



ONTARIO
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OPDL PARENT HANDBOOK 2019



Presented by:



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ABOUT OPDL

WELCOME TO THE OPDL



We are delighted that you will be a part of this exciting initiative that raises the bar in the development of youth players in Ontario. The *commitment* for players and you, as the parent, is higher in the OPDL, and this handbook is designed to help answer any questions you may have about the OPDL, both now and throughout the season.

Never heard of the OPDL, or don't have a child at the U13 age level yet? This document will provide you with all you need to know to consider the OPDL today, or sometime in the future.

All in all, the OPDL was created and developed by Ontario Soccer with one clear goal: to create a development environment that best supports players becoming their best.

**IN THE OPDL, THE LEVEL OF PLAYER PREPARATION
AND DEVELOPMENT IS UNPRECEDENTED**



- Launched in 2014 with the 2001 age group, the OPDL is one of the province's first youth standards leagues that combines top level competition and training environments.

SCOPE OF THE PROGRAM

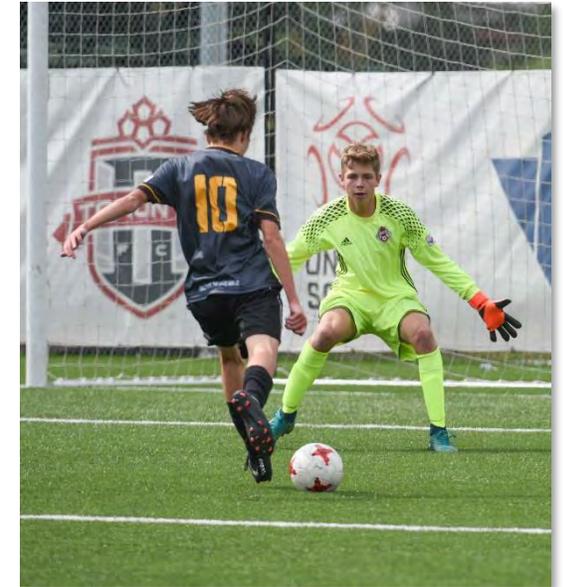


- In 2019, 25 License Holders will operate the OPDL, with over 2,500 players participating from Windsor to Ottawa. The breadth of the OPDL demonstrates both the continued growth and reach of the program.

CONTRIBUTING TO A BETTER SOCCER SYSTEM



The OPDL is one piece of a large, transformative process that Ontario Soccer is doing to modernize soccer in Ontario. This innovative, exciting youth program is an important component of the core principles of Long Term Play Development (LTPD) across soccer in Ontario and Canada.



LTPD helps talented youth players, who have the ability and dedication to train at a higher level, develop into top players with a strategic training philosophy in mind.

OPDL AS PART OF THE TALENTED PATHWAY



WHY WAS THE OPDL CREATED?



Ontario Soccer formed a committee of technical experts called the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to investigate our system of player development.

This committee identified some important flaws in the previous system:

- The best players were not necessarily playing with or against each other frequently enough.
- There was no player development accountability for clubs. Instead, they were rewarded for winning games and punished for losing them (through league relegation).
- Players would continuously migrate to a 'winning team' to remain in a top league, to the detriment of their development as a player.
- There was no high level coaching requirements in youth soccer leagues.
- There was no clear pathway of leagues to scouting and showcasing opportunities.
- Provincial team programs were not connected to youth soccer leagues and would remove players from their club environments, creating a less than ideal structure.

Out of these observations, OPDL was born, to raise the level of training and development for players and coaches, and give Ontario's top young players the opportunity to fully unleash their potential.

Talent.
Development.
Performance.



Talent.

- In addition to meeting a holistic level of talent, players eligible for the OPDL should also possess:
 1. Intrinsic Motivation
 2. Immense Potential
 3. Utmost Commitment



Development.

- Through the application of best practices, the OPDL provides an unmatched performance development environment to:
 - Players
 - Coaches
 - Match Officials
 - Administrators



Performance.

- The “best with best” philosophical approach fosters a competitive environment
- Pointstreak Performance Management technology is used to track, profile and measure athlete progress.

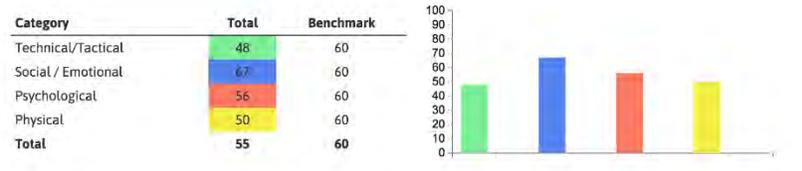


PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT PLATFORM

Pointstreak is a performance management platform that allows for Ontario Soccer to track players progress across the OPDL and Talented Pathway. License Holders are also equipped to utilize Pointstreak as:

- A management tool for day-to-day tracking of their OPDL players
- Provide resources through the team libraries for players and staff to access best practice standards
- Provide feedback to players on their development through age specific rubrics, fitness testing and individual development plans that are located in each individual player's profile

During the 2017 season, 4,430 player rubrics were entered into Pointstreak, demonstrating the breadth of the platform and detail to which performance management is executed in the OPDL.



Technical		Tactical		Social / Emotional		Psychological	
Vision and Awareness	Competent	Attacking	Competent	Cohesion	Competent	Commitment	Developing
Receiving and Turning Efficiency	Competent	Transition	Developing	Emotional Balance	Proficient	Concentration	Competent
Proactive Passing	Developing	Defending	Developing	Communication	Developing	Confidence	Competent
Running and Dribbling	Competent						
Finishing	Developing						
Proactive Defending	Developing						
Physical							
Physical Literacy	Competent						
Match Fitness	Developing						



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WHY THE OPDL IS DIFFERENT



OPDL ISN'T JUST A SOCCER LEAGUE...



There are a variety of key differences that you will see and may have noticed already in the OPDL:

Organizations enter the OPDL, not teams

≥ OPDL accepts organizations into the program in their entirety, once they have met a significant number of standards-based requirements (technical, administration, facilities, finances).

No promotion or relegations

≥ Teams remain in OPDL as long as their organization retains an OPDL license. This ensures the on-field results of the team does not interfere with the development of the players.

Minimum training standards

≥ OPDL License Holders must provide a year-round training program with appropriate periodization (different training at different times of the year with managed calendar breaks) with a minimum of three training sessions a week.

Provision of Sports Science Resources

≥ License Holders must also have a proper sport science program directed by a qualified provider managing the physiological development of players. It will cover fitness, strength and conditioning, injury prevention, nutrition and lifestyle management.

Competition play at high quality venues with high technical oversight

≥ Quality standards also extend to competition play in the OPDL. Unlike other leagues, OPDL games are played at high quality venues that must be pre-approved by the OPDL, allowing players to compete in the best game environment possible.

...IT'S A PERFORMANCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM



High quality game day experience

≥ OPDL provides a high degree of on-site event support to competition. This includes assigning and paying for Match Officials, medical personnel and on-site event coordinators.

A longer competition season

≥ OPDL is longer than traditional leagues, spanning 20 weeks from May-October, with training resuming in January. It creates a year-round, turn-key training and development program for Ontario's top players, rather than a seasonal program.

A year-round, periodized training calendar

≥ 12-month periodized training at high quality facilities with a minimum of 3:1 training to game ratio plus strength and conditioning. Planned training breaks are written into the annual training calendar to allow players to rest, recoup and spend time with family and friends.

Provincial technical staff support

≥ Some of the most established soccer technicians in Ontario are actively involved in working with License Holders to develop OPDL players.

Scouting opportunities year-round

≥ In tandem with Ontario Soccer's technical staff and innovative technology, players will be actively tracked, profiled and scouted.



- The OPDL is also driven by nationally-recognized coaching, as coaches at U14 and older require a minimum National B Part II, and coaches at the U13 level require a National B Part I License.
- License Holders must offer Goalkeeping and Strength & Conditioning programs to supplement players development.

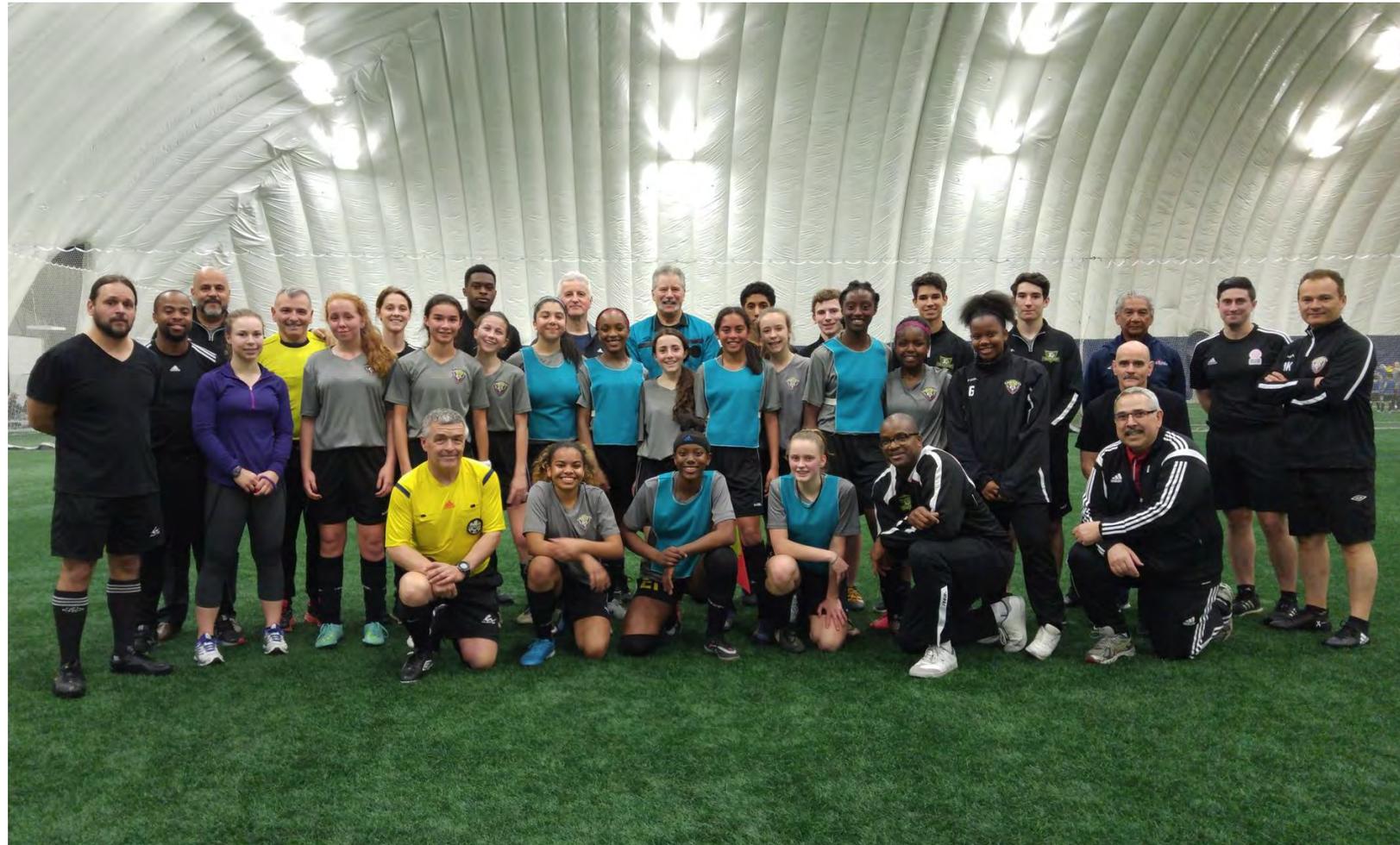


- The OPDL is also an integral part of the Match Official Talented Pathway.
- In the 2018 season, 4260 Match Officials appointments were made, during which they are mentored and developed for constant improvement.

OPDL AS PART OF LTOD



- A five-year strategic initiative, Long Term Officials Development (LTOD) provides a standards-based education and development program for Match Officials, through strong leadership, inclusivity and support.
- The OPDL creates a highly professional environment for Match Officials with a unique opportunity for development.



PARTNERSHIPS



- OPDL continues to welcome a growing family of partners that help elevate the brand of the program, as well as contribute to the continued sustainability of program operations. Players and families can expect to receive exclusive access to TFC games, scouting opportunities, athlete appearances and events; products and hydration education from Gatorade; and savings from partners such as SoccerX.com.



Presenting Partner



Program Partners



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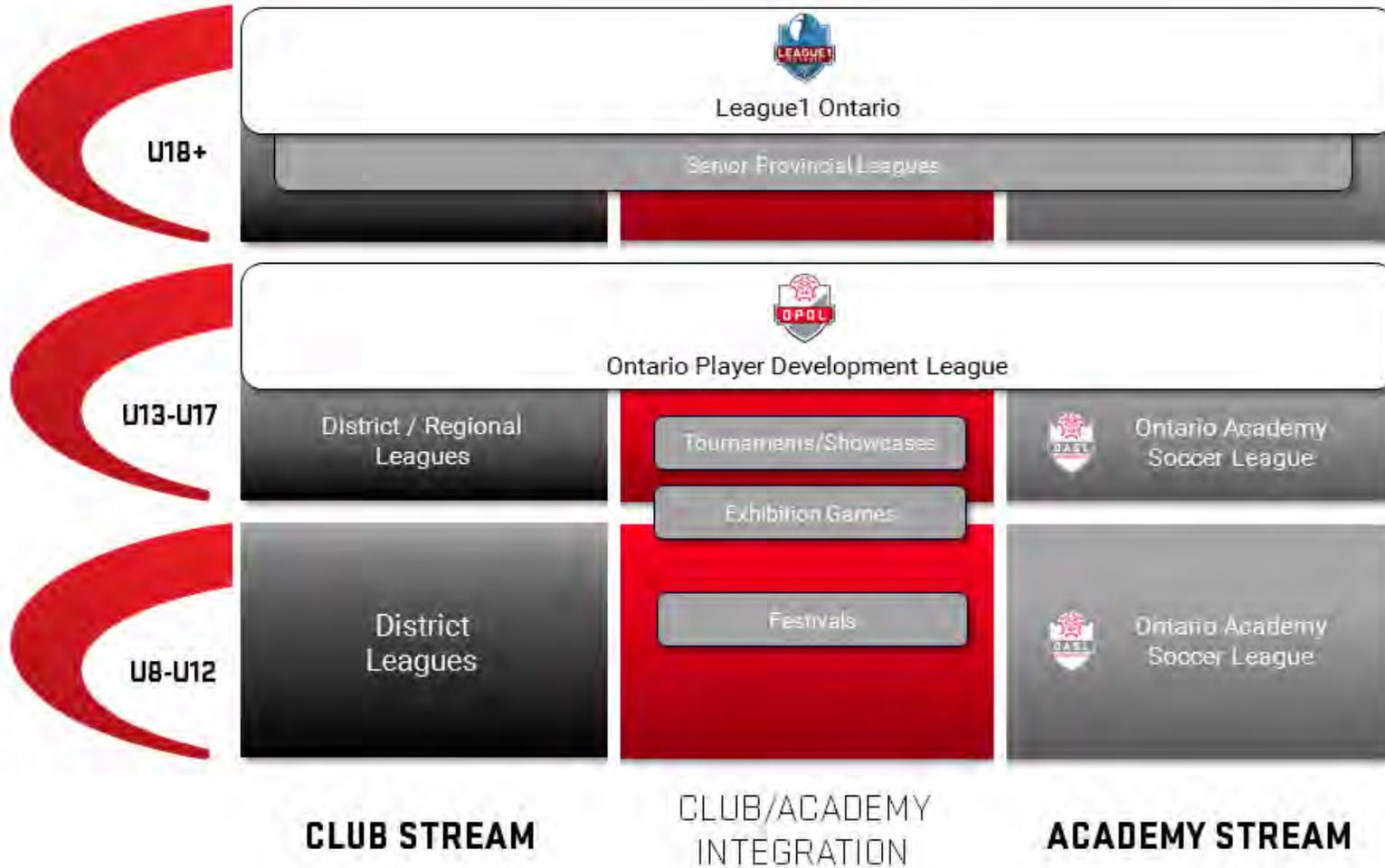
OUTCOMES OF THE OPDL





- OPDL provides increased exposure to the performance environments, and will directly lead to more provincial, collegiate, professional academy and National Team identification opportunities.
- In 2017, 40% of participants in the U15 and U17 National EXCEL program consisted of female OPDL players, while 67% of Ontario's Provincial Teams were made up of male OPDL players.

ORGANIZATIONAL PATHWAY



- OPDL bridges to League1 Ontario, Ontario’s Pro-Am league, forming the natural pathway of development of the Province’s most competitive players.



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A photograph of a soccer stadium at night. The foreground shows rows of empty red seats. In the middle ground, a crowd of spectators is visible, some looking towards the field. A person in the crowd is holding red pom-poms. The background shows the stadium's structure and flags. A red diagonal graphic element is present in the top-left and bottom-right corners.

REQUIRED COMMITMENT OF BEING IN THE OPDL

PARENTAL COMMITMENT



As a parent of an emerging athlete, the commitment asked of you is in many ways as high as that of the player. In this journey through the Talented Pathway with your child, it is important that you are as committed to the process as your child is.

Here are some of the core commitments you are adhering to when you join an OPDL program:

- A year-round soccer training program
- Bringing your child to and from training at least 3 nights a week
- Competition weekends from May to October
- Significant travel to and from OPDL games



HOW TO SUPPORT YOUR CHILD'S PARTICIPATION IN OPDL



Discuss training session on their completion with your child, focusing on learning outcomes and positive points.

Meet with your Head Coach at times prescribed by the OPDL License Holder and understand what you can do to help support your child's development.

Take your child out to the park or street and kick the ball around with them!

Remind your child that development is long term and that we don't learn without making mistakes.

Maintain a calendar of your child's training program and mark their progression on it.

Encourage your child to start a training diary. Many top athletes do, as this can be a great motivation tool.

Show support for your child at OPDL games. Negative remarks to opposing players, coaches, parents or the match officials will only put unnecessary stress on your child.

Speak to the Head coach to ensure you understand the OPDL player evaluation. Reinforce the positives and development goals outlined with your child.

Never be critical of your child's coach, their program or other players on the team in front of your child.

Unless unavoidable, remain committed to your OPDL License Holder.



PLAYER COMMITMENT



Commitment to:

- The entire training program for the year (Jan-Dec).
- Any personalized training, injury prevention or injury management work.
- Any performance testing and/or evaluations performed by the License Holder.



Attendance at:

- All training sessions, with exceptions made for sickness or injury.
- All off-field sport science sessions, including nutrition and lifestyle counselling sessions, gym work and tactical/analysis sessions.
- All OPDL games, including pre/post-season exhibitions or tournaments.



Adherence to:

- The License Holder's overall policies and codes of conduct, as well as the OPDL's player code of conduct



Mental Commitment:

- Focusing on training, not winning.
- Self-discipline required regarding proper nutrition, sport science, off-field training and lifestyle management.
- Recovering from defeat, rejection or other developmental setbacks.
- Balancing school with athletic commitments.



- The OPDL competition schedule is both intense and designed to draw out the best in your child.

Time will be one of the biggest commitments both you and your child will make.

OPDL COMPETITION SCHEDULE



OPDL games are hosted at Central Venues by Ontario Soccer and at home venues by each License Holder. The main objectives for the central venues are:

- Allow Provincial Scouts to conduct the player scouting and identification process, and complete game day coach observation and evaluation.
- Ontario Soccer technical and operational staff are able to ensure demonstration and execution of game day best practices in collaboration with the License Holder.
- Central Venues are located across different cities in Ontario. The list of Central Venues along with venues used by each License Holder to host their home venue is released prior to the start of the competition season.

Events outside the OPDL Schedule:

- OPDL players shall not participate in any other soccer programming with the exception of participation in Ontario Soccer Talent Development Centres, Provincial Projects/programs, National Team programs or official trial or development opportunities, as deemed appropriate by the OPDL.
- To ensure events do not conflict with periodization and/or OPDL activities, exhibition games, showcases or tournaments must be pre-approved by the OPDL.
- Approval to such events is done in writing by Ontario Soccer.
- If there are any questions or concerns over the status of a particular event, contact your child's Technical Director.



OPDL COMPETITION SCHEDULE



The OPDL Competition Schedule runs from May to October with a two-week mid-season break.

Games are played frequently on the weekends for three fundamental reasons:

- Athletes are conditioned to a routine of training and game play that is expected in high performance soccer.
- The training of all OPDL teams in all OPDL organizations can be coordinated and delivered to a consistently high quality
- All players can be consistently monitored and evaluated, giving all players the best opportunity for regional and provincial selection over the entire season, not just one try-out or showcase.





- During the year, OPDL License Holders will be conducting evaluations and routine assessments of all its players. This is an essential component of any meaningful player development program. It is also required of the organization by the OPDL.

PLAYER EVALUATIONS & TRIALS



OPDL requires that at least two (2) written and one (1) verbal evaluation are conducted on all players per year and that each evaluation is discussed with parents.

An organization may institute a variety of evaluation techniques to make assessments. The nature of the evaluation will vary over the course of your child's development. But it will always monitor fundamentals of player development from physical, technical, tactical and psycho-social standpoints.

Your Head Coach should be able to explain the system of evaluation for your child. OPDL License Holders are expected to properly communicate evaluation feedback to player's parents or guardians, in addition to utilizing player rubrics on Pointstreak to submit their feedback.

Note that receiving feedback does not entitle you as a parent to dispute, reject or overturn your Head Coach's evaluation results, even if the results are not what you or your child would ideally want.

Never disagree with the evaluation in front of your child or make excuses for them. Central to the OPDL is self-responsibility and player ownership of development outcomes.



OPDL SURVEYS & FEEDBACK



OPDL is a development environment. Active feedback is sought across the entire program to continuously improve it year over year. Evaluation extends to the League itself and those who actively deliver it.

To that end, you as a parent play an important role in offering feedback that will be sought from you throughout the year that will be used to evaluate quality in the OPDL, and make improvements in the program where necessary.

After each OPDL game, your team management will be asked to complete an evaluation of the game day you have just experienced. In this questionnaire, they'll be asked to assess the venue, OPDL Coordinator and event staff, Match Officials and other factors that impact an enjoyable game day experience for all. It is essential that you actively forward your feedback to your team management after your game for inclusion in this survey.

When doing so, follow these basic guidelines:

- Be honest, but fair.
- If you were satisfied, make sure you say it!
- Do not give feedback immediately after the game if you are emotionally upset or angry.
- Give specific examples if you can.

You will also be asked throughout the year to complete an online parent survey asking for feedback on your child's organization and its OPDL program.





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ASSOCIATED COSTS



OPDL COSTS

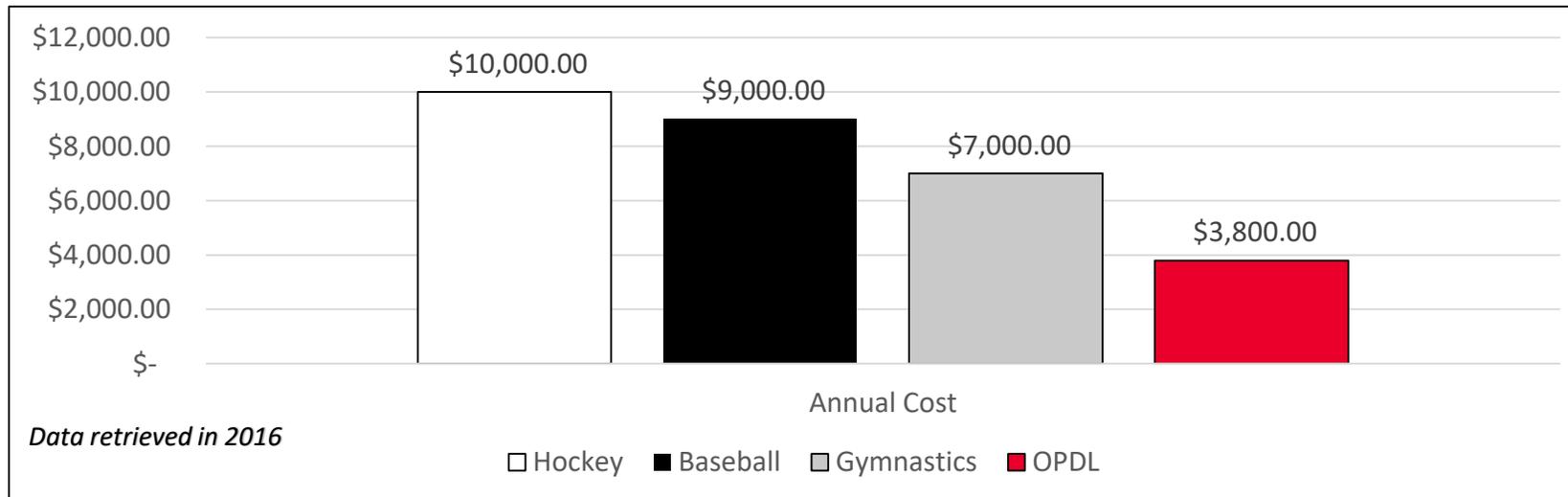


The OPDL requires a significant time and resource commitment from player's families. The program significantly raises the bar on the intensity of routine training (including the addition of sport science), qualifications of coaches and length of League season. To ensure the best-in-class delivery of the OPDL, costs may rise to meet the quality expectations of this much expanded youth standards-based soccer program.

OPDL License Holders determine the fees associated with their OPDL programs.

License Holders also establish a payment schedule. This may mean full payment of the annual fee at the beginning of the year, or monthly or quarterly installments. The OPDL fee may include any combination of uniforms, staffing costs, facilities, travel, sport science services and/or training.

Average annual costs for other high performance sports include:



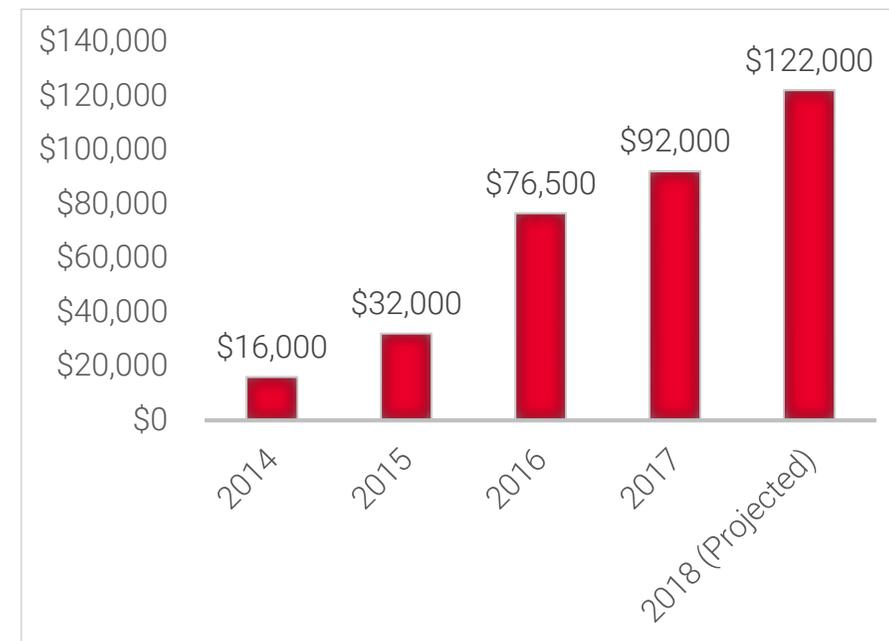
ATHLETE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM



This program offers financial support to players, in order to lower barriers to participate in the OPDL for as many athletes as possible.

Applications are submitted by OPDL License Holders to the OPDL and successful applicants receive a grant towards the player's OPDL costs.

- OPDL License Holders may offer further assistance programs in addition to this program. Since these programs are at the discretion of each organization, be sure to inquire about details and timelines.
- Athlete Scholarship applications are submitted by OPDL License Holders to the OPDL for consideration during the off-season from December until March. If you believe you qualify for assistance, please contact your License Holder for further detail.



To date, over \$460,500 have been made available to 500+ players through the Athlete Scholarship Program.



HOW TO JOIN



LICENSE HOLDER SELECTION



OPDL License Holders are selected every two years and hold a license to operate in the League for a two-year period. Acquiring an OPDL license is a demanding process. Organizations have to show quality in all areas; not just their programs and coaches, but their facilities, planning, and even their financial position.

To reduce unnecessary player migration, once committed to a License Holder, your child will not be permitted to move organizations until December 31st of the current OPDL season. Once you and your child make a decision and you're committed to a License Holder, you will be required to sign a "Player Commitment Letter" with them that binds your child to that License Holders for the year. So when choosing an organization, ask questions and do your research.

- ✓ Target the OPDL License Holder closest to you
- ✓ Target organizations your child has played at before
- ✓ Do not select a License Holder based on price alone
- ✓ Avoid selecting an organization based on an individual coach
- ✓ Do not choose a License Holder based on other players playing for the team
- ✓ Do no try to trade organizations off against each other

HOW TO TRANSFER WITHIN OPDL



End-of-Season Transfers & Trials

OPDL does not encourage you to move your child from one OPDL License Holder to another without an extremely compelling reason or an irresolvable problem.

After October 1st, you are able to renew your commitment with your existing organization or request to seek other opportunities with other organizations.

If you do wish to move, OPDL License Holders will hold trials in the Fall for player selection the following year. You can bring your child to these if you wish. Specific dates and times of trials are at the License Holder's discretion, so check with the organizations you are interested in, in the early Fall. For more information, please refer to the OPDL Trial Guideline published annually by Ontario Soccer.

Mid-Season Transfers

Although mid-season transfer of players from one OPDL License Holder to another are not permitted, exceptions can be made in certain circumstances. This relates to situations where a player is forced to leave a club for reasons outside of their direct control (ex. A family relocating). Under these circumstances, the transfer may be allowed, but must first be approved by the OPDL.

You will be entitled to a pro-rated refund for any fees you have already paid from the License Holder you are departing, but will be expected to pay pro-rated fees to the License Holder you are joining for the remainder of the season. Any outstanding fees with your existing License Holder must be settled before the transfer is approved.





- It is important to consider whether or not the OPDL is right for you. If you and your child are committed to one of the most rigorous soccer training programs in Ontario, and want to develop them into the best they can be, speak with a License Holder administrator or an OPDL staff member to learn more.



THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST IN THE
MOST ADVANCED PLAYER DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAM IN ONTARIO



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**For more
information, contact:**
OPDL@ontariosoccer.net

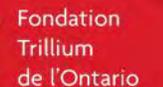
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