



The American Youth Soccer Organization and the American Cancer Society Youth Partner Fact Sheet

The American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO) is a nationwide nonprofit organization that develops and delivers quality youth soccer programs in a fun family environment based on the AYSO's six philosophies.

About the American Youth Soccer Organization

The American Youth Soccer Organization was established in the Los Angeles area in 1964 with nine teams. It was the dream of a group of devoted soccer enthusiasts who started the organization in a garage. Today, AYSO has more than 65,000 teams and more than 600,000 players. It also employs 50 people at its National Support and Training Center in Hawthorne, California.

AYSO revolutionized youth sports with its "Everyone Plays" and "Balanced Teams" philosophies. In AYSO, each child who registers is guaranteed to play at least half of every game.

Although AYSO is primarily a youth sports organization, it realizes the importance of providing a safe and healthy atmosphere for children. AYSO is continually working to improve the education of its volunteers in the fields of child development, human behavior, and sports psychology. A strong emphasis is placed on ethics and sportsmanship and on the development of the whole child.

Mission & Vision

- AYSO's **Vision** is to provide world-class youth soccer programs that enrich children's lives.
- AYSO's **Mission** is to develop and deliver quality youth soccer programs that promote a fun family environment based on AYSO's Six Philosophies.

Six Philosophies:

- **Everyone Plays®:** AYSO's program goal is for kids to play soccer, so they mandate that every player on every team must play at least 50% of every game. It's no fun to spend the game on the bench ... and that's no way to learn soccer!
- **Balanced Teams:** Each year, they form new teams as evenly balanced as possible because it's more fun and a better learning experience when teams of similar ability play one another. It allows each player to gain the experience of a wide variety of teammates of different skill levels
- **Open Registration:** AYSO's program is open to all children between 4 and 19 years of age who want to play soccer. Interest and enthusiasm are the only criteria for playing. There are no elimination tryouts, and nobody gets cut.
- **Positive Coaching:** Encouragement of player effort provides for greater enjoyment for the players and leads to better-skilled and better-motivated players. A coach can be one of the most influential people in a child's life, so AYSO requires they create a positive experience for every boy and girl.
- **Good Sportsmanship:** AYSO strives to create a positive environment based on mutual respect rather than a win-at-all-costs attitude, and our program is designed to instill good sportsmanship in every facet of AYSO.
- **Player Development:** AYSO believes that all players should be able to develop their soccer skills and knowledge to the best of their abilities, both individually and as members of a team, in order to maximize their enjoyment of the game.

Celebrate. Remember. Fight Back.®

Structure

AYSO's grassroots program starts with a community-based league, called a Region. A Region can range in size from a few hundred players to several thousand. Each Region is supervised by a Regional Commissioner and a local board of directors.

A group of Regions in close proximity makes up an Area. Area Directors are responsible for activities of the Regions in their Area, as well as for Area-wide activities.

For administrative purposes, AYSO divides the country into 14 geographic Sections based on player population. Section Directors oversee activities in their respective Sections.

Volunteers

- AYSO is supported by more than 250,000 volunteers. Parents donate their time as coaches, referees, team parents, and administrators.
- AYSO and the American Cancer Society work together to involve students in local Relay For Life events and mission activities.
- AYSO and the American Cancer Society Divisions work together to promote the Society and Relay For Life at AYSO national events.
- AYSO and the American Cancer Society communicate regularly to evaluate specific needs and opportunities for both groups.

How to Work with AYSO:

- Please ensure that AYSO teams include AYSO in their team name (example: AYSO Angels) and complete the affiliation information online or on the scannable form.
- A fact sheet will be distributed to the AYSO Regions, informing them of the partnership and how to find their local Relay through RelayForLife.org.
- The AYSO is providing a link to cancer.org from its Web site.
- To locate the AYSO program nearest you, please call 1-800-USA-AYSO, or visit ayso.org.

