

LEOPOLDUS LAW, APC

**CIF TRANSFERS
AND ELIGIBILITY:
A PARENT'S GUIDE
TO
NOT LOSING A
SEASON**

BRANDON LEOPOLDUS, ESQ.

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**CIF DOES NOT
CARE ABOUT YOUR
YOUNG ATHLETE'S
SITUATION AS
MUCH AS YOU DO.**

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Founder, Leopoldus Law, APC. Former professional baseball umpire.

TRANSFERRING HIGH SCHOOLS SHOULD NOT BE THIS COMPLICATED. IT IS.

Transferring high schools as a student-athlete in California is rarely simple. Whether you are moving across the country or just a few miles, navigating the California Interscholastic Federation transfer process can feel like stepping into a bureaucratic maze, one that often seems designed to trip you up rather than help you along. Parents, athletes, and even school administrators regularly feel confused, overwhelmed, and frustrated by the layers of restrictions, paperwork, and roadblocks the process puts in place.

This guide exists to keep you out of the traps. It walks the entire CIF transfer process, from the moment you consider a move to the final ruling on your young athlete's eligibility, and, if it comes to it, through the appeal. It explains the different eligibility outcomes CIF can issue and what each means, the documentation that actually strengthens a case, the truth about athletically motivated transfers and how CIF determines intent, and the appeal process: when to fight, how to present your case, and what it takes to win.

CIF does not care about your young athlete's situation as much as you do. That is not cynicism; it is the operating reality. CIF's job is to enforce rules, not to make exceptions, and the burden is on you to prove your transfer is legitimate. Take a strategic, informed, and prepared approach, and you can navigate the process successfully, avoid the mistakes that cost athletes their seasons, and, when CIF gets it wrong, fight back.

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This guide is educational. It is general information, not legal advice for your family's specific situation, and reading it does not create an attorney-client relationship with Leopoldus Law, APC. CIF bylaws, forms, fees, and dates change every year; confirm the current rules before you act.

**ENROLLING IS NOT
THE SAME AS
BEING ELIGIBLE.**

**ELIGIBILITY HAS TO
BE EARNED,
SEPARATELY.**

CIF TRANSFERS AND ELIGIBILITY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	WHAT CIF IS, AND THE FOUR POSSIBLE OUTCOMES <i>Why eligibility does not travel with the student, and what CIF can rule</i>	7
2	THE PATHS TO IMMEDIATE VARSITY ELIGIBILITY <i>The valid change of residence, and the recognized hardship categories</i>	10
3	THE TWO TRAPS THAT SINK TRANSFERS <i>The athletically motivated transfer, and undue influence</i>	13
4	BEFORE YOU TRANSFER: PREPARATION IS EVERYTHING <i>Confirming the reason, gathering proof, and working with both schools</i>	16
5	FILING THE PAPERWORK, AND THE DECISION <i>Form 207, Form 510, and what each ruling actually means</i>	19
6	THE APPEAL PROCESS: WHEN AND HOW TO FIGHT BACK <i>Three levels of review, and building an appeal that wins</i>	22
7	ATHLETIC MOTIVATION, AND SPECIAL SITUATIONS <i>How CIF reads intent, and the moves that carry their own rules</i>	25
8	WHERE A LAWYER FITS, AND BUILDING THE RECORD <i>The hardship statement, and the documentation that persuades</i>	28

Followed by scenarios from the field, frequently asked questions, a glossary, ten myths that cost seasons, and how to reach us.

1

CHAPTER ONE

WHAT CIF IS, AND THE FOUR POSSIBLE OUTCOMES

Why eligibility does not travel with the student, and what CIF can rule

WHO CONTROLS YOUR YOUNG ATHLETE'S ELIGIBILITY

A SECTION COMMISSIONER DECIDES FIRST, STATE CIF REVIEWS ON APPEAL

The California Interscholastic Federation governs high school sports in California, operating under a statutory framework that gives it authority over interscholastic athletic eligibility and requires it to maintain procedures for reviewing eligibility decisions.¹ It is organized into regional Sections, each with a Commissioner, under a State CIF office. When your young athlete's eligibility is at stake, it is a Section Commissioner who makes the first decision, and, on appeal, the State CIF process that reviews it.

The essential fact for a transferring family is this: athletic eligibility does not automatically travel with a student who changes schools. A student can be fully, academically enrolled at a new school and still be barred from competing there until CIF approves the transfer. Every year, families learn this the hard way, assuming their young athlete can simply suit up at the new school, and discovering only later that the transfer was never cleared.

/ WHY THE RULE EXISTS

The transfer rules exist to protect competitive fairness, to stop schools from recruiting athletes and to prevent "school-hopping" for athletic advantage. CIF is not, in principle, trying to punish families with genuine reasons to move; it is trying to verify that a given transfer is genuine. Your job is to show that your move is real and that it falls within the rules. Treat CIF as a gatekeeper that needs to verify your situation, not an enemy, and provide complete, truthful information.



DID YOU KNOW?

Your young athlete establishes an initial athletic eligibility at the school where they first enroll in ninth grade, and that eligibility follows them as long as they do not transfer.² The moment they transfer, everything in this guide starts to apply.

THE FOUR OUTCOMES CIF CAN RULE

EVERYTHING YOU DO IS AIMED AT THE BEST ONE YOUR FACTS SUPPORT

OUTCOME	WHAT IT MEANS
UNLIMITED (VARSITY) ELIGIBILITY	The best result: play at any level, including varsity, immediately. Granted when the transfer meets an approved basis.
LIMITED (SUB-VARSITY) ELIGIBILITY	May play sub-varsity (JV/Freshman) but not varsity, often for one calendar year.
SIT-OUT PERIOD (SOP)	Sits out varsity until a set date, then becomes varsity-eligible. A compromise outcome.
INELIGIBLE (DENIED)	No competition at any level for a period. Reserved for serious problems. Appealable.

Most families who transfer for the first time with truthful, well-documented reasons receive one of the top outcomes. Full denials are relatively rare when the information is honest and it is a first transfer, but limited eligibility and sit-out periods are common. Knowing the difference, and how to reach for the better outcome, is much of what this guide is about.

**POSITION YOUR FACTS SO CIF
GRANTS
THE HIGHEST OUTCOME THEY
GENUINELY SUPPORT.**

A person wearing a grey hoodie and glasses is looking down at a smartphone held in both hands. The background is dark and out of focus.

2

CHAPTER TWO

THE PATHS TO IMMEDIATE VARSITY ELIGIBILITY

The valid change of residence, and the recognized hardship categories

THE CLEANEST PATH: A VALID CHANGE OF RESIDENCE

BONA FIDE AND COMPLETE, OR IT WILL NOT SATISFY CIF

A bona fide, complete change of the family's residence is the most straightforward basis for varsity eligibility at the new school, provided you can document it thoroughly: leases or mortgage papers, utility bills, and proof the old residence was given up.

The key words are complete and bona fide. A partial move, a second address, or a paper change while the family's life remains rooted at the old home will not satisfy the rule, and CIF scrutinizes claimed moves closely. When the move is real and fully documented, it is the surest route to the best outcome.

/ WHAT "COMPLETE" ACTUALLY MEANS

A real move looks the same from every direction: a new lease or mortgage, the old lease terminated or the old home sold, utility bills at the new address in the family's name, an updated license, and a change-of-address confirmation. One document alone rarely convinces anyone. A consistent picture across several sources is what removes doubt.



DID YOU KNOW?

The move would qualify regardless of how you present it. But thorough documentation from day one removes friction and delay, and delay can cost games while CIF asks for more.

WITHOUT A MOVE: THE RECOGNIZED HARDSHIPS

CIRCUMSTANCES CIF WILL STILL CONSIDER FOR IMMEDIATE ELIGIBILITY

Even without a change of residence, CIF recognizes a set of circumstances that can support immediate varsity eligibility, sometimes called hardship waivers or valid exemptions:

COURT-ORDERED OR ADMINISTRATIVE PLACEMENT. A foster-care placement or juvenile-court order required the change of school.

CHILDREN OF DIVORCED OR SEPARATED PARENTS. The student moves between the homes of separated or divorced parents, typically supported by custody documentation.

DOCUMENTED SAFETY CONCERNS OR BULLYING. Documented bullying, harassment, or violence at the old school; requires solid evidence, such as incident reports.

A DISCONTINUED PROGRAM. The old school dropped the student's sport, and the student transfers to keep playing it.

A GENUINE, NON-ATHLETIC ACADEMIC PROGRAM. Academics alone do not guarantee a waiver, but a genuine academic motivation can help show sports were not the primary reason.

RETURN TO A HOME SCHOOL. A student who tried a private or charter school returns to their original home public school, often on conditions.

If none of these applies and there was no change of residence, expect that the student will likely sit out of varsity for a period or play sub-varsity, unless you can make a compelling case for an unforeseen, uncontrollable hardship. Identify your basis early and honestly, because the entire application is built around it.

3

CHAPTER THREE

THE TWO TRAPS THAT SINK TRANSFERS

The athletically motivated transfer, and undue influence

TRAP ONE: THE ATHLETICALLY MOTIVATED TRANSFER

CIF'S CENTRAL CONCERN, IN EVERY SINGLE CASE

CIF's central concern is that a transfer is really about sports — more playing time, a better team, a stronger program, a shot at a championship — rather than a genuine change in the family's circumstances. A transfer whose primary reason is athletic is not a valid basis for immediate varsity eligibility.

This does not mean an athlete cannot transfer; it means the reason has to be genuine and provably not primarily athletic. If the honest reason for the move is athletic, expect a restriction, and do not try to disguise it, because a disguised athletic transfer discovered is far worse than an honest one acknowledged.

**NEVER DISGUISE AN ATHLETIC
TRANSFER.
A DISCOVERED DISGUISE IS
WORSE THAN AN HONEST
RESTRICTION.**

TRAP TWO: UNDUE INFLUENCE AND CONTACT

IT CATCHES WELL-MEANING FAMILIES CONSTANTLY

CIF prohibits undue influence to secure a student's attendance for athletic reasons, and requires that any pre-enrollment athletic contact with the new school be disclosed.³ The rule reaches broadly: if you or your student talked to the new school's coach, attended open gyms, or a club coach connected you with the new school, that generally counts as pre-enrollment contact, and it must be declared on the CIF Pre-Enrollment Contact Affidavit, Form 510.

The safest course is to avoid unnecessary athletic contact with the new school's coaches or boosters before enrolling. But if contact did happen, the imperative is total transparency: failing to disclose a contact, even a single text message, can result in the transfer being denied for a full year. Disclose everything and CIF will often still approve the transfer, sometimes with a sit-out period. Disclosure protects you; concealment destroys you.

/ OVER-DISCLOSE, EVERY TIME

Almost any athletic-related communication with the new school before enrollment can trigger an allegation of undue influence, so it is taken very seriously. When it comes to pre-enrollment contact, over-disclose rather than under-disclose, every time.



4

CHAPTER FOUR

BEFORE YOU TRANSFER: PREPARATION IS EVERYTHING

Confirming the reason, gathering proof, and working with both schools

CONFIRM THE REASON, THEN START DOCUMENTING

THE DECISIVE WORK HAPPENS BEFORE THE STUDENT EVER CHANGES SCHOOLS

Be honest with yourself about why the student is transferring, and whether it is truly necessary. If the real reason is primarily athletic, know that CIF will be skeptical and that transferring solely for sports will likely result in a restriction. Consult the current school's athletic director before moving, if possible; they can set realistic expectations.

Every valid reason for a transfer requires proof, and it is never too soon to start collecting it. For a change of residence, gather leases, utility bills, and a change-of-address confirmation. For safety or bullying, save emails, incident reports, and counselor letters. For medical or financial hardship, get letters from doctors or financial statements. Be scrupulously accurate: false or fraudulent information in an eligibility matter can itself cost the student their eligibility.⁵



DID YOU KNOW?

Getting caught in a misstatement is often more damaging than the underlying issue you were tempted to hide. Honesty is not just ethical here; it is strategic.

BOTH SCHOOLS, AND THE RULES THAT CHANGE YEARLY

A COOPERATIVE RELATIONSHIP ON BOTH SIDES SMOOTHS THE WHOLE PATH

Talk with both the sending and receiving schools well in advance. The sending school's athletic director will need to sign off on parts of the paperwork, and the new school's AD will submit the request to CIF, so you want both on your side. A contentious relationship, where a bitter sending school raises flags or drags its feet, can derail a transfer.

Beware pre-enrollment contact. Before you enroll, do not have athletic-related contact with the new school's coaches or boosters unless you follow CIF protocols. If contact did occur, be completely transparent about it on the Form 510 affidavit.

Check CIF's current rules. Recognized hardships, sit-out-period dates, forms, and fees can all shift year to year, so check the State CIF website or your local Section before you rely on anything you read here or elsewhere.

**DO NOT LET THE STUDENT
COMPETE
UNTIL THE TRANSFER IS
ACTUALLY CLEARED.**

5

CHAPTER FIVE

FILING THE PAPERWORK, AND THE DECISION

Form 207, Form 510, and what each ruling actually means

FIVE STEPS TO FILE THE APPLICATION

A COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE FAMILY AND THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

- 1** **Enroll at the new school.** CIF processes a transfer only once the student is actually enrolled, so complete enrollment first, then alert the new AD you need to file.

- 2** **File Form 207, the transfer application,** usually through the CIF Home online system. State the transfer reason plainly and truthfully, and elaborate through attachments.³

- 3** **File Form 510 if there was any pre-enrollment contact.** Double-check your texts, emails, and calls, because CIF treats even casual conversations as contact.⁴

- 4** **Attach supporting documentation.** Proof of address change, hardship letters, academic-program proof, and any additional forms your situation requires. More proof is better.

- 5** **School submission and CIF review.** The new school submits the request; the former school must also verify. Review can take days to weeks; respond promptly to any request.

Two cautions run through the whole process. Do not let the student compete, practice in games, or even play in scrimmages, until the transfer is cleared. And keep copies of everything, in one organized folder, because you will need it if you have to appeal.

WHAT EACH RULING REALLY MEANS FOR YOU

GET THE DECISION IN WRITING BEFORE YOUR YOUNG ATHLETE PLAYS

When CIF completes its review, the Section sends the decision in writing. Get a copy of that decision letter for your records, because it states the eligibility granted or the basis for denial, and because it is the starting point for any appeal.

Unlimited eligibility is the best result: varsity immediately, in all sports. **Limited eligibility** means the student can practice with varsity and be on the team but cannot compete in varsity games until a set date or until a year passes. A **sit-out period** means the student will play varsity in the same school year, just not from the start. And **denied** means no participation in that sport at any level for a period, usually where there was undue influence, an athletically motivated transfer, or a failure to disclose.

A denial is serious but not the end of the road, because it can be appealed. If anything in the decision is unclear, ask the school's AD or the CIF Section office to explain it.



DID YOU KNOW?

A sit-out period is generally the better of the two restrictions, because varsity play returns sooner than under a full calendar-year limited eligibility.

6

CHAPTER SIX

THE APPEAL PROCESS: FIGHTING BACK

Three levels of review, and building an appeal that wins

THREE LEVELS, ONE FINAL DECISION

APPEALS ARE WON AND LOST AS MUCH ON PROCEDURE AS ON THE MERITS

LEVEL 1 • THE SECTION COMMISSIONER

Decides the request for unlimited eligibility based on Form 207, Form 510, and your documentation, on a season-of-sport timeline.⁶ If denied, the written decision states the basis, and that decision is what you appeal.

LEVEL 2 • THE STATE CIF APPEALS COORDINATOR

Filed within a set number of business days, on the current State CIF Appeal Request form, mailed with a non-refundable fee. Incomplete or late requests are treated as not submitted; the deadlines are unforgiving.

LEVEL 3 • THE HEARING OFFICER

A single, impartial officer hears the case, typically by video conference. The written decision is final and binding, and may not be appealed further within CIF.

**THE HEARING OFFICER'S DECISION IS
FINAL.
THERE IS NO FOURTH LEVEL INSIDE
CIF.**

FOUR PRINCIPLES OF A WINNING APPEAL

HOW YOU BUILD THE APPEAL OFTEN DECIDES IT

ARGUE TO THE BYLAW, NOT TO SYMPATHY. The winning argument is that on these facts there was no violation of the transfer rules, not that it is unfair to your young athlete.

PICK THE RIGHT BASIS, AND PROVE IT. Misapplied facts, the wrong bylaw, or genuinely new evidence, focused on one well-supported ground beats a scattershot appeal.

RESPECT THE PROCEDURE, EXACTLY. The deadlines, the mailed form, the correct fee instrument, are not formalities you can finesse. Missing them can end the appeal before the merits are heard.

DO NOT BURY THE HEARING OFFICER. A tight, well-documented case aimed at the exact question wins over a thick, unfocused file.

7

CHAPTER SEVEN

ATHLETIC MOTIVATION, AND SPECIAL SITUATIONS

How CIF reads intent, and the moves that carry their own rules

CIF CANNOT READ MINDS. IT READS PATTERNS.

THE TIMING, THE DESTINATION, AND THE DOCUMENTATION TELL THE STORY

A transfer to a stronger program, right after a season, with pre-enrollment contact, and no change of residence or documented hardship, looks athletically motivated, whatever the family says. A transfer prompted by a genuine relocation or documented hardship, supported by real documentation, and free of undue athletic contact, looks like what it is.

If your reason is genuine, document it thoroughly and present it plainly. Avoid the patterns that read as athletic even when your reason is real: unnecessary contact with the new school's coaches, transferring to a rival powerhouse with no other reason, timing that lines up suspiciously with the athletic calendar. Never try to disguise an athletic transfer as something else.



DID YOU KNOW?

The athlete whose genuine reason happens to coexist with athletic benefit is best served by leading with the genuine reason and being transparent about everything, including any athletic dimension, rather than hiding it.

FIVE SITUATIONS WITH THEIR OWN RULES

KNOW WHICH PATTERN YOUR MOVE FITS BEFORE YOU FILE

FOREIGN STUDENTS. Governed by CIF's own foreign-student provisions and forms.⁷

SECOND TRANSFERS. Draw stricter scrutiny; a second move without a change of residence can mean ineligibility.

LIVING WITH A CARETAKER. Requires a caretaker affidavit; CIF scrutinizes the arrangement closely.

FOLLOWING A COACH. A direct undue-influence concern; examined closely and often restricted.

RETURN-TO-HOME-SCHOOL MOVES. A return to the original public school can support eligibility on conditions, such as not having played varsity while away.

A family considering any of these should get specific guidance rather than assume the standard transfer rules apply unchanged.

8

CHAPTER EIGHT

WHERE A LAWYER FITS, AND BUILDING THE RECORD

The hardship statement, and the documentation that persuades

WHERE COUNSEL CHANGES THE OUTCOME

BEST INVOLVED BEFORE THE TRANSFER, NOT AFTER A DENIAL

Many families navigate CIF transfers without a lawyer, and for a clean, well-documented change of residence on a first transfer, that is often fine. But the value of counsel is highest where the stakes and complexity are highest: a denial or restriction you intend to appeal, an undue-influence allegation, a following-a-coach situation, a second transfer, or a foreign-student matter.

Counsel who does this work knows how to prepare a case from the start so an appeal, if needed, is winnable: gathering the right documentation, framing the reason correctly, and handling pre-enrollment disclosure properly. The best time to involve counsel is often before the transfer, when the case is shaped in its earliest steps.

/ THE HARDSHIP STATEMENT

When seeking a hardship basis, the written statement you submit is often the heart of the case. Ideally the student writes the primary statement in their own voice, with the parent adding a supporting letter. A strong statement states plainly what happened, with dates; explains why the old school became untenable; is backed by third-party documentation; and keeps the focus on the student's well-being, not athletics. Never exaggerate, dwell on athletic considerations, or leave a claim undocumented.

THE DOCUMENTATION THAT ACTUALLY PERSUADES

CIF REQUIRES PROOF, NOT ASSURANCES

For a change of residence: multiple, consistent pieces of evidence, the new lease, proof the old residence was given up, updated utility bills, an updated license, and a change-of-address confirmation.

For a hardship: third-party documentation is what carries it, a doctor's letter, incident reports and counselor letters, employment or income records, or the relevant legal documents.

For an academic-program basis: information about the specific program plus a showing that the old school did not offer it. Keep everything in a single organized folder from the moment a transfer is in sight; you will need it again if you have to appeal.

**ORGANIZED, THOROUGH
DOCUMENTATION
IS THE SUBSTANCE OF THE CASE,
NOT BUSYWORK.**

SCENARIOS FROM THE FIELD

Composites, stripped of identifying detail, to show how these cases actually unfold.

THE MOVE THAT WAS DOCUMENTED

A family relocated for a parent's job and, on counsel's advice, documented it thoroughly before filing. The documentation left no doubt the move was real, and the student received unlimited eligibility and played varsity from the opening game. Proof is what turns a valid reason into a granted outcome.

THE UNDISCLOSED TEXT THAT COST A YEAR

A student had exchanged a few texts with the new school's coach before enrolling, contact the family did not disclose. When it surfaced, the undisclosed contact turned a manageable situation into a denial. The concealment, not the conduct, was fatal.

THE FOLLOWING-A-COACH CASE THAT NEEDED REAL HELP

An athlete transferred to the school a former club coach had just joined, and the Section granted only limited eligibility. With experienced counsel, the family documented the non-athletic reasons, disclosed the full history of contact, and built a precise appeal that gave the athlete a real chance.

THE APPEAL THAT WAS WON ON THE BYLAW

A Commissioner denied eligibility citing an athletic motivation, but the family had a genuine, documented hardship the decision had not fully weighed. On appeal, counsel argued to the exact question, no violation of the rule, and the Hearing Officer agreed. The appeal was won not on sympathy but on a clean showing.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

My young athlete enrolled at the new school. Can they just start playing?

No. Enrolling academically does not make a student athletically eligible. The student must not compete, or even play in scrimmages, until the transfer is cleared.

We moved to a new house. Is that automatic varsity eligibility?

A bona fide, complete change of residence is the cleanest path, but it is not automatic; you have to document it thoroughly. A partial or paper move will not satisfy CIF.

The coach at the new school talked to us before we enrolled. Is that a problem?

It can be, and the answer is disclosure. Declare it on Form 510; over-disclosing usually lets the transfer proceed, sometimes with a sit-out period. Failing to disclose can cost a full year.

What is the difference between limited eligibility and a sit-out period?

Limited eligibility restricts to sub-varsity, often for a calendar year. A sit-out period lets the student become varsity-eligible partway through the season, generally the better outcome.

CIF denied or restricted my young athlete. Is that the end?

No. Limited-eligibility and denial decisions can be appealed, through the Commissioner, to the State CIF Appeals Office, and to a Hearing Officer. The Hearing Officer's decision is final, so it must be prepared carefully.

Do I need a lawyer for a CIF transfer?

Not always. A clean, well-documented first transfer is often manageable without one. For a denial, an undue-influence allegation, or a complicated case, experienced counsel can change the outcome.

What is the single biggest mistake families make?

Under-preparing because they assume their reason will obviously be accepted, and under-disclosing pre-enrollment contact. Document everything, disclose everything, and never assume CIF will simply understand.

REFERENCE

A GLOSSARY

RESIDENTIAL ELIGIBILITY. The default eligibility established at the school of first ninth-grade enrollment.

UNLIMITED (VARSITY) ELIGIBILITY. Play at any level, including varsity, immediately.

SIT-OUT PERIOD (SOP). A set period sitting out varsity before becoming varsity-eligible mid-season.

HARDSHIP WAIVER / EXEMPTION. A recognized circumstance that can support immediate eligibility without a change of residence.

UNDUE INFLUENCE / PRE-ENROLLMENT CONTACT. Improper athletic inducement, disclosed on Form 510.

FORM 510. The CIF Pre-Enrollment Contact Affidavit.

HEARING OFFICER. The impartial official whose appeal decision is final and binding.

TRANSFER ELIGIBILITY. The eligibility CIF determines for a student who changes schools.

LIMITED (SUB-VARSITY) ELIGIBILITY. A restriction to JV/Freshman level, often for a calendar year.

VALID CHANGE OF RESIDENCE. A bona fide, complete move of the family's permanent home.

ATHLETICALLY MOTIVATED TRANSFER. A move whose primary reason is athletic; not a valid basis for immediate eligibility.

FORM 207. The CIF Athletic Transfer Eligibility Application.

SECTION COMMISSIONER. The regional CIF official who makes the first eligibility decision.

TEN MYTHS THAT COST SEASONS

"Once my young athlete is enrolled, they can play."

Academic enrollment is not athletic eligibility. The transfer must be cleared by CIF first.

"A few texts with the coach do not count." CIF reads pre-enrollment contact broadly, and it must be disclosed on Form 510.

"CIF will understand our situation." CIF enforces rules, not sympathy. The burden is on you to show the transfer fits the rules.

"A denial is the end." Restrictions and denials can be appealed, through a multi-level process. Many are winnable.

"I can miss a deadline; they will understand." The appeal procedure is strict: mailed forms, exact fees, hard deadlines. Miss one and it is lost on procedure.

"We moved, so it is automatic." A change of residence must be bona fide, complete, and thoroughly documented. A paper move does not qualify.

"My reason is obviously valid, so I do not need much proof." CIF requires proof, not assurances. More proof is better.

"It is fine to describe the move however sounds best." False information can itself cost eligibility. Concealment is treated more harshly than the underlying facts.

"An appeal is about how unfair it is to my young athlete." The Hearing Officer applies facts to the bylaws. Win by showing no violation, not sympathy.

"I do not need a lawyer for any of this." For a clean move, maybe. For a denial or an appeal, experienced counsel can change the outcome.

Every myth shares a root: an understandable wish to trust that a good reason speaks for itself. The antidote is structure, documentation, disclosure, and current advice.

WHAT TO DO NEXT

THE ORDER THAT KEEPS A SEASON INTACT

If your young athlete is transferring, or has been restricted or denied: identify the real reason for the move and check honestly whether it fits a CIF-recognized basis; start gathering documentation now; talk to both schools' administrators early; avoid unnecessary pre-enrollment contact and disclose fully whatever did happen; enroll, then file Form 207 with complete, truthful information; confirm the current CIF rules for the year; and, if restricted or denied unfairly, appeal on time, on the right basis, following every procedural requirement exactly.

The CIF transfer process is bureaucratic, and it is not built to look out for your young athlete; that is your job. But it is navigable, and thousands of families come through it every year with their athlete's eligibility intact. Take a prepared, honest, and procedurally precise approach, get the right help when the situation calls for it, and you can move your young athlete to the right school without losing the season.

/ WORKING WITH LEOPOLDUS LAW, APC

Leopoldus Law is a sports and entertainment firm. Sports clients only. No exceptions. We advise families through CIF transfers, hardship applications, and appeals, and we work on flat rates wherever the matter allows, because you should know the cost before you say yes.

If you would like a firm to help protect your young athlete's eligibility or handle an appeal, we offer consultations to map your family's situation and ongoing counsel through the process. You can reach us anytime. Nights, weekends, and holidays are fine.

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BRANDON LEOPOLDUS, ESQ.

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Brandon Leopoldus umpired in professional baseball before he ever practiced law. Five leagues. Seven playoff series. Two All-Star games. One championship series. One infamous appearance on SportsCenter. That path, through the minor leagues and an Olympic family, is the lens he brings to every matter at Leopoldus Law, APC.

100+

ATHLETES ADVISED

25+

SPORTS

3

LEAGUES LAUNCHED

6

PRO TEAMS

4

GOVERNING BODIES

He advises families of student-athletes on CIF transfers, hardship applications, and appeals, guides parents through the documentation and disclosure that decide a case, and has helped athletes win eligibility that CIF initially denied.

His practice reaches the whole business of sport. He has served twice as Interim General Counsel for D.C. United of Major League Soccer, advised U.S. Olympic governing bodies, and helped develop and launch three startup leagues. He sits on the Board of Directors of the Sports Lawyers Association and teaches Sports Law as an adjunct professor at Loyola Law School in Los Angeles. His commentary has run in Sports Illustrated, ESPN, Teen Vogue, and The Daily Journal.

It traces back to watching his sister become the first Elite-level gymnast in Colorado, and to families he watched navigate the same pressures this guide addresses. He lives in Los Angeles with his dog Harvey, named for the Hall of Fame umpire Doug Harvey.

SOURCES & DISCLOSURES

ENDNOTES

1. Cal. Educ. Code §§ 33353, 35179 (the statutory framework under which CIF governs interscholastic athletics in California, including the requirement that CIF maintain fair and reasonable procedures for reviewing eligibility determinations). Statutes and CIF's governance framework change; confirm the current law.
2. CIF Constitution & Bylaws, Bylaw 206 (Residential Eligibility) (initial athletic eligibility is established at the school of first ninth-grade enrollment, and a bona fide, complete change of the family's residence is a recognized basis for eligibility at a new school). Confirm the current bylaw and your Section's rules.
3. CIF Constitution & Bylaws, Bylaw 207 (Transfer Eligibility) (governing the eligibility of a student who transfers schools, including unlimited and limited eligibility, the sit-out period, and the "following a coach" provisions at Bylaw 207.B). Confirm the current bylaw.
4. CIF Constitution & Bylaws, Bylaw 510 (Undue Influence / Pre-Enrollment Contact) (prohibiting undue influence to secure a student's attendance for athletic purposes and requiring disclosure of pre-enrollment athletic contact via Form 510). Confirm the current bylaw.
5. CIF Constitution & Bylaws, Bylaw 202 (Falsification / Ethics) (false or fraudulent information in connection with an eligibility determination can result in loss of eligibility and other penalties). Confirm the current bylaw.
6. CIF Transfer Eligibility Appeal Procedures (the three-level process: a determination by the Section Commissioner, an appeal to the State CIF Appeals Coordinator, and a hearing before an impartial Hearing Officer whose decision is final and binding), as described in CIF Parent Handbook II and the CIF Transfer Eligibility Appeal Administrative Regulations. Timelines and fees change annually; confirm with State CIF and your Section.
7. CIF Constitution & Bylaws, Bylaw 208 (Foreign Students) and related provisions governing special situations. Confirm the current bylaws for any special situation.

DISCLOSURES

This guide has been prepared by Leopoldus Law, APC for educational purposes only. It is current as of mid-2026 and provides general information about a topic of interest as of its publication date; it is not legal advice for any particular family or situation, and it does not create an attorney-client relationship between the reader and Leopoldus Law, APC or any of its attorneys.

CIF bylaws, forms, fees, appeal procedures, timelines, and recognized hardship categories change from year to year and vary by Section. Specifics stated here, including any dates, deadlines, or dollar amounts, may have changed or may not fit your situation. Confirm the current rules with the State CIF and your Section, and read the relevant bylaws and handbooks, before relying on anything here in a specific matter.

Scenarios in this guide are composites. Facts are drawn from multiple matters and altered so that no family is identifiable. No result described here predicts or guarantees the outcome of any other matter.

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