

Every Friday game day — fall and spring

Fall: Oct 9 • Oct 23 • Nov 6 • Nov 20

Spring: Apr 23 • May 7 • May 21 • May 28 • Jun 4 (playoffs)

Dismissal buses start pick-up for teams at 3:00 PM on EMPOWER game days at designated schools.
See table of contents.



EMPOWER New Haven

Season Two • 2026–2027

THE GUIDE FOR COACHES GUIDE



The Short Version — [read this first](#)

This fall is a **preseason**. Your job is player development and fun, not winning. **No score is kept.**

Your game-day essentials

- **Arrive by 3:30 PM**, stay until **6:00 PM**, and clock up to **2½ hours** (per your contract).
- **Games:** 8 field players plus a goalkeeper, two halves of 20–25 minutes, at 4:00 and 5:00 PM.
- **Equal minutes:** everyone plays as equally as possible.
- **Substitutions** only at dead whistles, led by the referee. Tell the referee “I need to sub” when the ball is dead or out.

Referees

Be cordial and patient. Treat the referee like you would treat your grandmother.

Parents during games

Do not engage. Redirect them to the lead coordinator and cite league rules. Only exception: a quick “I need to take my child and leave early.”

Communicating with families

Families receive your **email address**, not your phone number. A newsletter is encouraged (own template, Appendix B, or send it to the Help Desk to share through LeagueApps).

Players who join your team on game days

At least one **Fair Haven** player will play with **Martinez/FAME**, and at least one **Troup** player will play with **Barnard**. Contact Lisa or Wanda with questions.

Emergencies

Thunder, lightning or a code red: parents are called and players go to the bus platform, away from anything metal. Follow the field coordinator, who will try to shelter everyone indoors. Games are called as soon as conditions are unsafe. See Emergency procedures.

Key dates and contacts

Fall games: Oct 9, Oct 23, Nov 6, Nov 20. **Spring:** Apr 23, May 7, May 21, May 28, playoffs June 4. Matchups and buses are posted at newhavencounts.io/empower every Sunday evening before game week. Buses pick up at schools 3:00–3:15 PM.
Program Director: Lisa Pietrosimone. **Help Desk:** text 203-208-9249.

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For EMPOWER New Haven soccer coaches. Questions? Text the Help Desk at 203-208-9249.

1 Your role this season

- **Arrive on time.** Plan to arrive by **3:30 PM** on game days and stay until **6:00 PM**.
- **Clock up to 2½ hours** on game days, per your contract.
- **Develop players and have fun.** This fall is a preseason: do not try to win games, and no score is kept.
- **Share playing time** as equally as possible.
- **Keep the sideline calm.** Be cordial with referees and do not engage parents during games.
- **Stay in touch with families** through email and an optional newsletter.

Coaches typically drive their own cars to the fields. Practices are run by coaches at each school on Mondays and Fridays.

2 About the league

EMPOWER New Haven is a school-based soccer league for grades 3–8, run by New Haven Counts (NHC) in partnership with the City of New Haven and New Haven Public Schools. Our values are **Pride, Joy and Sportsmanship**. You are the heart of the program: you run practice, coach on game days, and set the tone for how kids experience the game.

Fall 2026 • Preseason

Player development and fun. **No score is kept**, coaches are not encouraged to try to win, and players share playing time as equally as possible.

Spring 2027 • League Cup

The league becomes competitive, with school-versus-school and citywide pride. There are four regular-season game days and a playoff day on June 4.

3 Season at a glance

Season	Game Fridays	Notes
Fall 2026 Preseason	Oct 9 · Oct 23 · Nov 6 · Nov 20	Sept 25 game day was cancelled. No score kept.
Spring 2027 League Cup	Apr 23 · May 7 · May 21 · May 28	Regular season. Spring practices begin April 7.
Spring 2027 Playoffs	June 4	Single elimination across both divisions: seeds 1–4 at Clinton Ave., seeds 5–8 at Kimberly Ave. Every team plays at least two games.

All games are on Fridays at 4:00 PM and 5:00 PM. The league does not reschedule once the season begins — missed games are forfeits.

Fall: who is playing whom, and the bus schedule, are posted on our website, newhavencounts.io/empower, every **Sunday evening before each game week**. **Spring:** the full schedule is released at the start of the season (a tentative draft is in Appendix A). Final school bus pick-up times are being sent by text this week.

4 Game day, step by step

When	What happens
Before 3:00 PM	Students are released from class to the bus platform.
3:00–3:15 PM	Buses pick up students at their schools and take them to the fields.
3:30 PM	Coaches arrive at the field (they drive their own cars) and are on the clock until about 6:00 PM.
4:00 PM	First games begin. Two halves of 20–25 minutes, depending on start time.
5:00 PM	Second games begin, with a different opponent.
About 6:00 PM	Games end. Families pick up their children, and coaches finish for the day.

5 How games work

- **8 field players plus a goalkeeper** per team (8v8 plus keepers).
- Each game has two halves of **20 to 25 minutes**, depending on start time. Referees and coaches have been told the timing.
- **No free-form substitutions.** Substitutions happen only at dead whistles (for example, out of bounds), and the referee leads them: the referee points to the sideline and calls for subs to come in.
- In the fall preseason, **everyone plays as equal minutes as possible**, and no score is kept.
- Every team plays two games on a game day, at 4:00 and 5:00, against two different opponents.

6 Working with referees

Treat the referee like you would treat your grandmother

Be kind, patient and cordial before, during and after games. Referees are working a low-cost league, just like you.

- Communicate with the referee about substitutions. When the ball is dead or out of bounds, say **“I need to sub.”**
- The referee will point to the sideline and call subs in. Wait for that signal.
- No free-form substitutions during live play.
- Do not argue calls. Concerns about a referee go to the Help Desk afterward, not to the referee.

7 Parents on game day

Do not engage with parents during games

League rules say coaches and parents do not talk during games. If a parent approaches you, **immediately redirect them to the lead coordinator** and let them know the league rules.

- **One acceptable exception:** a quick message that a parent needs to take their child and leave early.
- **Never** discuss playing time, strategy, questions or complaints during the game.
- Parents who behave disrespectfully are not allowed back at games and must meet with the Program Director. Please tell the coordinator right away if you see this.

8 Communicating with families

- Families receive coaches' **email addresses** (not phone numbers), so expect emails before game days.
- A newsletter is **encouraged, not required**. It keeps families updated on how you coach and what the team is learning.
- Use your own template, the example in Appendix B, or send your update to the Help Desk (203-208-9249) and we will send it through LeagueApps.
- Keep newsletters positive: effort, skills and fun, not scores.

9 Players who join your team on game days

Some players will play with your team on game days without practicing with you. For the fall:

- At least one player from **Fair Haven** will show up to play with the **Martinez/FAME** team.
- At least one player from **Troup** will show up to play with the **Barnard** team.
- Welcome them like any other player and include them in equal playing time.
- Contact Lisa or Wanda for more information about these players.

10 Fields, divisions and buses

North Division • Clinton Ave. Fields

- Celentano/East Rock
- Conte
- Edgewood
- Hooker
- Jepson
- Martinez/FAME
- Nathan Hale
- Ross Woodward

South Division • Kimberly Ave. Field

- Barnard
- Daniels/Truman
- Davis
- Highville
- Hill Central/Clemente/B. Ross
- L.W. Beecher
- Mauro-Sheridan
- St. Martin

Location	On-site field coordinators
Kimberly Ave. Field (South)	Wanda Faison and Lisa Pietrosimone
Clinton Ave. Fields (North)	James Buxton and Erniel Cruz — reach them by texting the Help Desk at 203-208-9249

Field locations (tap to open GPS): Clinton Ave. Fields — [Clinton Avenue School, 293 Clinton Ave., New Haven, CT 06513](#). Kimberly Ave. Field — [Betsy Ross Arts Magnet School, 150 Kimberly Ave., New Haven, CT 06519](#).

Players who join a team on game days

Fair Haven athletes are welcome to join the Martinez/FAME team on game days. Troup athletes are welcome to join the Barnard team on game days.

Buses

- Buses run from each school to the fields. Buses have been instructed to pick up between **3:00 and 3:15 PM**.
- This is a **dismissal bus, not a field-trip bus**. No adult has to ride.
- Coaches may ride if they have a way to get back to their car at school. Most coaches drive to the fields instead.

11 Which schools have buses

These schools have a dismissal bus on game days. Buses are instructed to pick up between **3:00 and 3:15 PM**. Final pick-up times are being sent by text. Specific bus pairings and routes are not final yet and will be shared later.

Schools with a bus

North Division • Clinton Ave. Fields

- Celentano
- Conte
- East Rock
- Edgewood
- Fair Haven
- FAME
- Hooker
- Jepson
- Martinez
- Nathan Hale
- Ross Woodward

South Division • Kimberly Ave. Field

- Barnard
- Daniels
- Davis
- Highville
- Hill Central
- L.W. Beecher
- Mauro-Sheridan
- St. Martin
- Truman

Schools without a bus on game days

- **Troup** does not have a bus. Troup athletes can join the Barnard team on game days; families arrange transportation.
- **Clemente** does not have a bus.
- Satellite locations do not get a bus. Families arrange transportation or carpooling.

12 Telling parents how to enroll

Families will ask you how to sign up. Here is what to tell them. It is the same two steps for every family: **After School program first, then the soccer league.**

Quick way to register: text 203-208-9249

The flyer says it best: **TEXT TO REGISTER 203-208-9249.** The league is open to all New Haven students participating in a New Haven Counts After School program.

Step 1 • Enroll in the After School program

- Sign up through AfterSchoolHQ: <https://afterschoolhq.com/NHA>
- The program costs \$25 per week and is paid to the City of New Haven through AfterSchoolHQ.
- **Fee waiver (After School program only):** if your family does not already have one, request it from the City of New Haven at 475-355-0833. The waiver covers the After School program only, **not** the soccer league.
- Your child must attend the After School program at least two days a week to practice with the team.

Step 2 • Join the Friday game day roster (soccer league)

- Register on LeagueApps: [https://newhavencounts.leagueapps.com/leagues/soccer-\(outdoor\)](https://newhavencounts.leagueapps.com/leagues/soccer-(outdoor))
- Use code **ALEXION** at checkout to remove the league fee.
- LeagueApps is also where families receive league updates, so use an email and phone you check.

What to tell a parent in one minute

- “Sign up for the After School program at AfterSchoolHQ. If you need a fee waiver, call the City at 475-355-0833. It covers After School only.”
- “Then register for the soccer league on LeagueApps and use code ALEXION to remove the league fee.”
- “Or just text 203-208-9249 and the Help Desk will help you.”
- Do not collect payments or sign families up yourself. Send them to the links or the Help Desk.

13 Emergency procedures

Thunder and lightning

All parents are called. Students go to the **bus platform** of the school and are told not to touch anything metal or anything attached to the building while we wait for parents to be reached.

At the fields, field coordinators will try to get inside and ask school staff whether we can shelter in the building.

Code red or a neighborhood safety concern

Handled **the same way as thunder and lightning:** parents are called, students go to the bus platform, and field coordinators try to get everyone inside.

Weather and field conditions

On game days we will call games **as soon as we learn** the field will be unplayable, or that conditions will make it not fun or not safe for students. Families are notified through LeagueApps and AfterSchoolHQ.

If there are not enough bus drivers

If the bus company has too many drivers call out, we will tell **schools** and **families** if other transportation to the fields must be arranged.

- **Home first:** all students go home on their regular school buses, then walk, drive or carpool to the fields.
- **Recycled buses:** one driver makes three stops, so students arrive at the field around **3:45, 4:15 and 4:45** instead of all at 3:45. Some or all of the 4:00 games may be cancelled.

Whatever challenge comes up, we will work to solve it and communicate the options.

What this means for you

- Move players toward the bus platform or indoors when the coordinator calls it. Do not wait for the clouds to look closer.
- Tell players not to touch anything metal or the building while waiting.
- Follow the field coordinator's lead on calling games and on altered start times.

14 Who to contact

Person	Role	Email (before game days)	Phone (game days)
Lisa Pietrosimone	Program Director, New Haven Counts	lisa@newhavencounts.org	203-843-7199
Wanda Faison	Program Manager, New Haven Counts	wanda@newhavencounts.org	203-606-6985

Email Lisa or Wanda **before** game days. Call or text them **on** game days. For anything else, text the **Help Desk** at 203-208-9249.

If you need to...	Contact
Players who join your team on game days	Lisa or Wanda
A parent approaches you during a game	The lead field coordinator at your field
Sending a newsletter through LeagueApps	Help Desk, text 203-208-9249
Reaching the Clinton Ave. coordinators	Help Desk, text 203-208-9249
Anything about pay, timesheets or schedule	Help Desk, text 203-208-9249

A Spring 2027 tentative schedule

Tentative — subject to change. Each team plays two games on each of the four regular-season Fridays (4:00 and 5:00), eight games in all: every team in its division once, plus one rematch. No team plays the same opponent twice on one day. Field numbers may change on game day.

North Division • Clinton Ave. Fields

Game	Field 1	Field 2	Field 3	Field 4
Apr 23 4:00 PM	Celentano/East Rock vs Ross Woodward	Conte vs Nathan Hale	Edgewood vs Martinez/FAME	Hooker vs Jepson
Apr 23 5:00 PM	Celentano/East Rock vs Nathan Hale	Ross Woodward vs Martinez/FAME	Conte vs Jepson	Edgewood vs Hooker
May 7 4:00 PM	Celentano/East Rock vs Martinez/FAME	Nathan Hale vs Jepson	Ross Woodward vs Hooker	Conte vs Edgewood
May 7 5:00 PM	Celentano/East Rock vs Jepson	Martinez/FAME vs Hooker	Nathan Hale vs Edgewood	Ross Woodward vs Conte
May 21 4:00 PM	Celentano/East Rock vs Hooker	Jepson vs Edgewood	Martinez/FAME vs Conte	Nathan Hale vs Ross Woodward
May 21 5:00 PM	Celentano/East Rock vs Edgewood	Hooker vs Conte	Jepson vs Ross Woodward	Martinez/FAME vs Nathan Hale
May 28 4:00 PM	Celentano/East Rock vs Conte	Edgewood vs Ross Woodward	Hooker vs Nathan Hale	Jepson vs Martinez/FAME
May 28 5:00 PM	Celentano/East Rock vs Ross Woodward	Conte vs Nathan Hale	Edgewood vs Martinez/FAME	Hooker vs Jepson

South Division · Kimberly Ave. Field

Game	Field 1	Field 2	Field 3	Field 4
Apr 23 4:00 PM	Barnard vs St. Martin	Daniels/Truman vs Mauro-Sheridan	Davis vs L.W. Beecher	Highville vs Hill Central/Clemente/B. Ross
Apr 23 5:00 PM	Barnard vs Mauro-Sheridan	St. Martin vs L.W. Beecher	Daniels/Truman vs Hill Central/Clemente/B. Ross	Davis vs Highville
May 7 4:00 PM	Barnard vs L.W. Beecher	Mauro-Sheridan vs Hill Central/Clemente/B. Ross	St. Martin vs Highville	Daniels/Truman vs Davis
May 7 5:00 PM	Barnard vs Hill Central/Clemente/B. Ross	L.W. Beecher vs Highville	Mauro-Sheridan vs Davis	St. Martin vs Daniels/Truman
May 21 4:00 PM	Barnard vs Highville	Hill Central/Clemente/B. Ross vs Davis	L.W. Beecher vs Daniels/Truman	Mauro-Sheridan vs St. Martin
May 21 5:00 PM	Barnard vs Davis	Highville vs Daniels/Truman	Hill Central/Clemente/B. Ross vs St. Martin	L.W. Beecher vs Mauro-Sheridan
May 28 4:00 PM	Barnard vs Daniels/Truman	Davis vs St. Martin	Highville vs Mauro-Sheridan	Hill Central/Clemente/B. Ross vs L.W. Beecher
May 28 5:00 PM	Barnard vs St. Martin	Daniels/Truman vs Mauro-Sheridan	Davis vs L.W. Beecher	Highville vs Hill Central/Clemente/B. Ross

June 4 playoff day (tentative)

Teams are seeded 1–8 in their own division by regular-season record. The **top four teams from each division** (North and South) all play at **Clinton Ave. Fields**. The **bottom four teams from each division** all play at **Kimberly Ave. Field**. North plays South: the top seed in one division faces the fourth seed in the other, and so on.

Time	Clinton Ave. Fields • seeds 1–4	Kimberly Ave. Field • seeds 5–8
4:00 PM Round 1	Game 1: North #1 vs South #4 Game 2: North #2 vs South #3 Game 3: North #3 vs South #2 Game 4: North #4 vs South #1	Game 1: North #5 vs South #8 Game 2: North #6 vs South #7 Game 3: North #7 vs South #6 Game 4: North #8 vs South #5
5:00 PM Round 2	Semifinals: winner of Game 1 vs winner of Game 2, and winner of Game 3 vs winner of Game 4. Second games: loser of Game 1 vs loser of Game 2, and loser of Game 3 vs loser of Game 4.	Same format as Clinton Ave.: two semifinals and two second games for Round 1 losers.
6:00 PM Final	The final at the site, played as a third game that everyone can watch.	The final at the site, played as a third game that everyone can watch.

Single elimination. Teams that lose their first game are out of the title race but still play a second game, so every team plays at least two. The day runs until about 7:00 PM. Because teams travel to their playoff site, playoff-day bus routes may differ from the regular season.

B Newsletter template

Copy this into your own email or document and fill in the brackets. Keep it short and positive.

Subject: [Team name] update — week of [date]

Hi [Team name] families,

This week at practice: [one or two skills we worked on, such as passing or dribbling].

Something we are proud of: [effort, teamwork or improvement you noticed. Celebrate effort, not scores].

This Friday: Buses pick up at school between 3:00 and 3:15 PM. Games are at 4:00 and 5:00 PM. Please send water, athletic shoes or cleats, and one light and one dark shirt.

A reminder for game day: Parents are our kind, polite, silent observers. Cheer and celebrate, and let the coaches coach.

Questions? Email me at [your email] before game days. Thank you for sharing your child with us.

[Your name], Coach, [School]

You can also send your update to the Help Desk (203-208-9249) and we will send it through LeagueApps.