



## Age Dispensation Policy

### Introduction

Rugby Canada and all provincial member unions are committed to providing and maintaining a safe, competitive environment. The *Age Dispensation Policy* aims to protect the safety and welfare of age grade rugby players by ensuring that participants with broadly compatible physical development and skill levels play with and against each other.

A dispensation is given to a player to allow them to play in an age grade that they would not usually be able to play in because of their age. The *Age Dispensation Policy* applies to all competitions sanctioned by Rugby Alberta. It focuses on allowing participants to play Rugby safely and not influence game results.

It is important that all people involved in a decision to permit a junior player to participate in a different age category fully understand that Rugby is a contact sport. Like all contact sports, players are exposed to the risk of injury. This risk could be heightened by allowing players to participate in matches organized for a different age category if their physical development, skill level, maturity and experience differ from that of the players he/she will play with or against.

### Eligibility

- 1.1. **To be eligible for senior contact rugby**, players must be turning 18 years of age during the calendar year, providing they comply with the procedures set out below and receive approval from Rugby Alberta.
  - 1.1.1. Front Row players are not eligible for dispensation to senior rugby.
- 1.2. To be eligible for higher **age-grade contact rugby**, players will be permitted to participate in an age-grade match that is not more than two (2) years above their age on January 1st of the year in which the match is held (referred to as the 'two-year window'), provided that they comply with the procedures set out below and receive approval from Rugby Alberta. For example, the two-year window applies to a play.
- 1.3. To be eligible for lower **age-grade contact rugby**, players will be permitted to participate in an age-grade match that is not more than one (1) year below their age on January 1st of the year in which the match is held, provided that they comply with the procedures set out below and receive approval from Rugby Alberta.

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- 2.1 In exceptional circumstances, playing up or down requests will be considered outside the designated age groups, considering the weight, height and experience level of the player and the welfare of other players in that age group.
- 2.2 Each application must include a signed assessment by a qualified coach, a signed confirmation by the player's parent or legal guardian, and a signed medical clearance by a sports medicine physician.
- 2.3 Applicants must not participate in matches outside their age category until written notification of approval has been received.
- 2.4 An approved application will only be valid for the year in which the application is made.
- 2.5 Rugby Alberta reserves the right to evaluate and assess players requesting dispensation independently.
- 2.6 Rugby Alberta may independently evaluate a player and move a players to a different Age Grade if it is safer for participants to do so.
- 2.7 The decision of Rugby Alberta is final.
- 2.8 Rugby Alberta reserves the right to change this Policy from time to time at its sole discretion.

## **Procedure**

- 3.1 The **Rugby Alberta Application for Dispensation From** must be completed and submitted to the Rugby Alberta Office at least 7 days before the player wishes to participate in any rugby-related activities in the requested different age category.
- 3.2 This Risk Assessment (Appendix A) should be discussed with the player's parent or legal guardian on completing the Application for Dispensation.
- 3.3 The **Rugby Alberta Application for Dispensation From** must be emailed to [memberservice@rugbyalberta.com](mailto:memberservice@rugbyalberta.com)
- 3.4 Applicants will receive written notification from the Rugby Alberta office whether their application has been approved or rejected.

### ***Appendix A: Risk Assessment***

## **Appendix A - Risk Assessment and Considerations for Age Dispensation**

To qualify to provide an accurate Risk Assessment, the minimum qualification required by an Assessor (Coach or Rugby Alberta Management) is to have a current:

- NCCP Competition Introduction (Level 2) certificate; and
- World Rugby Ready Certificate; and
- World Rugby Concussion Management for the General Public Certificate; and
- Coach Registration with Rugby Alberta

**In conducting any assessment, the assessor will consider the following:**

- What is the player's level of physical development when measured against potential playing colleagues and their team members?
- Is the player physically equipped to compete equally with players in the required age category?
- Will the player skill level place them on an equal basis with eligible players in the required age category?
- Is the competition at a level in which the player can compete **SAFELY**?

**Additional factors for assessment are:**

- Does the player have a sufficiently high skill level specific to both the playing position and the game's fundamentals?
  - E.g., tackle; pass; ruck; maul; scrum
- What is the player's level of experience?
- Is the player reasonably experienced and has gained the experience in a comparable standard of competition?
- What is the standard of competition in the required age group?
- Does the player undertake a regular strength program?
  - If so, how many times per week?
  - Who provided the program?
  - What was the nature of the program that was completed over the last month?
  - How many years has the player been doing regular strength programs?

**Additional important factors for consideration if the players are in a Front Row position**

- How many years of Front Row experience?
- Has the player missed any games due to injury?
  - If so, what was the nature of the injury
- What coaching qualifications does the player's coach have?
- Has the player received any specific Front Row coaching in the last two years?
  - What type?

- Who provided it?
- What are the provider's qualifications and experience?

**Finally – the most critical question to be considered.**

***Does granting this dispensation provide a possible increased risk of injury to themselves or other players?***

On completing the Application for Dispensation, this Risk Assessment should be discussed with the player's parent or legal guardian.