



USA Football: Let parents, not lawmakers, decide whether kids should play tackle football

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By: **Scott Hallenbeck, CEO of USA Football** | February 2, 2018

While Super Bowl LII is poised to be the most-watched TV broadcast of 2018 on Sunday, football's brightest days have yet to come.

However, for future generations of young athletes, that future requires forward thinking and a commitment to important standards and education that are changing behavior for the better.

Unfortunately, **lawmakers in Illinois and New York** do not believe parents should own the decision to choose tackle football for their children age 12 or younger.

USA Football believes parents – not government officials – are best suited to discern what sports their children can play and at what age they may play them.

We care about our sport, but we care more about our children who play it.

USA Football establishes a new and better “normal” in how youth football is taught, practiced and played.

Offering more choices to play, learn and enjoy the sport is USA Football’s view, supported by medical and sports development experts through our adoption of the U.S. Olympic Committee’s American Development Model (ADM). The USOC’s ADM can advance our kids’ joy of playing football, deliver a positive experience and strengthen physical literacy.

This translates to more options and entry points into the game, spanning flag; Rookie Tackle, a small-sided version of the sport focused on skill development; and traditional 11-player tackle.

“Shrinking the field and having modified tackle programs allows young athletes to grow into the game,” USOC Director of Coaching Development Chris Snyder told The Associated Press in January. “This philosophy fits very well with football.”

“What the ADM means is you should be doing sports in an age-specific and developmentally sound manner, not just physical but emotional and mental development,” NCAA Chief Medical Officer Dr. Brian Hainline also shared with The Associated Press last month.

“It improves the ability to develop athleticism,” Dr. Hainline added. “USA Football is wise to be doing this.”

More than 115,000 moms and dads spanning all 50 states were certified by USA Football in 2017 to coach their kids. This is a true commitment, and the number of certified coaches continues to grow. USA Football believes that every youth football coach – be it in flag, Rookie Tackle, or 11-player – should be certified before walking on a field.

Today, parents can find more than 10,000 school-based and youth programs that put their children first with USA Football coaching standards supported by the strongest names in sports medicine and the sport. These include the American College of Sports

Medicine, the American Football Coaches Association, the National Athletic Trainers' Association, and others.

USA Football's nationally endorsed youth tackle practice guidelines account for heat acclimatization, limit full contact and are used by schools and youth leagues nationwide. Guidelines encompass USA Football's Levels of Contact – five levels that define and control a drill's speed and intensity to teach skills while reducing fatigue, which also can advance player safety.

More can and is being done to keep kids active and healthy on the field, playing the best version of the sport for them.

Politicians can decide when to run for office.

Parents should decide when their kids run with the ball.

Scott Hallenbeck is the CEO of USA Football. As the sport's national governing body and a member of the U.S. Olympic Committee, USA Football designs and delivers premier educational, developmental and competitive programs to advance and grow the sport.