



## Guide to FIFA Regulations on the International Transfer of Minor Players

### Prepared for U.S. Soccer Federation Members and Stakeholders

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#### Introduction

The U.S. Soccer Federation is committed to fostering the development of youth football (soccer) while adhering to global standards set by the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA). This guide provides an overview of FIFA's regulations concerning the international transfer of players under the age of 18, as outlined in Article 19 of the FIFA Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players (RSTP). These rules apply uniformly to all 211 FIFA member nations, including the U.S. Soccer Federation.

**Important Note:** The U.S. Soccer Federation does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, nationality, or any other characteristic. Additionally, we are not an immigration enforcement authority. Our role is to ensure compliance with FIFA regulations while supporting the safe and healthy development of young players.

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#### Overview of FIFA Article 19

FIFA Article 19 establishes that international transfers of players are permitted only if the player is over 18 years old, with specific exceptions designed to protect minors and promote their well-being. These exceptions balance the need to prevent exploitation with opportunities for young players to pursue soccer and personal development.

#### Key Statistics

- **Global Participation:** Approximately 170 million to 230 million children aged 10-18 participate in organized youth football worldwide.
- **Professional Players:** There are 128,694 professional football players globally.
- **Probability of Going Pro:** The likelihood of a young player becoming a professional ranges from ~0.056% to ~0.076%.

These figures underscore the vast scale of youth soccer and the rarity of reaching professional status, highlighting the importance of protective regulations.

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## Exceptions to the Age Restriction

Below are the five key exceptions under Article 19, applicable to all 211 FIFA member nations, including the U.S. Soccer Federation.

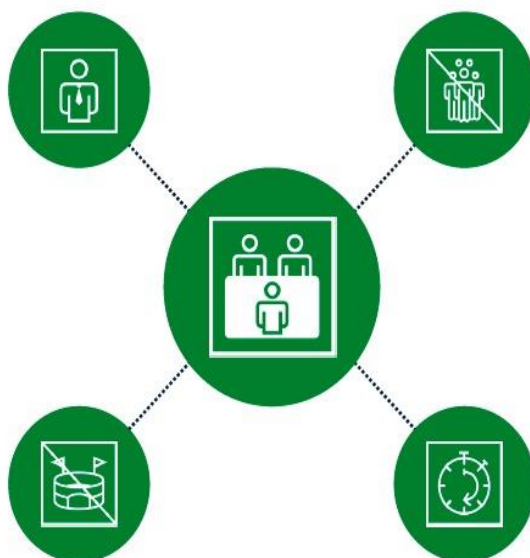
### Move for Reasons Not Linked to Soccer– Parents Move Exception

- **Criteria:** The player's parents' move to the United States is for **reasons unrelated to soccer** (e.g., employment).
- **Requirements:**
  - The permanent move and settling of the player's parents **must be proven**.
  - It is **imperative to prove** that the parent's move to the United States **is for reasons unrelated to soccer**.
  - Player moving to a guardian (family member) **do not qualify**, though exceptions may apply.
  - The timing of the move must clearly precede soccer-related decisions and **must be proven**.
- **Purpose:** Ensures the move is **not** motivated by soccer opportunities, protecting the player's family-driven relocation and need to remain as a family unit.

## Parent Move Exception Moved for reasons not linked to Soccer

### Parents Move

Players parents' moved to the United States



### No Guardians

In principle, **no delegation of parental authority** accepted, but possible exceptions.

### Not soccer-related

It must be clearly demonstrated that the parent' relocation to the United States is for reasons unrelated to soccer

### Timing

The **sequence and timing** of events are objective criteria to determine if the decision to move to the United States was driven by the stated reasons or influenced by potential soccer activity



**50 km Exception - Both the player's home and club are located within 50 km of the U.S. border, with a total distance of no more than 100 km between them.**

- **Criteria:**
  - The player remains at home with their parents, only traveling to and from club
- Both the player's home and the club are situated within 50 km of the U.S. border, and the distance from the club to the player's home does not exceed a total travel distance of 100km.
- **Purpose:** Allows cross-border participation for players near national boundaries without relocation.

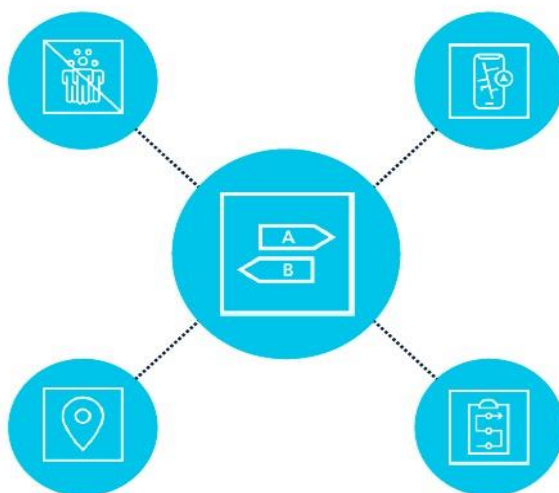
## 50 km Exception

### No relocation permitted.

The player must continue to reside at home.

### Main address

The player's domicile, or home, is defined as the primary address of the player's parent(s). Any secondary home of the player's parent(s) or the residence of a relative or third party does not qualify as the player's domicile.



### 50 km to border 'as the crow flies'

1. The player lives no further than 50km from the common border. Straight, point-to-point distance.
2. The distance between the club and the common border is of max. 50km. Straight, point-to-point distance.

### 100 km total 'route of travel'

The sequence and timing of events are objective criteria to determine if the decision to move to the United States was driven by the stated reasons or influenced by potential soccer activity



## Example 1:

**Situation 1**

The player lives in city Y of country A.

The player wants to be registered with club X located in neighbouring country B.

The player's address in city Y is located 23km (point-to-point distance) from the (closest) common border between country A and country B.

Club X's seat is located 11km (point-to-point distance) from the (closest) common border between country A and country B.

The "route travel" between the player's address and the club's seat is 37km.

**Assessment**

The distance requirements of art. 19 par. 2 c) are cumulatively met.

## Example 2:

**Situation 2**

The player lives in city Y of country A.

The player wants to be registered with club X located in the neighbouring country B.

The player's address in city Y is located 54km (point to point distance) from the (closest) common border between country A and country B.

Club X's seat is located 15km (point to point distance) from the (closest) common border between country A and country B.

The "route travel" between the player's address and the club's seat is 70km.

**Assessment**

The distance requirements of art. 19 par. 2 c) are not cumulatively met since the player's address is located more than 50 km from the (closest) common border.

Border

Road from Player's address to Club x's seat

### Example 3:

**Situation 3**

The diagram shows two countries, Country A and Country B, separated by a curved border. A player is located in City Y in Country A, 23 km from the border. Club X is located in Country B, 61 km from the border. A dashed line represents the 'route travel' between the player and the club, which is 90 km long.

The player lives in city Y of country A.

The player wants to be registered with club X located in neighbouring country B.

The player's address in city Y is located 23km (point-to-point distance) from the (closest) common border between country A and country B.

Club X's seat is located 61km (point-to-point distance) from the (closest) common border between country A and country B.

The "route travel" between the player's address and the club's seat is 90km.

**Assessment**

The distance requirements of art. 19 par. 2 c) are not cumulatively met since the club's seat is located more than 50km from the (closest) common border.

### Example 4:

**Situation 4**

The diagram shows two countries, Country A and Country B, separated by a curved border. A player is located in City Y in Country A, 41 km from the border. Club X is located in Country B, 48 km from the border. A dashed line represents the 'route travel' between the player and the club, which is 104 km long.

The player lives in city Y of country A.

The player wants to be registered with club X located in neighbouring country B.

The player's address in city Y is located 41km (point-to-point distance) from the (closest) common border between country A and country B.

Club X's seat is located 48km (point-to-point distance) from the (closest) common border between country A and country B.

The "route travel" between the player's address and the club's seat is 104km.

**Assessment**

The distance requirements of art. 19 par. 2 c) are not cumulatively met since the "route travel" from the player's address to the club's seat is more than 100km.

Border

Road from Player's address to Club x's seat



## Humanitarian Reasons for Unaccompanied Minors

- **Criteria:** The player flees their country because of threats to their life or freedom—such as those related to race, religion, nationality, or political views—as well as due to life-threatening situations, all while being unaccompanied by parents.
- **Registration:**
  - Refugees or protected persons may **only** register with amateur clubs, with no restrictions on national transfers before 18.
  - Asylum seekers or vulnerable minors: Limited to purely amateur clubs until 18. An unaccompanied minor **cannot** register with or play for a pro-affiliated club, regardless of whether the player is a refugee, seeking asylum, or has obtained asylum.
- **Purpose:** Protects vulnerable minors while aligning registration with their legal status.

## Humanitarian Reasons for Unaccompanied Minors.

### Humanitarian Motivation

The player flees his country due to: (i) **his life or freedom being threatened** on account of race, religion, nationality, belonging to a particular social group, or political opinion; or (ii) any other circumstances where **his survival is seriously threatened**.

### Refugees

If the minor has been formally recognized as a **refugee or a protected person**, they may be registered with a purely amateur club. No restrictions on any subsequent national transfer.



### Traveling Alone

The player moved **without his parents** and is therefore at least temporarily permitted to reside in the country of arrival and/or is recognized by the competent state authorities as vulnerable and requiring state protection.

### Asylum Seekers

Minor applications related to **asylum seekers or minor recognized by the competent state authorities as vulnerable** may only be registered with a purely amateur club. Subsequent transfer possible but not with a professional club until they turn 18.



## Humanitarian Reasons for Accompanied Minors

- **Criteria:** The player's family moves for humanitarian reasons, covered under the "parents move" exception.
- **Requirements:** Documents proving residency and family relocation are required. When applying to an amateur club, the player or their family must provide the asylum application submitted to USCIS for consideration. For those applying to a professional club, the parents and player should already possess full asylum or refugee status.
- **Confidentiality:** The player's former association does not access application details.
- **Purpose:** Supports families fleeing hardship while maintaining privacy.

## Humanitarian Reasons for Accompanied Minors.

### Parent(s) Move

If the minor player's family is forced to move to another country on humanitarian grounds, they are covered by the humanitarian accompanied minors exception.

### Required Docs

Same documents requested as a move for reasons not linked to soccer, except for the employment contract or employment certificate + migratory situation.



### Confidentiality of the Application

The player's former member association (assuming the minor player was previously registered) will not have access to the information contained in the application.

### Migratory Status

The minor player and their family must have permission, at least temporarily, to reside in the United States.



## Academic Exchange Students

- **Criteria:**
  - **Temporary Stay:** The player's stay abroad is short-term, expecting an immediate return home after studies. Registration is **restricted to amateur clubs only, excluding any pro-affiliations**.
  - **Registration Duration Limit:** The player's registration with the new club cannot exceed one year. For this exception to work, the academic program abroad must either:
    - Last less than one year in total, with registration matching that full duration or
    - If the program is longer than one year, have less than one year left when the player registers, with registration limited to that remaining time.
  - **Flexibility for Longer Programs or Age Transition:** If the academic program exceeds one year, two scenarios permit the exception: (1) the player registers when less than one year of the program remains, with registration limited to that residual period, or (2) the program extends beyond a year, but the player will turn 18 within one year of registration. In the latter case, the registration can extend up to their 18th birthday, as they will no longer be classified as a minor thereafter, negating the need for special approval under these rules.
- **Purpose:** Encourages education-driven mobility without soccer exploitation.

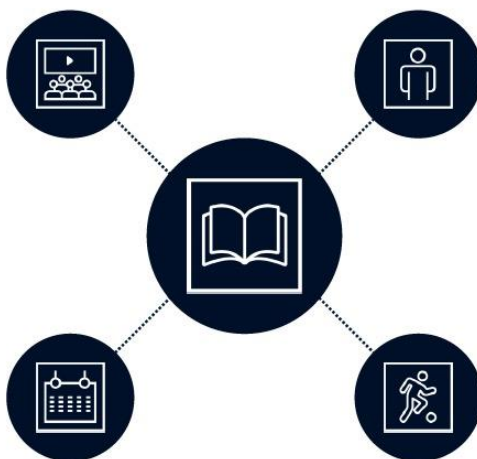
## Academic Exchange Student.

### Academic Program

The relocation occurred for purely academic reasons (to undertake an exchange programme). No sporting exchange programs allowed.

### Temporary Nature

The player's registration for the new club until he turns 18 or until the end of the academic programme should not exceed one year.



### Moving Alone

The player is a student and is moving abroad without his parents.

### Purely Amateur Clubs

The player's new club may only be a purely amateur club (no professional team, or no legal, financial or *de facto* link to a professional club).



- **Criteria:**
  - First registration in a country where the player is not a national. (Registering in the USA)
  - The player has lived continuously in that country for at least five years prior to the application.
- **Documents required include:** Minimum of five years' worth of educational records (such as transcripts, report cards, or signed attendance records from the school Registrar) dated from the application submission date backward.
- **Purpose:** Recognizes long-term residency for integration purposes.

## Five-year Rule Exception.

### First Registration

The player wishes to be registered for the first time

### Not a Citizen

The player is not a national of the country in which he wishes to be registered. For example, a player who resides in the USA but is originally from Mexico and wants to register in the USA.

### Time Threshold

The player has been living continuously for at least the last five years in the United States, counted (back) from the date on which the minor application is submitted

### Proof of Evidence

Minimum of five years of educational records such as transcripts, report cards, or signed attendance records from the school Registrar dated from the application submission date backwards





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## Limited Minor Exemption (LME)

- **Overview:** Since 2009, certain associations (over 30 globally) have been exempt from submitting certain minor applications to FIFA's Player Status Committee (PSC) for amateur players registering with purely amateur clubs.
- **Scope:** Relieves administrative burden under specific conditions.
- **Obligation:** Associations report registrations biannually, including player details and exceptions used.
- **Impact:** Over 350,000 registrations have benefited, enhancing cooperation between FIFA and member associations like the U.S. Soccer Federation.

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## Application Process and Outcomes

- **Submission and Review:** New federations submit applications via FIFA's Transfer Matching System (TMS), which the Regulatory Applications Team reviews.
- **Outcomes :**
  - **2021/2022:** 13,465 accepted, 13,198 rejected, 11,188 inadmissible.
  - **2023/2024:** Similar trends (exact figures not fully specified).
- **Processing Time :**
  - Average with additional documents: 14 days, 16 hours, 15 minutes.
  - Average without: 5 days, 2 hours, 13 minutes.
  - Requests for documents add ~8 days on average.



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## **U.S. Soccer Federation Commitment**

The U.S. Soccer Federation adheres to these FIFA regulations, which are identical to those followed by all 211 FIFA member nations. We prioritize player welfare, education, and development, ensuring no discrimination in our processes. We do not enforce immigration laws—our focus is football compliance and support for our members.

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## **Additional Resources**

- **U.S. Soccer Federation Support:** Contact our Player Status Department at [psd@ussoccer.org](mailto:psd@ussoccer.org) for assistance or clarifications.

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This guide is intended to inform and assist U.S. Soccer Federation members and stakeholders in navigating FIFA's minor transfer regulations effectively and responsibly.