



Introduction

This guideline considers the suitability of mixed gender teams and the circumstances where girls should be permitted to play contact Rugby with boys. The guideline takes under consideration the differences in physical and mental development of boys and girls at the different stages of progression through the established age-grade pathways within individual Unions.

Application

This guideline applies to all levels of the game and should be used in conjunction with the USA Rugby and World Rugby Age Differential Guideline where appropriate.

Guideline

A player should not participate in Mixed Gender teams once they have reached the 7th grade of school. Participation in mixed gender teams is permitted only up until the end of the season (including the following off-season) in which the player is in the 6th grade and the summer following the 6th grade.

****In exceptional circumstances a player in 7th and 8th grades may play on a mixed gender team *where no other option in continuing to play Rugby other than this exists.***

In order to ensure the suitability of players in such circumstances, the following criteria must be met. Agreements and confirmations must be submitted to the appropriate State Rugby Organization.

- a. Written agreement from the player's parents or guardians to play and acceptance of the associated risk with playing with people who may be stronger and more physically developed than them;
- b. Written confirmation from a coach with an appropriate understanding of the physical attributes required and of the risks to players in Rugby and to whom the player is known that the player has the requisite skills and experience to play Rugby at the desired level; and
- c. Such other consents, agreements or confirmations (if any) as may be required by the player's home Union or to comply with the local jurisdiction.
- d. Because of the particular nature of the front row compared to other positions appropriate considerations must be given within the assessment protocols outlined above regarding whether or not the player should be permitted to play in the front row.

A player Should Not participate in Mixed Gender contact rugby under any circumstances once they have reached the 9th grade.

Player Development & Participation Consideration

While player welfare is the key consideration when putting policies in place for USA Rugby regarding mixed gender contact Rugby, it is important to also approach this issue from a development and participation perspective. The following development considerations should be considered in developing age grade pathways for girls:

- Research indicates that girls prefer to play sports with girls mainly due to reasons related to social interaction. **Girls are more likely to stay involved in the sport if given this opportunity throughout their development pathway.**
- Girls under the age of 13 should not be discouraged from playing with boys but **a girls-only option should be provided for them** to attract the optimal number of girls into the Game.
- Any Mixed Gender Rugby policy implemented by USA Rugby's State Rugby Organizations should be developed as part of a larger player pathway plan for girls and women's rugby. USA Rugby's Long Term Player Development Models and research will assist with this process.
- Any instances where girls are permitted to play alongside boys due to lack of access to girls teams **should be a short term solution** and Unions should produce plans to **ensure girls have access to single gender teams** in their Unions.

Players irrespective of their age and gender should be prepared in a manner to play the game safely and should have undertaken a safety awareness program such as Rugby Ready or the equivalent available within their home Union.