



SOPA recognizes the challenges presented to Regions/Programs and coaches in identifying a sufficient number of athletes within a narrowed age group who wish to play a particular sport. This is the reason SOPA has designed a process to allow an athlete whose skill, strength, speed, size and social maturity fall outside that of other participants in his/her age group. Please remember, that in submitting a request to permit an elementary, middle or high school athlete to move “up” or “down” an age group level, that athlete must meet the age difference criteria; see Exemption Eligibility Chart on next page for details.

### **Exemption Request Policies:**

1. Exemption process **MUST** be followed, and all materials submitted in completion, including Team Rating Form (completed within your Attendance Tracker).
2. A team may submit up to 3 exemption requests (exemptions cannot equal 50% or more of your roster).
3. A team may not consist of individuals from more than 2 age groupings (i.e.: a team is not able to have 1 player playing “up” and another player playing “down”)

### **How do you apply for an Exemption based on athlete’s age:**

#### **STEP 1: Certified Head Coach submits [Team Sport Age Group Exemption Request Form](#) – Deadline is by Seasonal Eligibility date (refer to SOPA calendar for these exact dates each season/year)**

- Please submit a request as soon as possible so a decision can be made, and the athlete can be placed at another training site if necessary.
- Form must be approved by 3 individuals: Team Leader/Local Program Manager, Coach and Athlete requesting age exemption. If an athlete is under 18 years of age, the parent/guardian must also approve submission of the form.
- The coach must submit a sports-specific Team Rating form within their Attendance Tracker indicating that a player’s skills, tactical knowledge and competitive behavior are aligned with his/her teammates. If the coach is unable to collect this information by the deadline the RSD will work with the coach to complete it for final submission (copies of sports-specific Team Rating form can be found on the SOPA website, under Sports Offered, but must be submitted for review within the Attendance Tracker).

#### **STEP 2: Regional Sport Director evaluate request and submit to VP, Sports – Deadline for approval/denial of exemption requests is 2 weeks after Seasonal Eligibility deadline (refer to SOPA calendar for these exact dates each season/year)**

- Regional Sport Director must review and approve; approval signifies due diligence has been conducted to ensure this individual is appropriate for the team and there are no health or safety concerns for this athlete, their teammates and their potential opponents. This may include a site visit to meet the athlete, assess health and safety including individual’s skill, strength, speed, size and social maturity and ensure meaningful involvement is achieved. RSD/RED if unable to conduct an on-site visit themselves, may assign an evaluator to conduct the on-site visit.
- Sport-specific Team Rating form and on-site evaluation will be utilized to help determine a player’s skills, tactical knowledge and competitive behavior. This system will be the primary basis to determine the appropriateness of the request.
- RSD will update Status column on internal tracking document (Monday board) with their decision
  - RSD’s must gain approval from Regional Executive Director and should include comments to support the approval/denial within the conversation section on the Monday board.

- Link to Attendance Tracker with completed Team Rating Form must be included as a link on the Monday board

**STEP 3: Within 72 hours (3 business days) of receiving exemption request, VP, Sports communicates decision with RSD, Regional Executive Director and Head Coach.**

**Questions please contact your Regional Sport Director**

## Team Sport Age Group Exemption Eligibility Chart

	<b>Eligibility to play <u>up</u> an age group</b>	<b>Eligibility to play <u>down</u> an age group</b>
Elementary: 8-11 years old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is determined the athlete's skill, strength, speed, size and social maturity are more comparable to the Middle School age group;</li> <li>• It is determined there is no risk to the health and safety of any athlete on that team;</li> <li>• There is no more than a 5-year age difference between the athlete moving up to the Middle School Age Group and the oldest athlete on the Middle Age Group team.</li> </ul>	<p>Unable to request exemption. Athletes/Unified Partners must be 8 years of age to compete.</p>
Middle School aged: 12-15 years old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is determined the athlete's skill, strength, speed, size and social maturity are more comparable to the High School age group;</li> <li>• It is determined there is no risk to the health and safety of any athlete on that team;</li> <li>• There is no more than a 5-year age difference between the athlete moving up to the High School Age Group and the oldest athlete on the High School Age Group team.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is determined the athlete's skill, strength, speed, size and social maturity are more comparable to the Elementary age group;</li> <li>• It is determined there is no risk to the health and safety of any athlete on that team;</li> <li>• There is no more than a 5-year age difference between the athlete moving down to the Elementary group and the youngest athlete on the Elementary Age Group team.</li> </ul>
High School aged: 16-21 years old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is determined the athlete's skill, strength, speed, size and social maturity are more comparable to the Young Adult age group;</li> <li>• It is determined there is no risk to the health and safety of any athlete on that team;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is determined the athlete's skill, strength, speed, size and social maturity are more comparable to the Middle School age group;</li> <li>• It is determined there is no risk to the health and safety of any athlete on that team;</li> <li>• There is no more than a 5-year age difference between the athlete moving down to the Middle School Group and the youngest athlete on the Middle School Age Group team.</li> </ul>
Adults: over 22	<p>Unable to request exemption, there are no higher Age Groups at this time.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is determined the athlete's skill, strength, speed, size and social maturity are more comparable to the High School group;</li> <li>• It is determined there is no risk to the health and safety of any athlete on that team</li> <li>• The age variance between the youngest and oldest member of the team should be no more than 20 years.</li> </ul>