



As SJSL, SJGSL league and club leaders make decisions about your future affiliation, Northern Counties Soccer Association (NCSA) wishes to share our recent experiences that you may find helpful. NCSA is comprised of 85 clubs, 20,000+ players and 2,500+ coaches; any change is significant and needs to be well planned. After six months of discussions with sanctioning bodies, the NCSA Board voted to apply for league affiliation with NJYS this past December.

The decision to affiliate with NJ Youth Soccer came down to being about an alignment of mission and vision about what we need locally. The NCSA Board believes that the 2026 FIFA World Cup will drive participation in youth soccer to new levels and we will need more local backing for programs such as coaching development, referee development and of course, competitive development. As a very large league administered by volunteers, that added local resources will help us continue to develop the league and related programs to support the anticipated growth in membership. NJYS' mission "to connect and empower the youth soccer community" resonates.

For the past couple of years, NJYS has provided proactive local leadership, regardless of affiliation. We shared best practices for rules of competition, discipline, and coaching and referee development. While we had no formal alignment with NJYS, we were invited to participate in the quarterly all-league roundtables; the yellow armband initiative for youth referees and expanded access to coaching certification programs. Through these experiences we have been able to understand the vision for NJYS and believe that it is more closely aligned with the vision of NCSA.

In the last 30-60 days, we have been diligently focused on the transition process and have learned the following work with the NJYS staff:

- Throughout the vetting and decision process, NJ Youth Soccer has delivered or over delivered on its commitments.
- When flexibility was needed, NJ Youth Soccer listened to every request and made reasonable accommodation.
- When challenges arose, NJ Youth Soccer demonstrated a knowledgeable and solutions-oriented approach.
- When deadlines required time or attention at night or over the weekends, NJ Youth Soccer was accessible and delivered.
- When creativity was needed, NJ Youth Soccer has shown an ability to think outside of the box.

NCSA is committed to our membership that is largely community and volunteer based. We continue to believe that NJ Youth Soccer provides value and demonstrates a genuine commitment to our local needs.

We understand the magnitude of this decision and NCSA look forward to being members in one of the largest state associations in the country and helping to grow participation in the state with arguably the greatest history of developing a soccer culture and world class talent.

Regards,

Bob Heinrich – President NCSA on behalf of the Board of Directors of the NCSA.