



CHILD RIGHTS & SPORTS ALLIANCE



For Immediate Release

November 12, 2024

Child Rights and Sports Alliance Launches Ahead of FIFA World Cup 2026™

Alliance to elevate rights and voices of young people to drive community impact in the planning, execution, and legacy of the tournament

Tampa, FL – A group of leading organizations today announced the creation of the Child Rights and Sports Alliance (CRSA) in the United States. The goals of the Alliance are to elevate child rights, center youth voices, and use the sport as a vehicle for youth development in the planning, execution, and legacy building of the FIFA World Cup 2026™.

The FIFA World Cup 2026™ is the first mega-sporting event in history to incorporate human rights into its bid process, execution, and legacy. This Alliance aims to help cities fulfill the human rights and legacy components focused on children. Each organization in the Alliance brings special expertise and resources across three pillars:

- Centering the voices and priorities of children and young people in local decision making.
- Advancing opportunities for children to have access to soccer as a vehicle for youth and human development.
- Improving child safeguarding in sport.

The [U.S. Soccer Foundation](#) is leading legacy efforts around increasing soccer participation through programs and initiatives that use the sport as a vehicle for social change.

“As the legacy of the 1994 FIFA World Cup, we’re excited to join other leading organizations and the 2026 FIFA World Cup Host Cities to create a legacy from this tournament that will benefit generations to come,” said **Ed Foster-Simeon, president & CEO of the U.S. Soccer Foundation**. “For more than 30 years, our team at the U.S. Soccer Foundation has worked to advance soccer as a vehicle for social impact in under-resourced communities, and we are committed to ensuring that this work continues as a legacy of this tournament.”

Aspen Institute’s Project Play – An initiative of the Sports & Society Program of the Aspen Institute, Project Play develops, shares and mobilizes knowledge that helps build healthy communities through sports. Project Play developed the [Children’s Bill of Rights in Sports](#) and is

continuing to champion children's rights to and in sports to World Cup, soccer and sports stakeholders through initiatives like [63X30](#) and the [Project Play Summit](#).

"We are proud to join with these esteemed organizations to build upon the Children's Bill of Rights in Sports," said **Tom Farrey, the executive director of the Aspen Institute Sports & Society Program**. "Realizing the goal of a youth-centered sport ecosystem that serves all starts with creating a cultural consensus that every child has a right to play sports, and that we as adults are responsible for creating safe, healthy environments that meet their needs."

The Centre for Sport and Human Rights convenes host cities on human rights, is leading safeguarding efforts through [Generation 2026](#), and is working with select host cities in the U.S., Mexico, and Canada on youth voice, such as the [Youth Media Forward](#) initiative.

"The World Cup will create new levels of interest from young people to play soccer," said **Mary Harvey, Chief Executive Officer, Centre for Sport and Human Rights**. "And as that happens, it is our responsibility to commit to centering child voice, participation, and safety as an integral part of grassroots programs. The alliance we've built together is a team of organizations coming together to play to their strengths for the benefit of the next generation."

In support of its vision to build communities for every child, UNICEF USA's [Community Alliance for Child Rights](#) is leading efforts to help host cities adopt child-centered governance strategies and ensure that children and young people can meaningfully participate in local decision making around World Cup 2026 and beyond.

"UNICEF USA is honored to join the Child Rights and Sports Alliance alongside well-respected organizations in support of the 2026 FIFA World Cup Host Cities and their commitment toward creating a lasting legacy not only for teams and attendees but for future generations," said **UNICEF USA President and CEO, Michael J. Nyenhuis**. "Together, we are working to ensure local policies, programs and planning prioritize the voices and well-being of children and youth alike, shaping brighter futures for the next generation through the impact of major sporting events like the World Cup."

NLC is working to ensure that in the lead up to and during the year of the World Cup, cities are bringing together key departments/community partners, aligning planning efforts, and leveraging resources inside and outside of government that will benefit all young children, providers, and their families for years to come.

"Local communities across North America are the perfect place to showcase the world's greatest athletes," said **Clarence Anthony, CEO & Executive Director of the National League of Cities**. "We are thrilled to help cities take advantage of the FIFA World Cup and use the opportunity to improve the lives of some of their youngest residents. We couldn't ask for better partners to collaborate with in this work, and we are excited to break new ground in the lead-up to 2026."

The announcement of the Child Rights and Sports Alliance was made at National League of City's Annual City Summit in Tampa, Florida. The CRSA convened a group of 2026 World Cup

host city and committee representatives at the conference to gain a better understanding of the specific needs of municipalities in the lead up to the tournament and to begin discussions on planning and support members of the CRSA can provide.

ABOUT CHILD RIGHTS & SPORTS ALLIANCE

The Child Rights & Sports Alliance, led by the Aspen Institute's Project Play, the Centre for Sport and Human Rights, the National League of Cities, UNICEF USA, and the U.S. Soccer Foundation, commits to elevate child rights and center youth voices to drive community impact in the planning, execution, and legacy building of communities hosting the FIFA World Cup 2026™. Together, the group of partners are committed to providing expertise and support to center youth voices in local decision-making, prioritize children's needs, increase access to soccer as a vehicle for youth and human development, and improve child safeguarding in sport. For more information, visit <https://www.sporhumanrights.org/childrightsandsportsalliance>.

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Jennifer Arnold, U.S. Soccer Foundation
jarnold@ussoccerfoundation.org

Seth Barlow, National League of Cities
barlow@nlc.org

Nina Marie Costa, UNICEF USA
Nmcosta@unicefusa.org

Matt Stone, Centre for Sport and Human Rights
matt.stone@sporhumanrights.org

###