

Play. Inspire. Unite.



New Canadian Guide to Ontario Soccer

A reference for newcomers to help you settle into your community life in Ontario through participation in soccer.



Welcome to Ontario!

ontariosoccer.net



New Canadian Guide to Ontario Soccer

Copyright © 2026 by Ontario Soccer Inc.

All rights reserved.

No portion of this book may be reproduced in any form without written permission from the publisher or author.

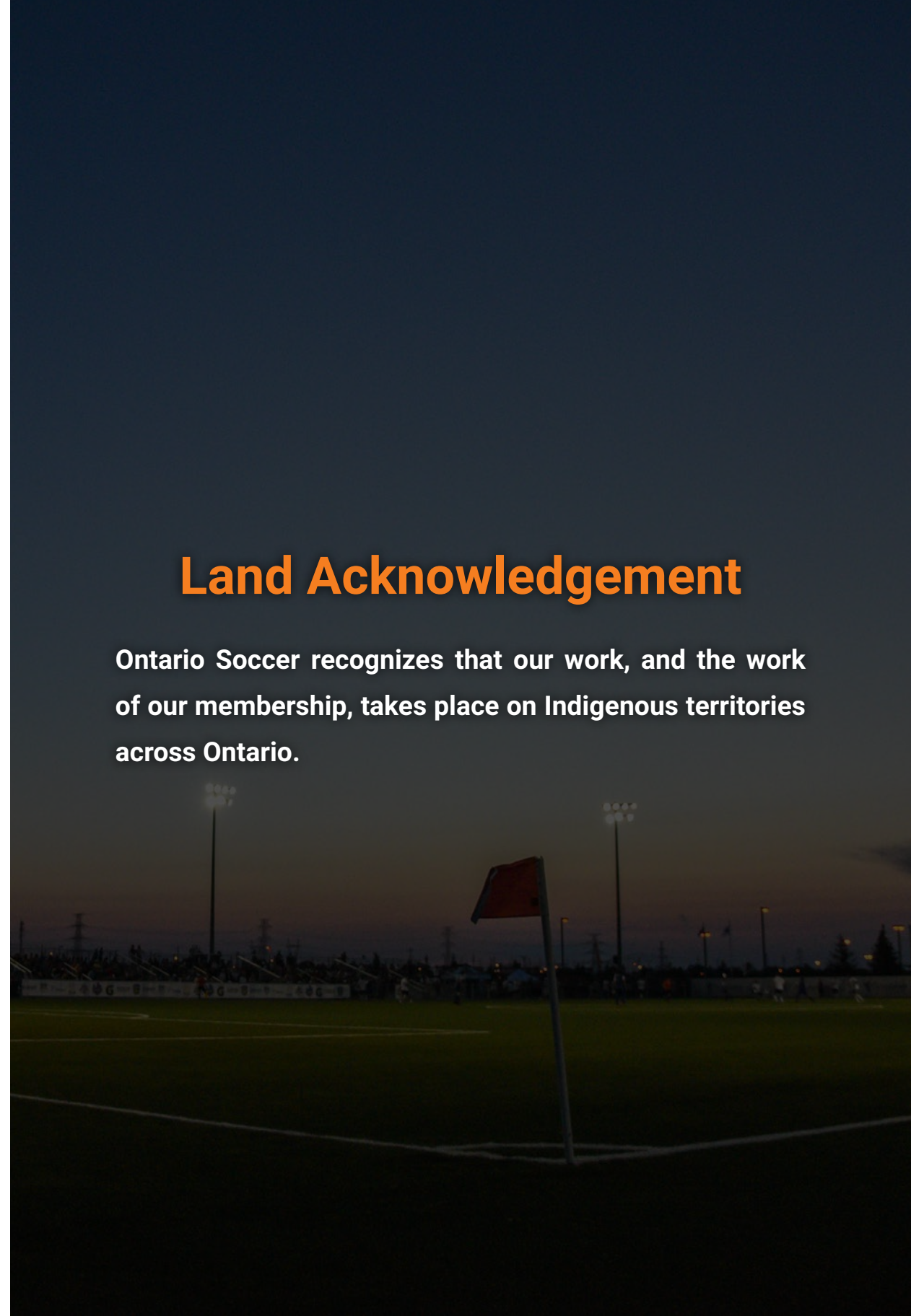
Ontario Soccer would like to thank **Capitis Consulting** and **Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI)** for their support in the completion of this project.

Play. Inspire. Unite.

ontariosoccer.net | HelpDesk@ontariosoccer.net | (905) 264 - 9390

Land Acknowledgement

Ontario Soccer recognizes that our work, and the work of our membership, takes place on Indigenous territories across Ontario.





Welcome to Canada and the Province of Ontario

This guide is here to help you feel at home and discover the joy of soccer, the world's favorite game! Starting fresh in a new place can feel overwhelming, but connecting with others who share your love for the game makes everything easier. We're excited to help you settle in and join Ontario's amazing soccer community!

Table of Contents

1

Welcome To Ontario - Page 3

- What this Guide is about and who it is for

2

Why Get Involved In Soccer In Ontario? - Page 5

- What does soccer in Ontario bring to your family?

3

What's Soccer Like In Ontario? - Page 7

- Everyone is invited to play!
- When do we play soccer in Ontario?

4

How Is Soccer In Ontario Managed? - Page 13

- 'Organized' or 'sanctioned' soccer
- 'Unorganized' or 'unsanctioned' soccer

5

Many Ways You Can Play And Participate!

- Page 21

- A guide to the many types of soccer available to you in Ontario

6

How Players Develop And Grow With Ontario Soccer

- Page 25

- Long Term Player Development
- Grassroots soccer
- Soccer 4 (for) life
- Talented pathway

7

How You Can Get Involved! - Page 31

- Find your community Club!
- Ways to participate

8

What Does It Cost To Join Ontario Soccer?

- Page 51

- Recreational (house league) registration fees
- Competitive registration fees
- Other costs to consider



Welcome to Ontario!

If you are reading this, you have recently moved your life to Ontario, Canada. Welcome! Everyone involved in the sport of soccer is delighted you are here. We are ready to make you feel welcome and 'at home' by getting you involved in the world's game – soccer!

You may know this game by other names. It's called 'football' in some countries like the United Kingdom. It's 'fútbol' in South American regions. Italians call it 'calcio'. You'll hear it called those names here by many of your fellow newcomers. But you'll most often see it called 'soccer', and that's what we'll be calling in this Guide.

This Guide has been developed for people like you! People who have decided to move their lives to Ontario, often with their families, for many different reasons, but, ultimately, to pursue a happy life enjoying all that Ontario and Canada at large has to offer.

Getting started in a new place isn't easy. You may be unfamiliar with the neighborhood, and you may not know many people in your community yet. You may be trying to get settled with employment, housing, school for your children and other essential services like a family doctor, a place of worship, transportation options and local shopping options.

Trying to do all of this on your own can be scary, especially, if English is not your first language. The sooner you can get to know people like you who have settled in the Ontario community you are now calling 'home', the easier and happier your new life in Ontario will become.

This is where we can help!



On behalf of all of us at Ontario Soccer, welcome to Canada and welcome to your new community in Ontario. We hope you find this New Canadian Settler's Guide helpful and that your family will join the over 500,000 participants that play, referee, coach, and volunteer in soccer (football).



We are here to help you with your transition and settlement in Ontario as soccer (football) is organized in every community.

At Ontario Soccer, everyone is welcome!

- Alan O'Brien

Chair, Board of Directors - Ontario Soccer

"Sport has the power to unite, and soccer – celebrated across cultures – is a powerful force for connection, especially for newcomers building a new life in Ontario.

Whether you are playing on the pitch or cheering from the sidelines, soccer helps foster belonging, friendship, and a sense of home. Ontario is proud to welcome everyone into our ever-growing soccer family."

- Neil Lumsden

Minister for Sport, Government of Ontario



"On behalf of Canada Soccer, we warmly welcome all newcomer families to Ontario. Soccer is more than a game – it's a vital part of our community that builds connections, friendships, and growth.



Newcomers to our country have been a strong pillar of Canadian soccer, and we're proud to support your journey as you make the sport part of your new beginning here."

- Peter Augruso

President, Canada Soccer

Why Get Involved In Soccer In Ontario?

We all know that the one language that everyone in the world speaks is soccer! Whether you play, coach, referee, organize, or just cheer at the soccer field or on the television, soccer is the world's game!

Ontario is home to people from all around the world. In the area in and around the City of Toronto alone (called the Greater Toronto Area or 'GTA'), there are over 250 different ethnicities, with large communities from India, China, the Philippines, the Caribbean and parts of Europe. This creates vibrant, exciting communities in Ontario, where people celebrate and showcase their ethnicity. Soccer thrives among this population that is so diverse and multicultural.

"We came here just with three suitcases, and we didn't have any friends or relatives here. We knew nobody, it was quite a challenge. It was overwhelming, stressful.

Because you need to start a new life, and you don't know where to start. For us, soccer is not just simply a sport, it became a bridge to a new community. Here we made new connections, new friends, and we have support. If you need anything, you can ask for help, and there are a lot of people who are ready to help you.

This is where you feel like you're at home."

- Iryna Pankova
(originally from Vinnytsia, Ukraine)



Thousands of newcomers to Ontario have chosen to participate in local soccer activities around their home to get to know the people in their new community and help their kids make friends with their neighbors, many of whom will be attending the same local schools, colleges or places of worship as them. Some will be newcomers to Ontario like you! Others may be residents who have lived in your community their whole lives and can bring great stories of its history and heritage. But they have one thing in common – they all enjoy soccer together.



When we ask people in Ontario why they love participating in soccer, here is what they say:


- Our kids love the game and make friends in the community through it.
- Volunteering through soccer makes it easy to meet great people in my community who I trust to look out for me and I can depend on.
- Coaching soccer allows me to bring soccer skills from where I came from and apply them to my new home in Ontario.
- Refereeing soccer gave me life skills in leadership, self-confidence, performance under pressure and assertiveness in decision-making, while giving me the opportunity to earn some money, too!
- It's so easy to get involved because everyone knows the game and its very affordable compared to other recreational activities.

In Ontario, soccer builds communities. So, let's see how we can make you part of it!



What's Soccer Like In Ontario?

Similar to how the USA is made up of states, Canada is made up of 13 provinces and territories, who have their own governments and local municipalities. It means that sports like soccer are run a bit differently depending on what province or territory you are living in.



The province of Ontario, where you are, is the largest province or territory in Canada in terms of population size, and contains the country's largest city, Toronto, and the nation's capital city, Ottawa.

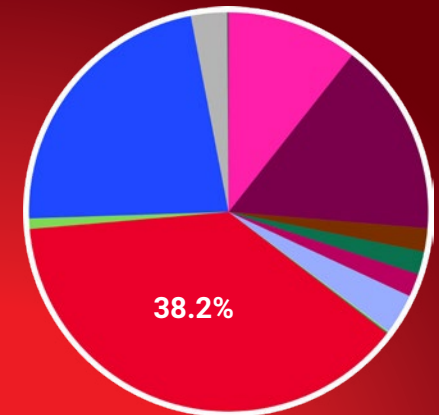
Soccer is the most popular sport in Canada, played by over 750,000 people (not including people having a casual kick-around in the park). More people play soccer through organized soccer clubs than any other sport.

With Ontario being home to over 38% of Canada's total population, it is no surprise that nearly 40% of all registered soccer players in Canada (over 380,000 players) are right here with you in this province. Add in the +70,000 coaches and managers, +8,000 match officials, and countless volunteers, parents and supporters, and you'll find the community of people participating in organized soccer in Ontario is over 1,000,000 Ontarians!

Everyone is invited to play!

REGISTERED SOCCER PLAYERS BY PROVINCE/TERRITORY, 2024

- Ontario - 38.2%
- Quebec - 22.5%
- British Columbia - 15.7%
- Alberta - 10.6%
- Nova Scotia - 3.3%
- Saskatchewan - 2.9%
- Manitoba - 1.9%
- Newfoundland & Labrador - 1.9%
- New Brunswick - 1.8%
- Prince Edward Island - 0.8%
- Yukon - 0.1%
- Northwest Territories - 0.1%
- Nunavut - 0.1%



Source: Canada Soccer Player Registration Data, 2025





In some countries, soccer is seen as a sport that is just for boys or men. But in Canada, soccer is participated in by everyone!

- +80% of Ontario soccer players are children and youth
- +33% of Ontario soccer players are female
- Many Clubs offer soccer opportunities for people with physical or intellectual disabilities ('all-abilities' soccer)
- Many Clubs offer soccer opportunities for older individuals ('seniors'), who still want to play but who cannot compete against younger players without the risk of injury

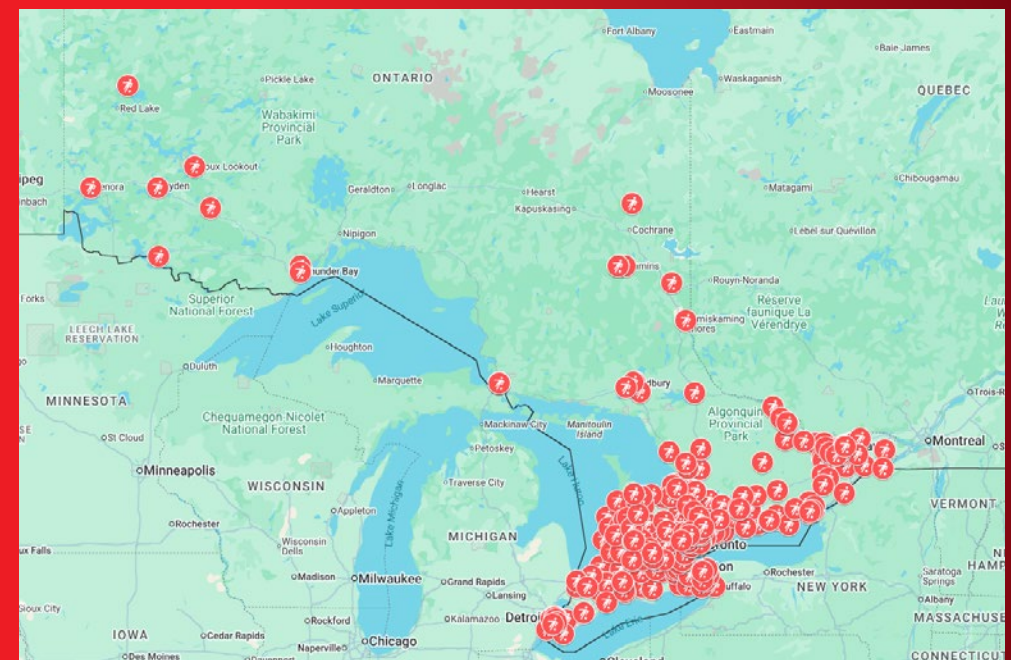
Soccer Clubs are everywhere!

Many people who live in Ontario ('Ontarians') largely reside in urban communities in or around these two cities of Toronto and Ottawa. But it's not all about the cities! There are many beautiful villages and hamlets and farming communities outside the cities in the countryside across Ontario. In these regions too, you will find soccer clubs serving these rural communities.

In some parts of rural Northern and North Western Ontario, communities can be quite remote and resources more spread out over larger distances. But people still find a way to play soccer through local soccer clubs so, if you are in one of these areas, you will still be able to get involved.

In total, there are over 500 soccer clubs affiliated to Ontario Soccer that will be delighted to welcome you and your family to their Club.

Are you ready to find out which soccer clubs are closest to you? Contact us at HelpDesk@ontariosoccer.net or call (905) 264 - 9390 to find your nearest Clubs and how you can get involved.



ONTARIO SOCCER MEMBER CLUBS MAP

Source: Ontario Soccer club data, 2025



When do we play soccer in Ontario?

Ontario is a large province and weather from place to place can be different. In general, summers are hot and soccer is played outdoors on grass fields, like in many countries around the world. But in winter, it can get very cold, especially in the northern parts of the province. So soccer is played indoors, either in indoor sports centres, or school gymnasiums.

Due to the realities of the weather, soccer is seen as a summer sport in Ontario. More people tend to participate in the summer months compared to the other seasons. But this is changing, as more indoor facilities are built and more Clubs introduce year-round playing opportunities.





How is Soccer in Ontario Managed?

In Ontario, you can play any soccer in one of two ways:

'Organized' or 'sanctioned' soccer

In organized soccer, you participate by joining a soccer club that is connected to the official organizers of the game. Your Club will offer you a variety of different ways to participate in soccer, whether you want to play yourself or are looking for opportunities for your child. When you 'register' yourself or your child, the Club will charge you a fee and you will be allowed to play in the program offered (usually 8-12 weeks in line with the seasons of play). With some Clubs, soccer programming is free through offerings like "Try-it Program" and "Drop-in Soccer".

There are three different types of soccer organizations you will find, where you or your family members can register to participate:

1. Not-For-Profit Community Soccer Clubs

These Clubs are managed by a volunteer Board of Directors and might have a few staff. They are usually set up as not-for-profit organizations that can give them special tax status. This means these Clubs provide a service to the community, and they tend to offer more soccer programs for as many people in the community as possible, for as little cost as possible. To help keep fees down, they rely on volunteers to coach their youth soccer programs. So if you are interested in coaching, you should definitely approach these Clubs! Most soccer clubs you will encounter are of this type. If you are not sure, just ask them; they will explain.





2. For-Profit Soccer Club Enterprises

These Clubs are really private companies offering soccer opportunities to you as a business. They are often smaller, focusing on advanced training and development opportunities for soccer players pursuing higher levels of play. They often refer to themselves as 'academies' or 'soccer schools', and generally offer competitive and ambitious youth opportunities to access high quality, professionally-run soccer training, compared to casual 'play for fun' recreational programs. These organizations are profit-driven, so the fees charged are often higher than in not-for-profit soccer clubs. However, their coaches are usually well-qualified, paid professionals and training is more frequent and intense than in many not-for-profit soccer clubs.

3. Soccer League Associations

Aside from the governing bodies like Ontario Soccer, independent soccer league organizations exist, which are connected to our Clubs and run soccer leagues and competitions that you can access through your local soccer club, or even on your own or with a group of your friends in the case of adult leagues. For youth soccer, your Club will automatically enrol your child in these leagues as appropriate, and the cost will be included in your registration fee with the Club. For adult players, if your Club is very large, it may offer its own adult league program. Or your team may play in one of these independent leagues. So if you are looking for casual, recreational soccer opportunities as an adult, these organizations are worth contacting.





Governing Bodies

Whichever soccer club you join, your club is connected to a local district or regional soccer group. There are 16 of these groups in Ontario, and together they cover the whole province. These groups are all part of Ontario Soccer, the organization that runs soccer across Ontario. Ontario Soccer is part of Canada Soccer, which is the national organization. Canada Soccer belongs to Concacaf and FIFA, the world soccer organization you may already know about.

Ontario Soccer and its local district and regional soccer associations set rules, policies, standards and guidelines that ensure soccer is played safely, fairly and respectfully. They also actively enforce these requirements and manage discipline for those who break the rules, especially if they do it repeatedly.

Your governing bodies also provide certification for coaches and referees so the game can be played consistently in line with the Laws of Game. These organizations also run regional or provincial level competitions, leagues and tournaments and provide opportunities for Ontario's top soccer talent to develop to higher levels of the game.

How Soccer Is Governed & Organized



'Unorganized' or 'unsanctioned' soccer

Outside of the 'organized' soccer system, you can participate in soccer like any other recreational pastime in Ontario, such as jogging, swimming or cycling. These activities that people often casually undertake in parks, streets and beaches and public waterways are commonly referred to in Canada as 'recreation'. It is free and involves people using the public infrastructure, particularly the parks and recreation systems, for private use.

You just need to take a soccer ball out into a public park with a group of friends and play casually in Ontario and pay no fees or be subject to any rules outside of the law and whatever rules are in place for using the park.



Some unorganized soccer activities exist, however, that look similar to organized, sanctioned activities under the authority of Ontario Soccer. Some unsanctioned soccer organizations may field teams and participate in unsanctioned leagues and tournaments, like sanctioned soccer clubs do. And they may appear attractive, as they may charge lower fees as they are not affiliated to the organized game.

Be careful before enrolling in these organizations and note the following with caution:

- ⚠️ **These activities are not affiliated to any governing body, which means there is no oversight or standards with regard to player safety, background checks for coaches, or quality of the program.**
- ⚠️ **Unsanctioned soccer activities are not covered under the same insurance policy that all players, who register for activities through sanctioned soccer clubs, enjoy and which protects them from costs related to injury while participating. Be sure to check the status of insurance if you choose to participate in any unsanctioned soccer activities. The operators of unsanctioned soccer activities may take out their own insurance coverage, but some do not.**
- ⚠️ **Licensed referees are not permitted to participate in these soccer activities, so game quality might be different than in organized soccer games.**
- ⚠️ **Players who only participate in unorganized soccer activities are not eligible for sanctioned soccer competitions offered by Ontario's soccer governing bodies, or affiliated leagues and Clubs. This includes competitions like the Ontario Cup, the Ontario Player Development League, Ontario Premier League and more. Also, players playing in unsanctioned soccer activities are not eligible for talent identification for provincial programming, provincial squads or even Canadian National Team opportunities.**



Many Ways You Can Play And Participate!



In Ontario, there are so many ways you can participate in soccer! Here is a quick outline of the different types of soccer available to you, and who they are best suited to:

GRASSROOTS SOCCER

This form of soccer is for younger children, aged 12 and younger. The rules of the game, field and goal size, equipment and team size are modified for different age groups, so kids can participate more freely, get more opportunities to touch the ball, and learn to play the game. Grassroots soccer starts as young as 3 years old and moves to skills development as they get older. See later in this Guide for more detail on this!



11v11 SOCCER

The traditional 11v11 form of the game is played on full-size fields. It is introduced to youth groups aged 13 and older and to adult age groups. Generally, full FIFA Laws of the Game apply when 11v11 soccer is played. 11v11 soccer is mostly played outdoors in spring and summer months, although there are some large, indoor centres that have full-size indoor fields with artificial turf that can accommodate 11v11 play all year long.





FUTSAL

Futsal is a 5v5 form of soccer played indoors on hard court surfaces, usually indoor gymnasiums or specialized futsal courts. The game is skillful and fast-moving and played with a special futsal ball that is smaller and harder (so it doesn't bounce as high and allows for skilled ball mastery and 1v1 attacking and defending). Futsal is a separate form of soccer in its own right, and futsal competitions exist up to national level in Canada. The game is also often used by coaches in winter training of youth players, driving ball mastery and skills development.

ACCESSIBLE (ALL ABILITIES) SOCCER

Ontario Soccer embraces opportunities for participation in soccer for all and there are a range of types of soccer available geared to people with physical or intellectual disabilities. These include blind soccer (5v5), Paralympic soccer (7v7), Deaf soccer (11v11 and futsal), Special Olympics soccer, wheelchair soccer and amputee soccer. Some community soccer clubs offer these all-abilities soccer opportunities directly, and so does Ontario Soccer.



BEACH SOCCER

Beach soccer is played 5v5 and on sand, simulating the beaches around the world where the game was established, particularly in South America. The rules are modified to account for the sandy surface and it is played barefoot with a softer ball to facilitate acrobatic skills and aerial play. It is a recent innovation of soccer in Ontario, and you will not find many community soccer clubs offering it, mostly due to lack of access to beach surfaces to play on.



WALKING SOCCER

Walking soccer is geared to senior (55+) individuals where running and competing physically in regular soccer activities may pose a potential risk of injury. The game is played with running disallowed and players walking instead. No physical contact is permitted and the ball cannot go above head height. With the game played at a much slower pace, it can be enjoyed socially by less active players for whom mobility has become difficult.



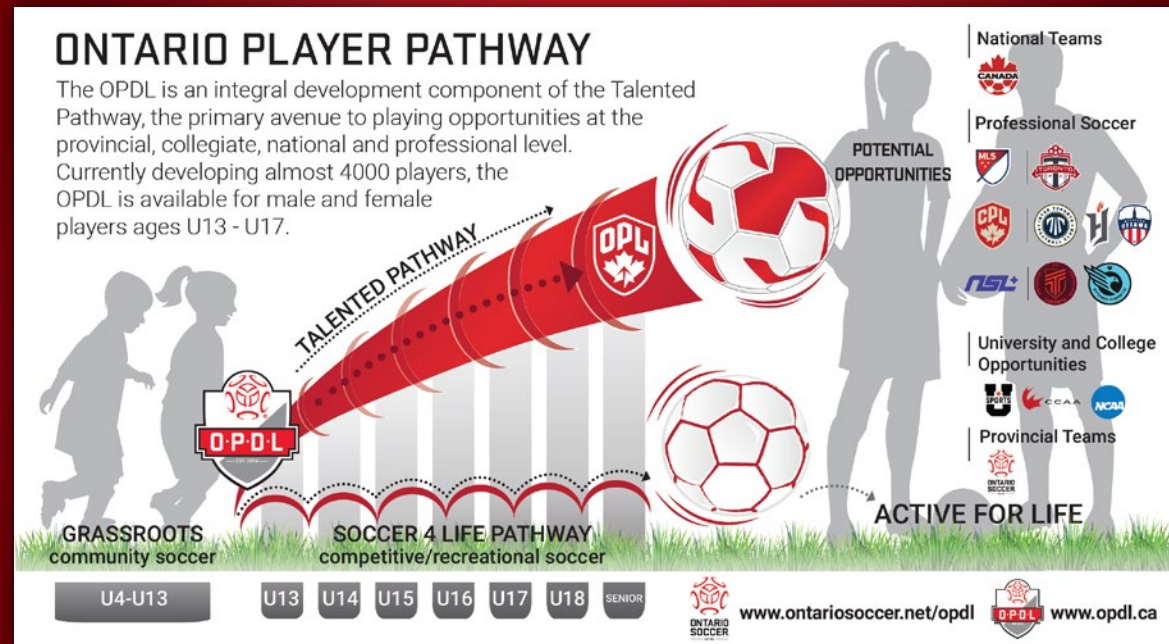
How Players Develop And Grow With Ontario Soccer

In Canada, a lot of work has been done trying to find a way to give players the best opportunities to grow and develop as players, while keeping the game fun for everyone. We have found that many kids have stopped playing in the past because of parents or coaches behaving badly at games and taking the results of the game too seriously. For some, winning games are more important at young age groups than teaching the kids how to play and making sure they are having fun and want to return.

This changed around 15-20 years ago, when Canada Soccer issued a framework to develop youth players called [Long Term Player Development – Wellness To World Cup](#). In this document, changes to rules and game formats were introduced, particularly for children at important stages of early childhood development (particularly 3 to 12 year olds).



Ontario Soccer has been supporting the Long Term Player Development framework since it was introduced and has used it to create its own 'Player Pathway', which outlines clearly how soccer changes in how it is taught and played as children grow physically and mentally.



*Updated December 2025

Ontario Player Development League (OPDL)

To learn more visit: ontariosoccer.net/player-talented-pathway

Long Term Player Development – Wellness To World Cup link:

https://canadasoccer.com/wp-content/uploads/resources/Pathway/EN/CSA_2009_WellnessWorldCup_EN.pdf



Grassroots Soccer

(players are 3-12 years old)

In these early years, our goal is to get as many kids kicking a soccer ball as possible and falling in love with the game, as so many of us have around the world – including you, right? At these young ages, when kids are still developing physically and mentally, all players are treated the same and given the same opportunities. You'll find soccer programs to be centred around fun, including everyone, making friends and teaching basic skills with the ball so the kids can enjoy playing as they get older.

At very young age groups, boys and girls play together, and sometimes age groups are combined (particularly in smaller Clubs). There are no league standings, no official 'winning and losing', no cups and trophies (except for participation medals) and the scores of the game are not recorded. Referees are only introduced and rules enforced when the players are eight years old. This may seem like it is taking an important element of the game away. But we have seen that, in doing this, parents and coaches place less pressure and stress on the young players to win and the kids have fun and want to play more.

Soccer 4 (For) Life Pathway

(players 13 years old and beyond)

When kids move into their teenage years, most players will want to continue to play casually for fun with their friends and Club mates, rather than train intensely several times a week and play competitively. Those who take this option (around 90% of all players at this age), enter the 'Soccer 4 (For) Life' pathway.

This path gives players the opportunity to continue to play soccer in some way into adulthood if they choose. Players play in leagues between Clubs or within with their Club (called 'House Leagues') where the aim is just to have fun. However, the modifications to the rules and game format that were put in place for the young kids are removed as the kids grow through youth years and the full 11v11 game you will be familiar with begins. Programs consist of a weekly game and some training, maybe one or two sessions a week at most. Coaches are generally all volunteer coaches, who are trained and developed by the Technical Director of your Club.



Talented Pathway

(players are 13 years old and beyond)

Some players fall in love with the game so much that they want to train to play at a highly competitive level, often with dreams of becoming professional soccer players and playing for Canada! Opportunities for these players to pursue and fulfil these dreams are possible! Many of Canada's most successful players are from families who were newcomers to Ontario at one point.

Players who have the passion, commitment and talent to pursue these more competitive soccer opportunities enter what is called the 'Talented Pathway'. This pathway starts when kids are 12 years old and can be selected into the [Ontario Player Development League \(OPDL\)](#). This league is not really a league. It is more like an advanced training program for Ontario's top youth soccer talent, where the games that are played are really part of their training more than trophies to win at all costs. Soccer at this level isn't for everyone. The commitment for the players and parents is high. Training will be at least four evenings per week and all year round. Games run from May until October, but are located all around Ontario, so there is more travel involved. And participation is much more expensive than for Soccer 4 (For) Life programs, as there is more training, more games, and coaches are professionally paid and must be highly qualified.

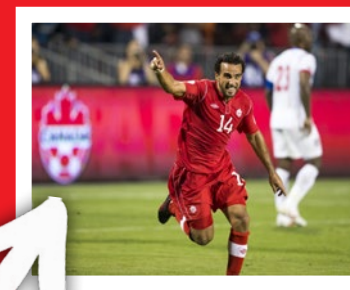
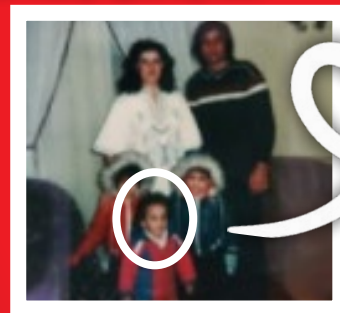


Only certain Clubs that are structured enough to support this level of training and competition are granted a licence to participate in the OPDL and there are currently 27 licence holders, mostly in the Toronto and Ottawa areas. So not everywhere in Ontario will have access to the OPDL, especially if you are in a remote part of Ontario. However, Ontario Soccer does scout areas where OPDL licence holder Clubs do not exist, so your child will have the opportunity to be spotted for higher level opportunities.

When players reach the end of their youth years, the OPDL is replaced with Ontario Premier League, which is a high performance league for young adults to continue their advanced soccer development from the OPDL and hopefully graduate into university scholarships, or even professional soccer careers in Canada's professional soccer leagues, the Canadian Premier League (men) and the Northern Super League (women). Talent at this level can also pursue professional soccer careers outside of Canada and international soccer opportunities for Canada.

"Moving from Guyana was difficult but exciting one as we were happy to start a new life in Canada but, like most people, didn't know what to expect. It was through sports that we found community and felt more at home as a lot of families we encountered through soccer were having very similar experiences as immigrants to Canada. Soccer and sports in general (as my kids played many sports) will always hold special memories for us as a family and I can recall the fun that my kids had as well the quality time we were able to share as a family."

- Carol De Rosario
Mother of Dwayne De Rosario



"Soccer played a pivotal role in my childhood. Growing up in such a widely diverse community as Scarborough taught me how to appreciate learning many different cultures with the many similarities we shared as humanity. I have such gratitude for all the sacrifices my parents made leaving their home in Guyana to create a better life for our family. I shared it that day I was selected to represent Canada. I never looked back from then on, but I will always remember the journey."

- Dwayne De Rosario
former Canadian Soccer International &
Toronto FC Captain



How You Can Get Involved!

Find Your Community Club

To get involved in soccer in Ontario, the first thing you should do is find your local soccer clubs and choose one to join that is best for you and the needs of you and your family. Through your Club, you will be able to get access to all kinds of ways to get involved, as we outline below and even offer some financial assistance for costs that you might not get help with without a Club's support. So reach out to your local Clubs today! There are many to select from, particularly in and around major cities and towns in Ontario.

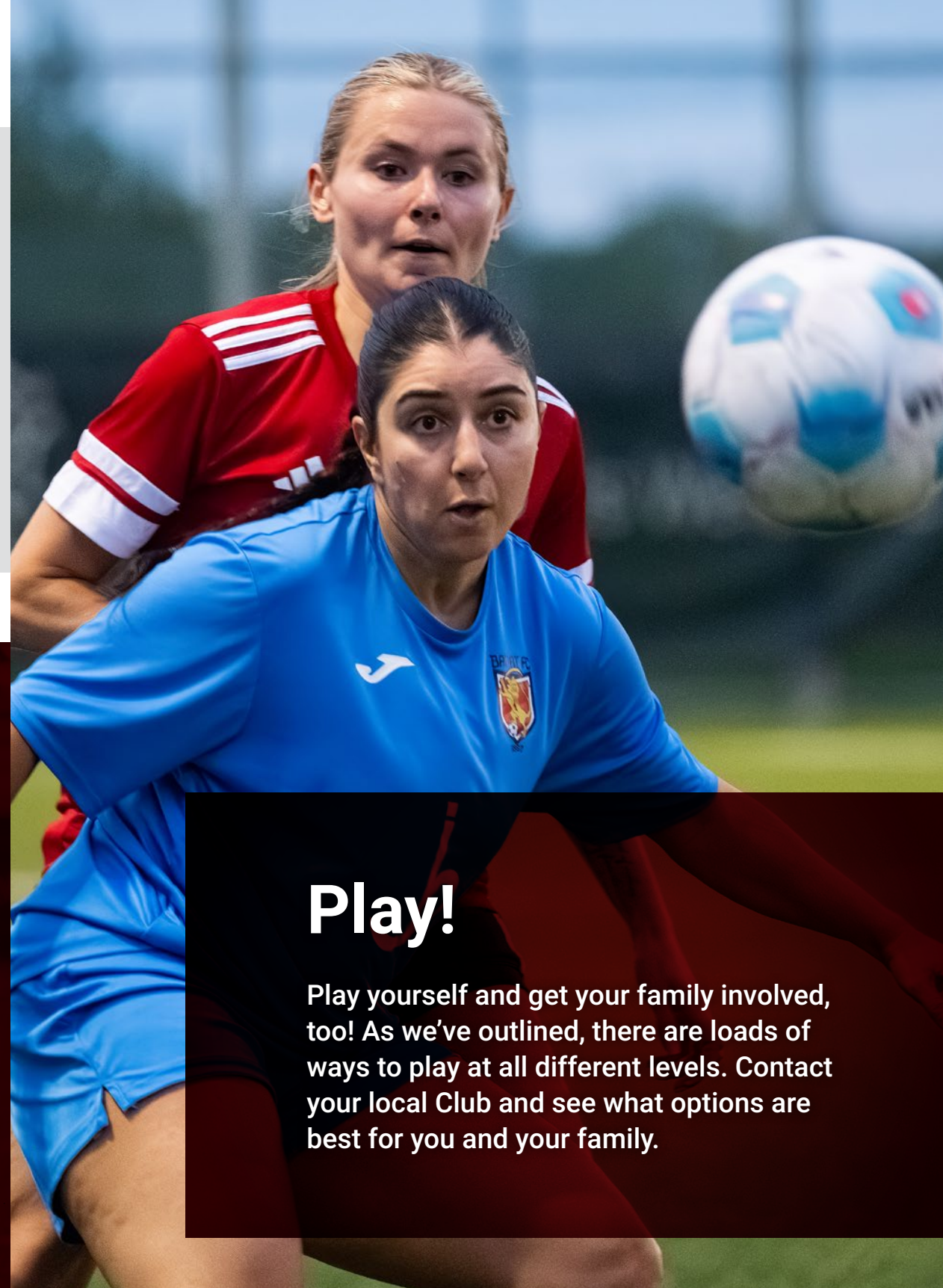
Contact us at HelpDesk@ontariosoccer.net or call (905) 264 - 9390 to find your nearest Clubs and how you can get involved.





Ways To Participate

Once you find your Club, you'll see there are many different ways to get involved. You can choose one, or several options to pursue at the same time if you like! Here are a few of the main ways you can participate:



"We immigrated to Canada in October 2021 — myself and my five children. When we arrived, we felt happy and excited to begin a new life, especially for the sake of my children's future.

Through Immigrant Services Guelph-Wellington, we learned about the Guelph Soccer program and were able to register the children to start learning how to play.

Getting involved in soccer helped my children build a sense of community and taught them how to make friends outside of school.

Now, they continue to play soccer both at school and in our community — and it brings them so much joy."

- Eyerusalem H.
(Originally from Eritrea, Africa)



Play!

Play yourself and get your family involved, too! As we've outlined, there are loads of ways to play at all different levels. Contact your local Club and see what options are best for you and your family.



Coach!

If you've played soccer before and want to pass your knowledge of the game on to the next generation, then your local Club will want to talk to you about coaching! Clubs are always in need of quality volunteer coaches, especially those with good experience playing the game. You can coach entry-level fun soccer with very young kids or focus on skills training with kids aged 8-12 years old when they learn best! You can also coach teens or adults if you prefer. Most coaches are volunteers, but there are opportunities for you to get paid and coach professionally if you coach at higher player development levels and have advanced coaching qualifications. All you have to do is contact your Club and ask how to get started and how they can support you.

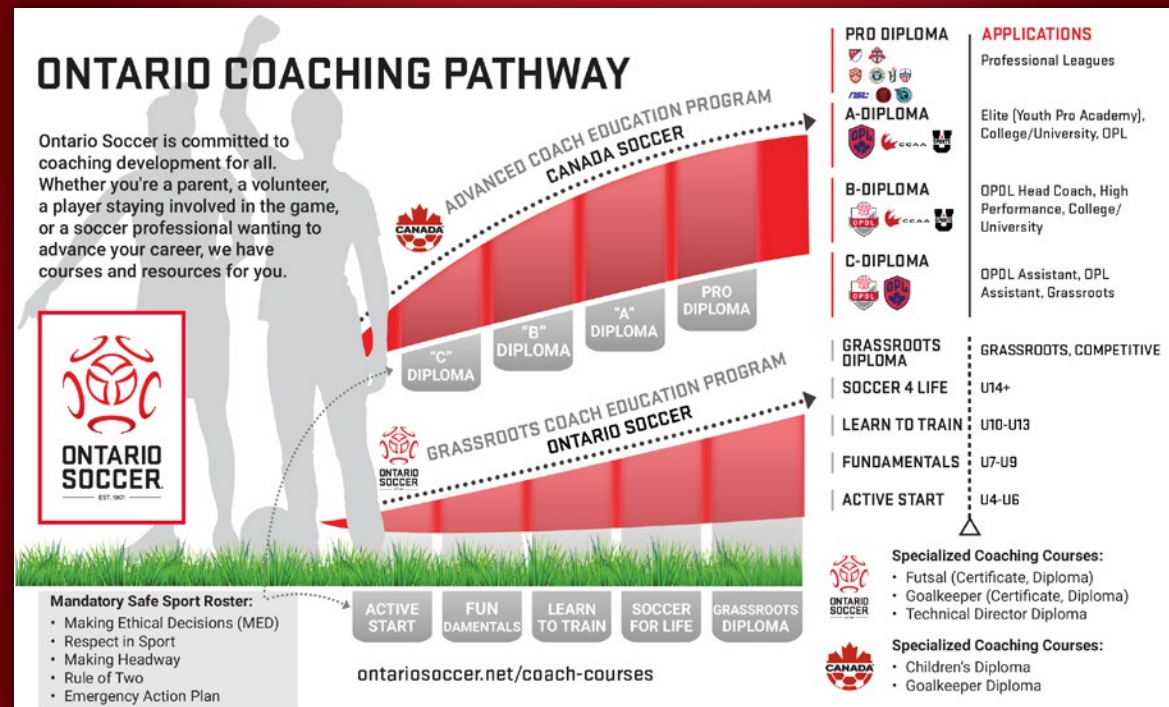
What do I need to coach?

Coaching Certification

To coach soccer in Ontario, you are not required to have coaching licenses if you are coaching very young children who are just being introduced to the game. However, it is mandatory that you take basic coaching courses that are best suited for the type of soccer you want to coach.



In Canada, coaching courses exist that are developed in line with the Long Term Player Development model for developing young players that we mentioned earlier in this Guide. These courses are created by Canada Soccer but are run in Ontario by qualified instructors by Ontario Soccer.



*Updated December 2025



Qualifications vary in cost and time commitment depending on the level you want to coach at. Qualifications to coach very young kids (Active Start, Fundamentals) are relatively short and

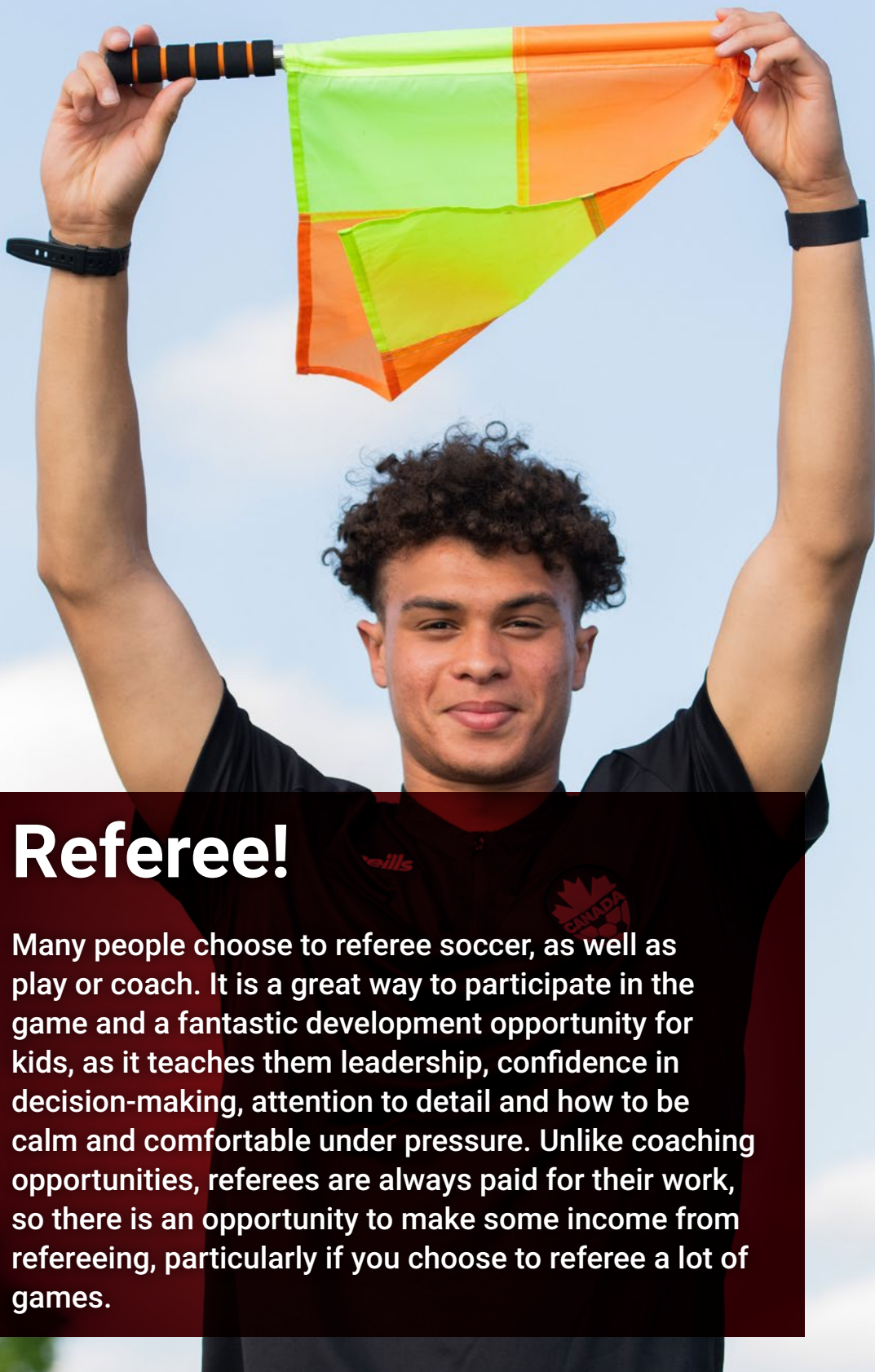
inexpensive and are focused on activities you can coach to teach basic skills to young kids in a way that makes it fun for them and their parents. More advanced diploma-level qualifications are more complex, intense and require more commitment in cost and time invested. However, acquiring qualifications at these advanced levels improve your chances of getting paid to coach and are mandatory for you to coach in advanced development programs such as the Ontario Player Development League. Specialized coaching courses also exist for specific soccer items, such as goalkeeping, futsal and coach leadership.

Criminal Record And Vulnerable Sector Checks

To coach soccer in Ontario, you will be required to undertake a criminal record check to show you do not have a criminal history. If you want to coach children, you will also need to complete a vulnerable sector check, which shows that you have no criminal history in relation to children. These checks are carried out with all coaches across Canada (not just Ontario) to ensure that our kids are safe and entrusted in the care of dependable, law-abiding people.

Criminal record and vulnerable sector checks are available through your local or regional police authority. Some commercial companies manage them, but charge more than the police authorities for their services. Ask your Club about how to obtain your checks. Many Clubs can provide financial assistance and may fully cover the costs related to obtaining these records.





Referee!

Many people choose to referee soccer, as well as play or coach. It is a great way to participate in the game and a fantastic development opportunity for kids, as it teaches them leadership, confidence in decision-making, attention to detail and how to be calm and comfortable under pressure. Unlike coaching opportunities, referees are always paid for their work, so there is an opportunity to make some income from refereeing, particularly if you choose to referee a lot of games.

What do I need to referee?

Referee Qualifications

In Ontario, refereeing is very similar to coaching in that there are different pathways you can follow, depending on what level of refereeing (or 'officiating') you want to pursue. To qualify as an accredited referee, you must take referee courses that are run by Ontario Soccer and its district/regional affiliates. These courses teach the basics of how to officiate games and test new referees' knowledge of the Laws of the Game and how to implement them in game situations. These courses are run routinely around the province by qualified instructors, especially in the spring as we gear up for the summer outdoor season ahead. Learn more about soccer opportunities at: ontariosoccer.net/match-official-courses.



Game Leaders

Large youth soccer clubs have their own referee development departments and in-house instructors, who will be able to provide you with a lot of support as a new referee.

Once you have your qualifications, you will be assigned games to officiate, usually starting with younger age groups. You may be asked to be a 'game leader', which is not an official referee, but someone who is on field with young kids helping them understand the laws of the game during play.



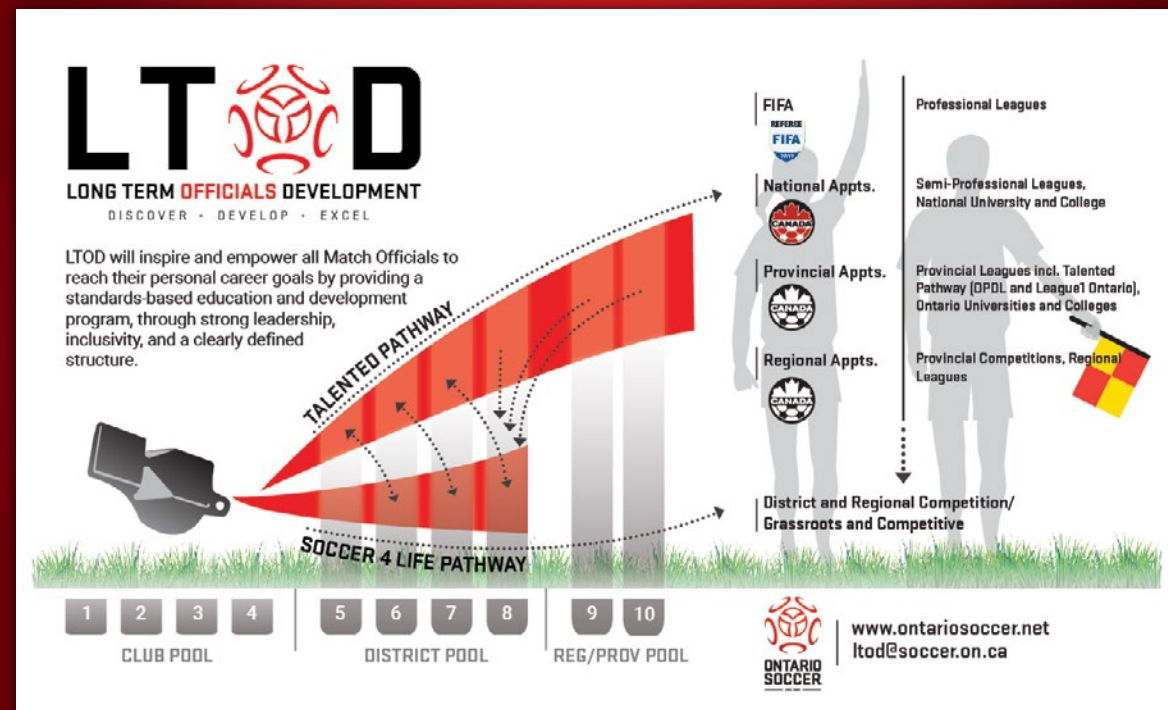
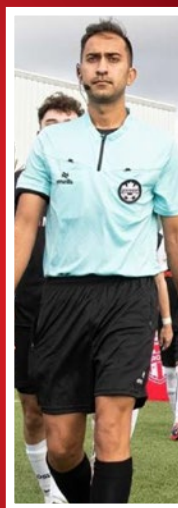
Game leaders are used in the years before official referees are introduced at age eight years old. It helps both young players and parents get used to officials enforcing rules during the game, which they will not have experienced in earlier years. Game leading is a great way for you to get used to refereeing and get comfortable with the game environment, before you progress to full refereeing roles. This position may be paid or volunteer-based depending on the Club.

"Refereeing soccer has never been just a profession for me. It has been a way of life that carried me from stadiums and soccer atmospheres across Iran and Asia all the way to Canada.

With all its challenges and ups and downs, refereeing has always been my motivation to keep moving forward, including now, one year into my journey as a newcomer.

I'm grateful to Ontario Soccer and Canada Soccer for giving me this opportunity."

- Saman Soltani
(Originally from Iran)



**Updated January 2025*

Mentoring

When you do start taking official referee positions, ask your Club about mentoring opportunities. Mentoring is where an experienced referee accompanies you to and watches you officiate your game. After the game, they will give you feedback and advice on how to improve. They will also be there to help if any problems arise during the game that you are not comfortable managing yet.

Mentors are usually assigned to referees who are starting their refereeing careers, so they have the support they need to be successful. However, not all Clubs have the resources to appoint mentors, so be sure to ask your Club about what support you can expect to receive.





Volunteer!

If you don't play, coach, or referee soccer, there is still an important place for you in the game here in Ontario.

All Clubs are constantly in need of volunteers to help run their Clubs as effectively but also as efficiently as possible.

Clubs are always trying to keep the cost of playing as low as possible and rely on volunteers to do this and avoid having to hire paid staff that may increase registration fees.

The most common way people volunteer is to coach, but there are many other different ways you can volunteer that are fun, rewarding and help you get to know great people in your Club and the community. Here are a few volunteer roles that you should talk to your Club about:



Director / Board Member

Not-for-profit soccer Clubs must have a Board of Directors, that manages the Club's overall direction and oversees its proper management. Members of the Board of Directors (called 'Directors') are usually elected by the Club's members every year. If you have experience in business, finance, risk management or legal, your skills will be much needed by your Club's Board of Directors.



Committee Member

Most Boards of Directors also have committees of volunteers, through which they manage much of the administrative work of running the Club. If you are a hands-on person who likes to get involved in getting things done, join one of these committees! They will welcome your help and they are a fun way to get involved in the Club.



Team Manager

Most competitive soccer teams, particularly at youth level, have a volunteer Team Manager. The Manager works alongside the coach to manage all the administrative and logistical affairs of the team, so the coach can focus on coaching the players. If you are well-organized and like hands-on work, this volunteer opportunity is for you!

Event Organizer

Your Club will no doubt run several events every year as part of their normal soccer year. These may range from summer outdoor season launch events, to banquets and awards nights, to annual member meetings or soccer festivals and jamborees. The Club will need help running these events, both in planning them and running them on the day. Ask your Club what events they run and how you can help and they will be sure to accept your support!



Convener

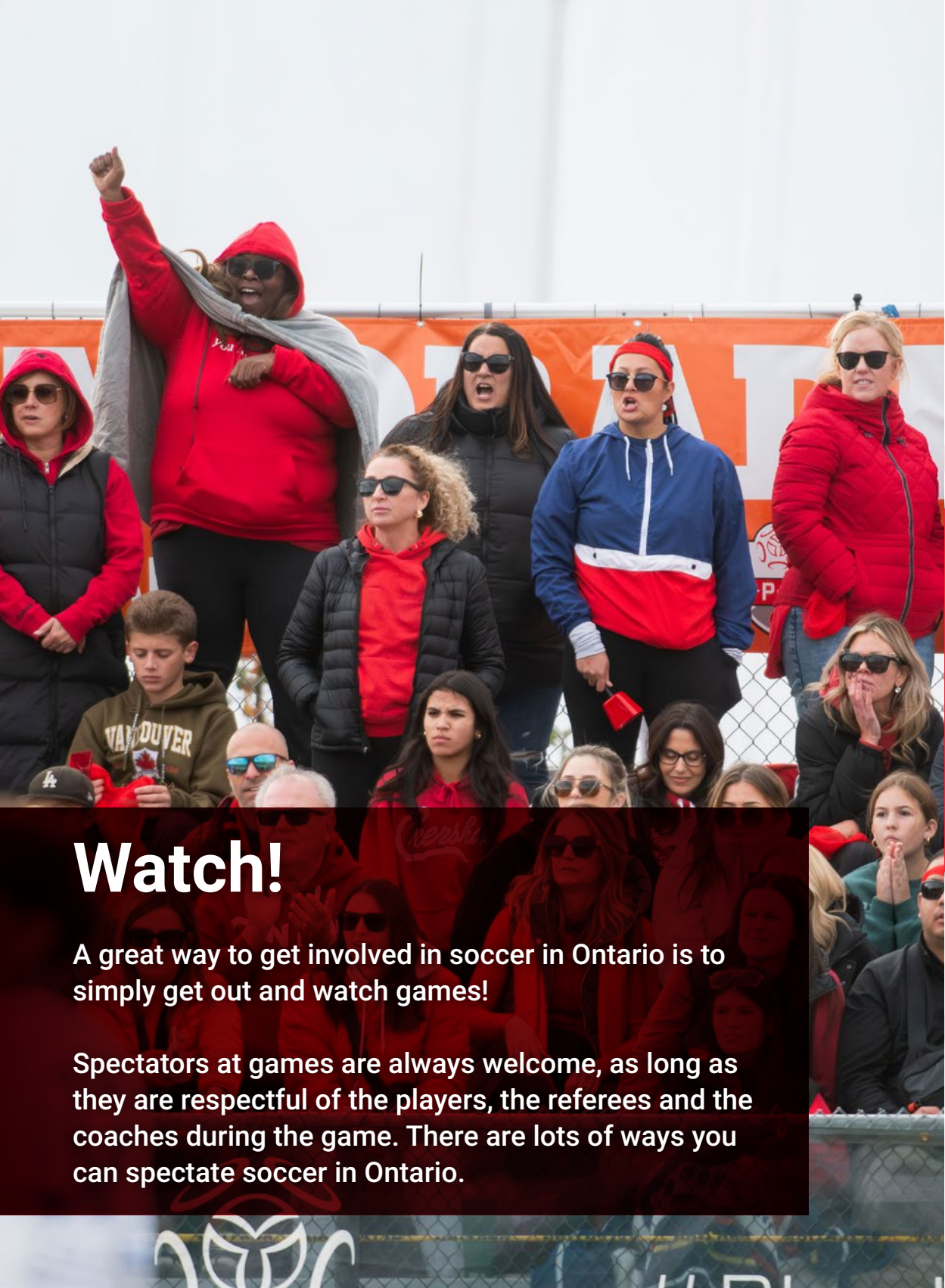
If your soccer club is large, with over 500 players, it will likely have its own internal recreational league called a 'House League'. In very large Clubs, that have over 2,000 players registered, the management of these House Leagues can take a lot of work. So in these Clubs, volunteer 'conveners' are appointed. These conveners manage the running of these leagues – they roster the teams, schedule the fields, oversee referee assignment, manage scores and standings (if they are at the age where this is done) and deal with parent queries. Convening is great fun and a wonderful way to get to know all the parents of the kids who your child is playing with and against in their House League.



Fundraiser

All soccer clubs need financial support, so if you have expertise or interest in raising funds for either your child's soccer team, or the Club at large, your Club will want to hear from you! Fundraising can mean speaking to local businesses about sponsoring teams, or asking parents or other individuals to donate to help your soccer club. This may be helping people in your who don't have a lot of money cover the cost of their child registering to play, or raising money to fund a soccer team's travel to a competition or tournament.





Watch!

A great way to get involved in soccer in Ontario is to simply get out and watch games!

Spectators at games are always welcome, as long as they are respectful of the players, the referees and the coaches during the game. There are lots of ways you can spectate soccer in Ontario.

Ontario Player Development League (OPDL)



If you are excited to watch Ontario top youth players, why not take a look at some OPDL games? You can watch OPDL games for free, just by going to the game and watching from the sideline or designated spectator area. OPDL games run all through the summer and into early Fall.

You'll find the fixture schedule on opdl.ca

Ontario Premier League (OPL)

If you are interested in watching young adult talent that is pushing through to professional teams and the Canadian national team squads, Ontario Premier League is the place for you. Spectators can often watch for free or charged a small fee, and games are scheduled all through the summer around Ontario.



Visit oplsoccer.ca for more information.

Canadian Premier League (CPL)



This is Canada's only national men's professional soccer league. If you want to watch Canada's top men's talent that is playing exclusively in Canada, this is where to go! Currently, three of the eight teams in the League are in Ontario – Atlético Ottawa (based in Ottawa), Forge FC (based in Hamilton) and Inter Toronto FC (based in Toronto).

Visit canpl.ca for more information.

Northern Super League (NSL)

This is Canada's first and only national women's professional soccer league. Now in its second year of operation, the League has two of its six teams based in Ontario – AFC Toronto and Ottawa Rapid FC.



Visit nsl.ca for more information.

Major League Soccer (MLS)



This is North America's main men's professional soccer league. Although most of the teams are based in the USA, Canada has three teams who compete in the league, in Vancouver, Montréal and Toronto. Toronto's team – Toronto FC – plays in downtown Toronto and represents the highest level of men's soccer you will get to see in Ontario (outside of international soccer fixtures).

Visit mlssoccer.com for more information.

Canadian National Teams

Aside from Club soccer, you can cheer on our Canadian national men's and women's teams at all levels as they battle in FIFA and Concacaf international competition. International games hosted in Ontario are played at either BMO Field in downtown Toronto (where Toronto FC play their home games) or at TD Place Stadium in Ottawa. Information on upcoming games can be found at Canada Soccer.



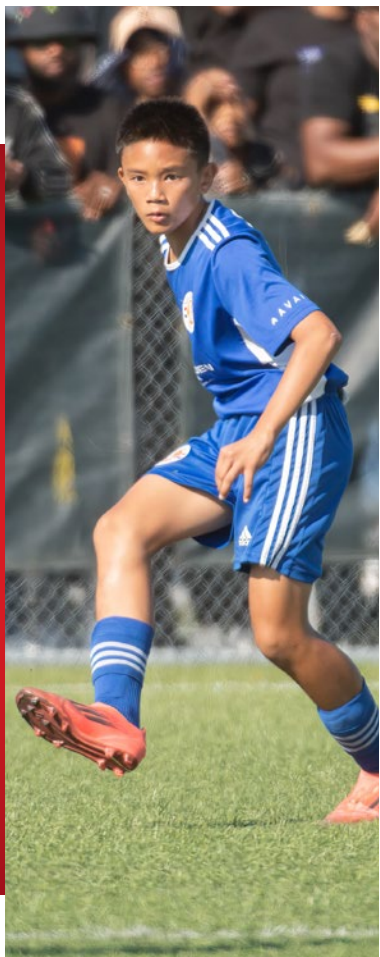
Visit canadasoccer.com/national for more information.



What Does It Cost To Join Ontario Soccer?

In Ontario, amateur soccer operates on what we call a 'pay to play' model. That means community soccer clubs are funded by fees they charge for people to register to play in the soccer programs they offer. The Clubs use these registration fees to pay for the costs they must cover to run the soccer programs, which include soccer field rental, player affiliation fees, uniforms and equipment, league fees, coaching fees and costs to run the administration of their Club.

This means the registration fees that the Clubs charge will vary a lot, depending on how much it costs to run them. Basic recreation soccer programs for very young kids have lower registration fees as they are relatively low cost to run, compared to an Ontario Player Development League program (which involves more frequent and intensive training, paid coaches, higher league fees, etc).



Recreational ('House League') Registration Fees

Generally, you can expect to pay \$300-\$400 for a child or adult to participate in a 10-week season of indoor or outdoor recreational soccer. This fee usually includes a uniform (shirt, shorts and socks), and a soccer ball to practice with.

Often, soccer clubs will have promotional offers or discounts from their sponsors that you can enjoy with your child at local restaurants and businesses.

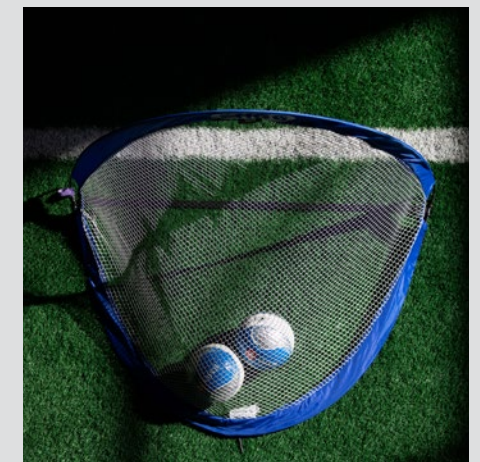
Competitive Registration Fees

Depending on how often your child's team trains, you can expect to pay \$1,000-\$2,000 for a season of competitive soccer (outdoor or indoor). This includes the player match uniform and training kit, league fees, facilities fees, and coaching costs. Advanced and highly intense player development programs like the Ontario Player Development League will likely cost \$4,000-\$6,000 per year and present a significant financial commitment to the player's parent(s).

Other Costs To Consider

Aside from the player's registration fees, there are other costs you will likely need to pay for you or your child to participate:

- Soccer boots and shin guards
- Goalkeeper gloves
- Water bottles and snacks
- Travel costs (which may involve accommodation for games that are out-of-town)
- Injury management (outside of what insurance claims will cover)



Financial Support

If you have come from a country where participation in soccer is generally either free or low cost, these fees may come as a surprise to you.

The **GOOD NEWS** is that many not-for-profit soccer clubs have financial assistance programs set up to ensure that families who need financial assistance can afford to have their kids play soccer. These programs vary from Club-to-Club, and have different eligibility criteria.

There are other financial assistance programs in place through charitable organizations who raise money to help kids overcome financial barriers to play sports:



Visit KidSport
kidsportcanada.ca



Jumpstart
Bon départ

Visit Jumpstart
jumpstart.canadantire.ca

Ontario Soccer also has a scholarship program for players in the Ontario Player Development League who find it difficult to meet the participation costs of the League due to financial reasons.



Visit opdl.ca/athlete-scholarship-program for more information.

If you feel the costs involved in participating are difficult for you, don't walk away without telling anyone. Your Club will be very eager to have you involved and there may be options for you that they can only offer you if they are aware of your situation. So speak to your coach about financial assistance opportunities, and who to speak to in your Club. They will do all they can to ensure your child gets to play!





**ONTARIO
SOCCER.**

EST. 1901

Proud member of the global soccer community.



Concacaf

FIFA

Play. Inspire. Unite.

ontariosoccer.net | HelpDesk@ontariosoccer.net | (905) 264 - 9390



Play. Inspire. Unite.

ontariosoccer.net | HelpDesk@ontariosoccer.net | (905) 264 - 9390