

# International Clearance

## BACKGROUND

FIFA requires all players over the age of 12, regardless of their ability or citizenship, to receive an international transfer clearance ("ITC") from their former country when they are attempting to register to play soccer in a different country (i.e., the United States). U.S. Soccer is responsible for obtaining that ITC on behalf of all players in the U.S. participating in affiliated leagues.

FIFA, however, prohibits the transfer of players between the ages of 12 to 17 (minors) unless the player meets one of two exceptions:

- (a) The player has moved with his/her parents to the U.S. for reasons other than playing soccer (e.g. work);  
or
- (b) The player and prospective club are both located within 30 miles of an international border.

If the player can prove to FIFA that either of the two exceptions above has been met, U.S. Soccer would be permitted to request the ITC for that minor player. If the player does not meet one of the two exceptions above, the available options to register are listed below.

In 2009, FIFA instituted the FIFA TMS system. TMS is an online method to provide FIFA with documentation to prove that a player fits either of the two exceptions above. Documents are uploaded into FIFA's system and are reviewed by FIFA, who then makes the final determination on whether an ITC request could be fulfilled for a minor player. However, U.S. Soccer has received a limited exemption from FIFA from the requirement to use the electronic FIFA TMS system. U.S. Soccer is now responsible for the documentation, review and determination of whether a player meets either of the two exceptions above. Although required to uphold the same standards as FIFA, U.S. Soccer is able to review the documents on an expedited basis and determine whether an ITC request could be made for a minor player.

## International Transfer Clearance Options

Under FIFA's rules, there are four options by which a player born outside of the U.S. can register with an affiliated league:

1. **Entry Prior to Age 12** - Players who entered the U.S. prior to the age of 12 (regardless of their current age) can supply a copy of an official document to prove that fact (e.g. – report cards, immunization records, doctor records).
2. **First Registration**
  - a. **U.S. Citizens** – U.S. citizens born outside of the U.S. (regardless of current age) may simply complete and sign the First Registration form attesting that the player has never been registered at any level to play soccer in any other country. U.S. Soccer can immediately clear the player.
  - b. **Non-U.S. Citizens** – A player born outside of the U.S., who is currently over the age of 18, may also complete and sign the First Registration form. U.S. Soccer will contact the foreign federation for confirmation, and once that is received, U.S. Soccer can clear the player.
3. **Minors** – Any player currently between the ages of 12 to 17 who is NOT eligible for one of the proceeding methods must prove to U.S. Soccer that he/she meets one of the exceptions (a) or (b) above. Once verified, U.S. Soccer will request the ITC from the former federation. Per FIFA regulations, that federation has up to 30 days to respond after which U.S. Soccer can issue a provisional international transfer clearance.

**ITC Request** – Players 18 years of age and over who are not eligible for the Entry Prior to Age 12 or First Registration options, will need to fill out the ITC Request Form and submit it to U.S. Soccer. U.S. Soccer will then request the ITC from the former federation. Per FIFA regulations, that federation has up to 30 days to respond after which U.S. Soccer can issue a provisional international transfer clearance.

Please contact [Steven Murry](#) with any questions.

## Prior to Age 12

Players who were born outside of the U.S. but entered the country to live prior to their 12<sup>th</sup> birthday simply need to provide proof in order to be cleared to register with U.S. Soccer. The document being used as proof should have the player's name, a date that is prior to the player's 12<sup>th</sup> birthday, and show that the player was taking part in day-to-day life in the United States.

Acceptable forms of proof documentation include, but are not limited to, the following:

- School report cards
- Doctor records
- Immunization records
- Certificate of Baptism
- Previous registration history with a sports program

Unacceptable forms of proof documentation include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Passport entry page
- Class Photo from 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade that does not individually identify each student
- Letter from player/parents verifying the date they moved to the country

In order to be cleared via this method, the player should complete the following steps:

1. Complete the [Prior to 12 Submission Form](#) (.pdf)
2. Obtain a copy of some form of official document that proves the player was living in the United States prior to their 12<sup>th</sup> birthday per examples listed above
3. Send a copy of both the P-12 Form and proof document to League/State Association and U.S. Soccer Federation
4. Player's documentation is reviewed by U.S. Soccer and approval sent to League/State Association. Players should communicate with their State Associations to verify whether clearance has been granted.

## First Registration

**For U.S. Citizens:** U.S. Citizens born outside of the U.S. may be cleared to register by simply completing and signing the First Registration Form. This process is available to all players, regardless of current age and skill level. The player (and guardian, if player is under the age of 18) should complete and sign the First Registration Form (below) and forward the document to their affiliated member and U.S. Soccer. U.S. Soccer will review the document and notify the affiliated member within 5 days whether the player is free to register or not via the First Registration process.

### **Summary**

U.S. Citizens born outside of the U.S. complete the following steps:

1. Fill out the [First Registration Form \(.pdf\)](#)
2. Submit the completed form to State Association/League and U.S. Soccer
3. U.S. Soccer reviews the paperwork and will notify affiliated member if player is clear to register

**For Non-U.S. Citizens:** A player born outside of the U.S. who is currently aged 18 or over may also be cleared to register by the First Registration process, however there is an additional step required. Once the First Registration Form is completed and submitted, U.S. Soccer will contact the foreign federation of the player and inquire whether they have any registrations, at any level, for the player in question. If no response is given within seven (7) days or the foreign federation confirms there was no previous registration, U.S. Soccer will notify the league member that player is free to register. If the foreign federation states, however, that the player had been previously registered, the player cannot use the First Registration method and will have to use one of the other three methods to obtain international clearance.

### **Summary**

Non-U.S. Citizens, complete the following steps:

1. Fill out the [First Registration Form \(.pdf\)](#)
2. Submit the completed form to State Association/League and U.S. Soccer
3. U.S. Soccer will confirm with the foreign federation the accuracy of the form and will inform the State Association/League if the player is clear to register or if other steps should be taken to obtain international clearance via one of the other methods.

## **MINOR ITC APPLICATIONS - FIFA TMS PROCESS**

Anyone player under the age of 18 who is not eligible for the Prior to 12 option, will be required to go through the FIFA TMS process in order to obtain their international transfer clearance.

FIFA's Regulations, state that international transfers of players are only permitted if the player is over the age of 18. There are three exceptions to the rule:

1. The player's **parents** move to the country in which the new club is located for reasons not linked to football.
2. The transfer takes place within the territory of the European Union
3. The player lives and the club wishing to register the player are both located no further than 50km (roughly 30 miles) of an international border

U.S. Soccer will use exceptions #1 and #3, as the second exception deals only with players in Europe.

In 2009, FIFA instituted the FIFA TMS system. It is an online method to provide FIFA with documentation to prove that a player fits either of the two exceptions above. Documents are uploaded into their system and are reviewed by FIFA, who would make the final determination on whether an ITC request could be requested for a minor player. However, U.S. Soccer has received a limited exemption from the requirement to use the electronic FIFA TMS system. U.S. Soccer is now responsible for the document review and determination on whether any player meets either of the two exceptions above. Although required to uphold the same standards as FIFA, U.S. Soccer is able to much more quickly review the documents and determine whether an ITC request could be requested for a minor player.

In order to get registered under this process, the minor player (and parents) should follow these steps:

1. Collect required documentation to prove that the player meets the first of the above-given exceptions:
  1. Player's Passport
  2. Player's Birth Certificate

3. Player's Parents' Passports
  4. Player's Parents' Work Visas (if available)
  5. Player's Parents' Proof of Residence (Water bill, lease agreement, etc.)
  6. Player's Parents' Proof of Employment (Pay Stub, Employment Verification Letter, etc.)
  7. Completed [ITC Request Form](#) (.pdf)  
(For more information on what is required in these documents, please refer to the "[Protection of Minors -Pertinent Facts Document](#)" (.pdf) provided by FIFA)
2. Forward documentation to State Association/League and U.S. Soccer Federation
  3. U.S. Soccer will review documentation and determine whether any exception to the general prohibition by FIFA on the international transfer of minors has been met.
  4. If U.S. Soccer determines that an exception has been met, we will immediately request the player's international clearance from their former federation.
  5. The foreign federation has thirty (30) days to respond to our request.
  6. Once a response is received, U.S. Soccer will notify the State Association/League via e-mail
  7. If no response is received after 30 days, U.S. Soccer will issue a Provisional or temporary clearance, which will allow the player to register immediately, and notify the State Association/League

## **ITC Request Process**

All players age 18 and over participating in affiliated leagues, who are not eligible for the Prior to 12 or First Registration option, will be required to complete the ITC Request Form (ITC 5-11).

The form should be forwarded to the player's State Association/League and U.S. Soccer Federation for processing. U.S. Soccer will then issue a formal ITC Request to their player's former federation.

Per FIFA regulations the foreign Federation has up to 30 days from the date the ITC was formally requested to respond after which U.S. Soccer can issue a provisional international transfer clearance.

In order to complete this process, the player should follow these steps:

1. Complete the [ITC Request Form, including Section B](#) (.pdf)
2. Forward documentation to State Association/League and U.S. Soccer Federation
3. U.S. Soccer will process and request the player's international clearance from their former federation.
4. The foreign federation has up to thirty (30) days to respond to our request.
5. Once a response is received, U.S. Soccer will notify the State Association/League via e-mail
6. If no response is received after 30 days, U.S. Soccer will issue a Provisional or temporary clearance, which will allow the player to register immediately, and notify the State Association/League