation in other sports and activities.

### **Illinois Fire Juniors Travel Program: Ages Under 10 thru Under 18 (U10 – U18)**

The Illinois Fire Juniors travel program is for players seeking a more competitive level of soccer in the central Illinois area. Currently we offer travel soccer opportunities for boys and girls from U10 through U18.

### U10-U18 Travel Team Formation and Player Selection

All teams are formed each year based upon coach input and analysis and review of annual tryouts conducted in May/June. Typically, two try-out sessions are designated for each age group, and players are expected to attend both sessions.

The coaching staff reviews the participants, and players are then placed on a team at the sole discretion of the DOC. Coaches will not review their own child.

Within a week to ten days after try-outs, the results will be communicated. Specific dates will be announced at the time of the tryout. Parents have forty-eight (48) hours to accept the offer. To facilitate team and schedule creation and to prevent unnecessary administrative work, offers will not be held open for longer than 48 hours.

Once the team is formed and all roster spots have been filled, a team/parent meeting will be scheduled by the team manager and/or the assigned coach. This meeting will cover items such as plans and goals for the season, practice schedules, and provide parents an opportunity to get to know one another.

There may be instances where players are added mid-season based on team needs or player interest. For example, if a player moves into the community and has an interest in travel soccer, he/she may be added to a team. The DOC will have the sole discretion of player placement depending on the skills/talents of the player and the needs of the team. Players may be added mid-season based on the above if needed and/or necessary. For additional information, please see our Partial Season Play Policy.

If an athlete completes try outs for Illinois Fire Juniors, but does not commit during the documented commitment period, that athlete will not be considered for an Illinois Fire Juniors roster spot until completing try outs again the following seasonal year. Interested athletes who did not complete try outs will be handled on a case by case basis.

### Registration

Details on registration procedures will be provided to parents at the time of the tryout. If you have questions about this procedure, please contact [admin@illinoisfirejuniors.com](mailto:admin@illinoisfirejuniors.com).

### Competition Types

**League Play** - Illinois Fire Juniors teams will play in approximately six (6) to ten (10) league games per season. These games can be at home or typically within a couple of hours drive of Bloomington/Normal. League games are typically played as double headers and games are normally on Sunday afternoons, but can also be played midweek.



**Tournaments** - Each team will play in a minimum of four (4) tournaments per seasonal year. Tournaments are typically played over Saturdays and Sundays with a minimum of three (3) games. Some tournaments will offer three to four days of play and approximately five (5) games. These are not common and typically affect the older age groups. Each team has its own tournament schedule based on the age, ability and availability of the players. Younger teams will typically stay within a couple of hours of Bloomington/Normal and older teams tend to travel more. Your teams annual calendar will outline the events you are scheduled to attend.

**State Competitions** - On occasions, Illinois Fire Juniors teams will play in state competitions such as State Cup and Presidents Cup. These are typically very similar to a tournament in format and are normally played over a weekend. Depending on the age group, teams that do very well in State competitions will qualify for Regional and National competitions.

**Friendlies** (more informal games) - These are typically organized by the coach based on the team's schedule. These are games against other teams that are used in an effort to provide the following: game experience, preseason preparation, player evaluation and/or system evaluation. If your team is scheduled to have a friendly, this will be communicated to you.

**Indoor** - Indoor soccer is typically played over the cold winter months. Generally these types of games are optional. Our teams typically participate in the following indoor formats: Futsal, 3v3 Tournaments, 7v7 Leagues, and/or full sided play leagues.

Please note the following in regards to Off Season Events: With the exception of official off season training events (Winter Training, Illinois Fire Juniors sponsored OSEC conditioning, and other camps and training bearing the "Illinois Fire Juniors" name), participants in other training and events have the sole legal and financial responsibility for them. While Illinois Fire Juniors recognizes the benefit of off season training, since these are not officially sponsored by our club, Illinois Fire Juniors is not responsible for paying for these items, providing coaching, coordinating of teams, providing apparel or gear, or managing injuries or accidents during these activities.

### **Travel Team Philosophies**

#### **Multiple Sports/Activities**

Placements of student athletes on teams are based in part upon their commitment to a full year of play. Student athletes making a commitment to Illinois Fire Juniors are expected to honor that commitment when placement is made on any Illinois Fire Juniors Team – irrespective of participation in other sports and activities.

#### **Attendance at Practices/Training**

Athletes giving other activities or sports other than soccer a higher priority, which results in multiple absences from his/her soccer practices, league games or tournaments may see reduced playing time. Each student athlete is important to the team! Absences impact team cohesiveness, bonding, offensive/defensive strategies and the team's overall ability to execute.

#### **Scheduling of Practices/Training**

Practice schedules are determined by the Director of Coaching and team coach based on facilities, coaches and player availability. Each athlete will be given a schedule, and while every effort will be made to adhere to that schedule throughout the season, there may be instances when practices are rescheduled due to a variety of reasons. Please be flexible and understanding.

Players are expected to arrive ten (10) minutes prior to all practice and training sessions or as directed by their coach. Please note, due to the lack of lighted fields, it should be expected that practice times may vary slightly due to the availability of sunlight.

Player attendance at all practices is expected. If your child is unable to attend a practice, please make every effort to call or email the coach or team manager as soon as possible. No shows are frowned upon and may result in reduced playing time.

Please make every effort to contact your team manager or coach if you know your child will be late to practice. Skills can be enhanced by observation, so even if your child is unable to participate, they can observe. Unless your child would be made sicker by attending practice, or would pass along an illness to others, they should plan on attending all practice sessions. Contagious sicknesses are a good reason to miss practice, but "not feeling like going" is not. Since Illinois Fire Juniors is a competitive travel club, player absences may have a direct effect on that player's ability to start the next match and their subsequent playing time.



### Required Equipment

- Arrive completely dressed:
  - Soccer socks covering the whole shin guard
  - Training attire includes: Illinois Fire Juniors training shirt, black soccer socks and black shorts
  - Jeans, khaki's, chinos or other street clothes are NOT permitted.
- Have a properly inflated soccer ball. (U9-U12 use size four; U13+ use size five).
- A more than adequate water supply is a must at all practices and games.

### Game Day

On game days, players are expected to be at the correct field, completely dressed, 45 minutes prior to kick-off, or at a time instructed by the coach. Time before games is used to physically warm-up and mentally prepare for the match. Generally, the home team must change jerseys if there is a color conflict. To avoid any issues, each player should always bring both jerseys and both sets of socks to every game. Before the game, players should be properly fed, hydrated, rested and ready to play. Our uniform of choice is always red shirt, red shorts and red socks.

### Travel

Travel and league play is a big component of our program. This allows our players to compete against a variety of teams. Another benefit of travel is the team bonding that naturally occurs as players and their families spend off-field time together.

Therefore, when a team travels to a location that requires an overnight stay, teams are strongly encouraged to stay at the same hotel. Your team manager, along with assistance from the club, can help with hotel identification. Team managers will make every effort to reserve suitable lodging at affordable rates. Many hotels have severe cancellation policies.

### Playing Time

Philosophy - Illinois Fire Juniors believes playing time during games is a critical factor in the development of individual players. Games provide playing conditions that can be simulated, but not reproduced, in a training environment.

### Guidelines

Based on the above, Illinois Fire Juniors has adopted the following regarding playing time for its competitive program:

Players on teams U10 thru U12 generally play in at least half of each of the team's games (e.g., at least 25-30 minutes in a 50-60 minute game), including league games and organized scrimmages. Coaches may reduce playing time at their discretion for individual players due to any of the following:

- Poor attendance and/or punctuality at practices and/or games
- Poor effort, attitude, and/or behavior during practices and/or games
- Poor fitness level, including injuries
- Inability to work/play well with teammates
- Tournament play when seeking advancement in the competition or tournament finals.

Players on U13 teams generally play in at least one third of the game. Illinois Fire Juniors expects its coaches to consider what is best for individual players and what is best for the team as a whole in determining how much playing time individual players receive.

Coaches may reduce playing time at their discretion for individual players due to any of the following:

- Poor attendance and/or punctuality at practices and/or games
- Poor effort, attitude, and/or behavior during practices and/or games
- Poor fitness level, including injuries
- Inability to work/play well with teammates
- Lack of technical and/or tactical abilities
- Tournament play when seeking advancement in the competition or tournament finals.

The amount of playing time that players on teams U14 and older receive is subject to the discretion of the player's coach. Illinois Fire Juniors expects its coaches to consider what is best for individual players and what is best for the team as a whole in determining how much playing time individual players receive. Coaches may reduce playing time at their discretion for individual players due to any of the following:



- Poor attendance and/or punctuality at practices and/or games
- Poor effort, attitude, and/or behavior during practices and/or games
- Poor fitness level, including injuries
- Inability to work/play well with teammates
- Lack of technical and/or tactical abilities
- As the demands of the game/competition dictate the need.

Illinois Fire Juniors expects its coaches to communicate decisions to limit/reduce playing time to the players who are affected by those decisions. Coaches should communicate the factors in their decisions, as well as any steps the player(s) can take to receive more playing time in the future.

There may be instances where players are added mid-season based on team needs or player interest. For example, if a player moves into the community and has an interest in travel soccer, he/she may be added to a team. The DOC will have the sole discretion of player placement depending on the skills/talents of the player and the needs of the team. Players may be added mid-season based on the above if needed and/or necessary. For additional information, please see our [Partial Season Play Policy](#).

If an athlete completes try outs for Illinois Fire Juniors, but does not commit during the documented commitment period, that athlete will not be considered for an Illinois Fire Juniors roster spot until completing try outs again the following seasonal year. Interested athletes who did not complete try outs will be handled on a case by case basis.

Additional information related to “Guest Players”, including playing time is located [here](#).

Parents with questions or concerns about playing time should first contact the team coach. If further communication is required, please contact our Director of Coaching [myron.king@illinoisfirejuniors.com](mailto:myron.king@illinoisfirejuniors.com)

Some tournaments have “specific” hotel requirements, so it is very important you inform your team manager if you will not be staying at the “team” hotel. There may be instances where the tournament will not allow a choice of staying at a “non-tournament hotel.” These scenarios can be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

When Illinois Fire Juniors teams are out of our home area for games and tournaments, the coach may impose a curfew/bedtime for the players. Also, depending on morning game times, the coach may also announce a specific time all players are to be dressed and in the hotel lobby for a morning run, workout and breakfast. Parents are expected to help the coach by enforcing these times.

Players are expected to observe exemplary manners when staying in the team hotel. When traveling to a tournament, players must remember they represent Illinois Fire Juniors, their families and the central Illinois community; and act accordingly. Running in the halls, excessive noise, kicking soccer balls indoors, and any other behavior unbecoming of a student athlete is unacceptable. Tournaments generally require our players to play at least three (3) games in a two day period. The time between games should be used for physical and mental rest/preparation.

### **Physical Training & Injury Prevention**

There are four main components in which we train our soccer players:

- Technique - Dribbling, control, shooting, passing, etc.
- Tactics - Decisions and strategies
- Psycho-Social - Mental and social aspects
- Physical - Strength, fitness, and injury prevention.

As our training environment is typically limited to two to three days per week, we will generally focus on technical, tactical, and psycho-social training during the regular season. General fitness and injury prevention techniques are adopted in our training sessions.

However, we feel that alone is not enough to completely prepare the student athlete to perform at the highest physical levels possible. Therefore, the Illinois Fire Juniors has formed a partnership with Orthopedic Sports Enhancement Center (OSEC) to provide our performance enhancement and injury prevention programs.

These programs are offered throughout the year. These programs are an additional expense and are optional for our players. However, they are recommended for all student athletes. Details on upcoming OSEC programs can be found [here](#).



## ***Camps, Clinics, and Special Events***

Throughout the year, we offer a number of additional camps and clinics for our players. These are optional. Details on current offerings can be found on our website. Here is a brief listing:

**TOTS Soccer** - U5 - U6 - Summer, Fall, and Spring

**Goalkeeping** - U9 - U18 - In Season

**Stars of Tomorrow Camp** - 1st through 8th Grade – June/July/August - In association with PCSL

**Futsal** - For all Illinois Fire Juniors travel players – Winter Only

**Premier Camp** - U8 – U14, players - Summer only

**Summer Academy** - U8 - U14 - Summer Only

**Indoor Training** - U8 - U18 - Winter Only

**7v7 League** – Summer Only