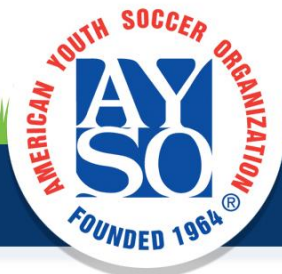
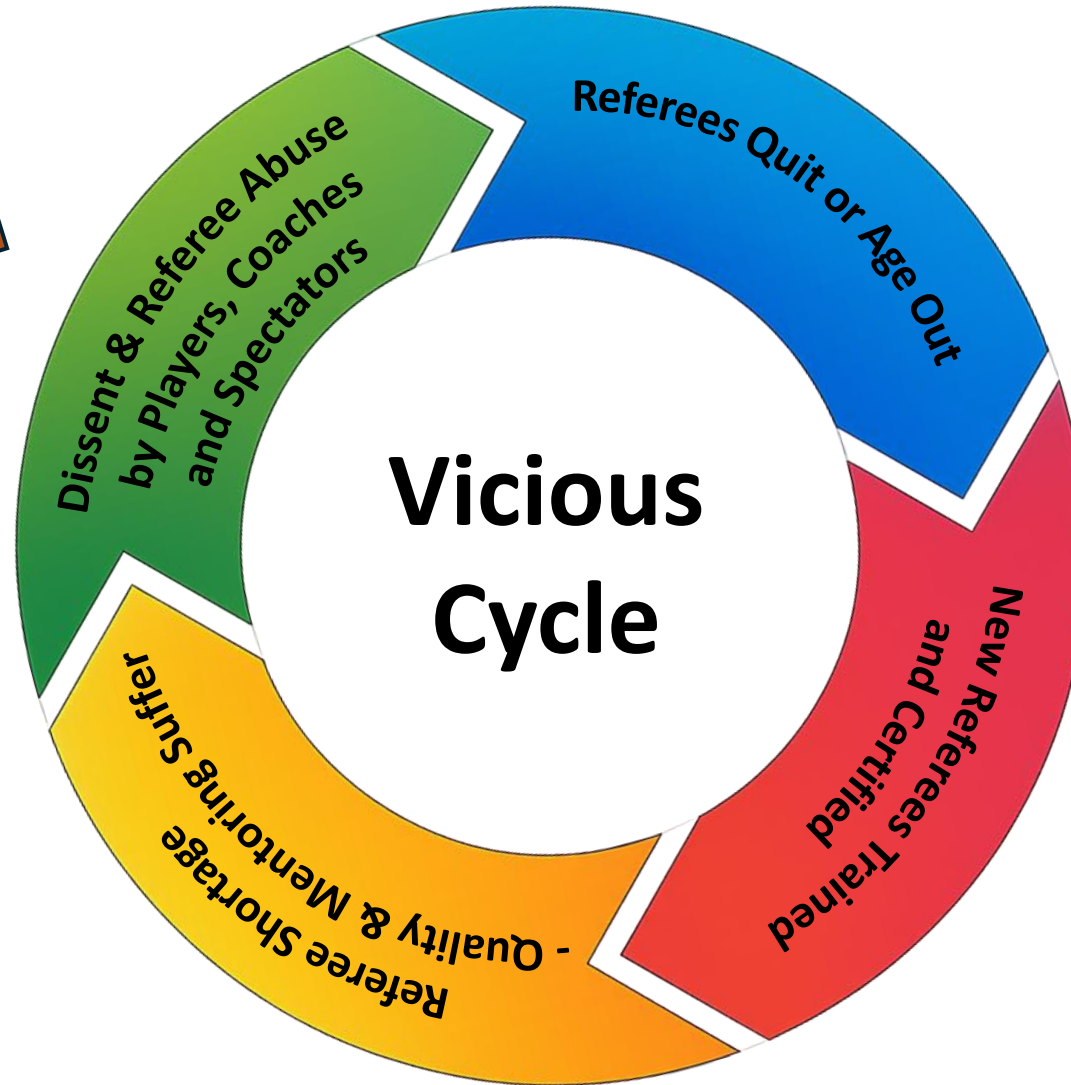


# **U.S. Soccer and AYSO Referee Abuse Prevention (RAP) Program**

EVERYONE PLAYS® BALANCED TEAMS OPEN REGISTRATION POSITIVE COACHING GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP PLAYER DEVELOPMENT







# The Spectrum of Bad Behavior

Frustration

Dissent

Referee Abuse

Referee  
Action

- Do nothing
- Player counseling
- Non-verbal warning
- Verbal warning

- Verbal warning
- Caution
- Send-Off / Dismissal
- Referee or Incident Report, as appropriate

- Send-Off / Dismissal
- Coaches conference during match
- Referee or Incident Report, as appropriate

# “Frustration” is *not* the same as “Dissent”

Frustrating verbal outbursts are common during games. Most of the time, they are simply *reactive* statements of frustration and not directed as dissent against the Referee.

Examples include:

- A player kicks the ball to an opponent and mutters, “Shit!”
- A player misses what you perceive as an easy goal opportunity and you exclaim to the player, “Come on. Focus!”
- The referee, *in your opinion*, misses a call and you say, “That was a foul, Ref!”

The event happens, a reactive outburst is made, the referee give you a look or the “enough” hand signal, and we move on. If it is too public, perhaps there is a verbal warning from the Referee.

# “Dissent” is *not* the same as “Referee Abuse”

Dissent is defined as “a *public* protest or disagreement (verbal and/or physical) with a match official’s decision; punishable by a Caution (yellow card)” to a player and/or team official (e.g., coach).\*

IFAB Laws of the Game Glossary

Examples include:

- “Hey ref! Are you paying attention to the game?”
- “Call the foul. That was an obvious trip.”
- A player kicking the ball away when a foul is awarded to the opposing team

\* Spectators are not Cautioned (yellow card) or Sent-Off (red card) – they are warned and dismissed (ejected).

# “Dissent” is *not* the same as “Referee Abuse”

*Dissent* is not always *Abuse*, but *Abuse* is an extreme form of *Dissent*.

*Referee Abuse* is **extreme**, deliberate, and non-contact behavior that causes a Referee significant harm, or demonstrates a material lack of respect.

*Referee Assault* is any deliberate physical action against a Referee.

Any and all forms of Referee Abuse or Assault require the submission of a Referee or Incident Report.





# NON-PHYSICAL ABUSE

**Contact doesn't have to be made for damage to occur.** Non-physical abuse – hurtful language and aggressive behavior – has no place in our game. It disrupts matches, interferes with the referee's ability to do their job, and it hurts the game for everyone. Left unchecked, non-physical abuse takes an emotional toll and has the potential to escalate into physically dangerous situations. The updated policy is designed to eliminate this behavior.

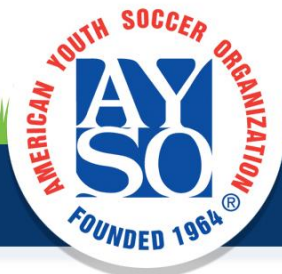
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## NON-PHYSICAL ABUSE

# LEVEL 1: VERBAL TAUNTING

Speech or gestures intended to belittle the referee, damage their credibility, and undermine their ability to effectively officiate the game.

## DEFINITION

Insulting, Belittling, Insinuating or Taunting Behavior  
Undermining Referee Authority.

## EXAMPLES

- **Questioning Competence:**  
*"Do you even know the rules?"*
- **Mocking Appearance or Abilities:**  
*"Did you forget your glasses?"*
- **Accusations of Bias:**  
*"What's the other team paying you?"*
- **Dismissive Language:**  
*"You suck."*
- **Aggressive Tone:**  
*"You're the worst ref we've ever had."*

## RECOMMENDED APPROACH

If you have concerns about a call, respectfully ask the referee for clarification. Share your perspective calmly, avoiding yelling, insults, or offensive gestures.

**Disclaimer:** These are only a few examples of abuse – other actions or statements may also fall into this category.



## NON-PHYSICAL ABUSE

# LEVEL 2: HARASSMENT/INTIMIDATION

Occurs when language or body language is intended to make a referee feel unsafe but where the threat of violence remains unspoken.

### DEFINITION

Harassment, Intimidation, Retaliation, Abusive or Threatening (Non-Physical) Language.

### EXAMPLES

- **Using Expletives:**  
"That call was complete \$H\*t!"
- **Personal Attacks:**  
"You're a F-ing joke!"
- **Escalating Intensity:**  
"You can't make a single good f\*\*\*\*\* call!"
- **Getting In The Referee's Face.**

### RECOMMENDED APPROACH

Take a moment to gather yourself before you speak to the referee. Ask for clarification calmly, aiming for constructive communication rather than causing conflict.

*Disclaimer: These are only a few examples of abuse – other actions or statements may also fall into this category.*



## NON-PHYSICAL ABUSE

# LEVEL 3: THREATS/DEROGATORY LANGUAGE

When aggressive language or threats of violence enter the mix – or when abuse spills online.



## DEFINITION

Aggression, Attacking, Derogatory, Cyberbullying, Doxing, or Threatening (Physical / Violence) Language.

## EXAMPLES

- **Threatening To Inflict Harm On A Referee:**
  - “You’re gonna pay for that!”
  - “I’ll see you in the parking lot”
  - “I’m going to shove that card down your throat!”
  - “You better watch your back!”
- **Public Attacks Online** such as uploading a post to social media attacking the referee.

## RECOMMENDED APPROACH

When you feel frustrated by a referee’s call, take a moment to pause and breathe. Reflect on how your reaction impacts your experience and the overall atmosphere of the game for everyone involved.

***Disclaimer:** These are only a few examples of abuse – other actions or statements may also fall into this category.*





## NON-PHYSICAL ABUSE

# LEVEL 4: OFFENSIVE OR DISCRIMINATORY ACT



U.S. Soccer is inclusive of everyone. Discrimination – attacking referees for who they are, or offending their dignity – will not be tolerated.

### DEFINITION

Discriminatory or derogatory words or actions on account of race, skin color, ethnicity, nationality, social origin, gender, disability, sexual orientation, language, or religion.

### EXAMPLES

- Racial or ethnic slurs.
- Offensive gestures.
- Homophobic language.
- Using harmful or sexist stereotypes.

### RECOMMENDED APPROACH

Remember that soccer is for everyone. We're all human, and everybody deserves the opportunity to enjoy the game without being made to feel bad about who they are.

**Disclaimer:** These are only a few examples of abuse – other actions or statements may also fall into this category.





# PHYSICAL ABUSE

**Physical abuse makes the game unsafe for everyone.** It's also easy to avoid. Outside of friendly handshakes, there's never a reason to touch the referee. Any unwanted physical contact is considered physical abuse. Physical violence can also result in criminal charges, lawsuits, or medical liability.

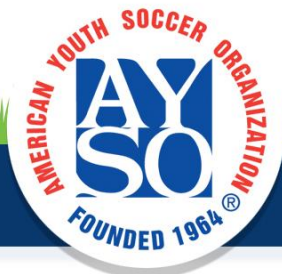
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## PHYSICAL ABUSE

# LEVEL 1: MINOR OR SLIGHT TOUCHING

Even minor deliberate touches can be unwanted and make referees feel unsafe and are considered physical abuse.



### DEFINITION

Minor or Slight Deliberate Touching.

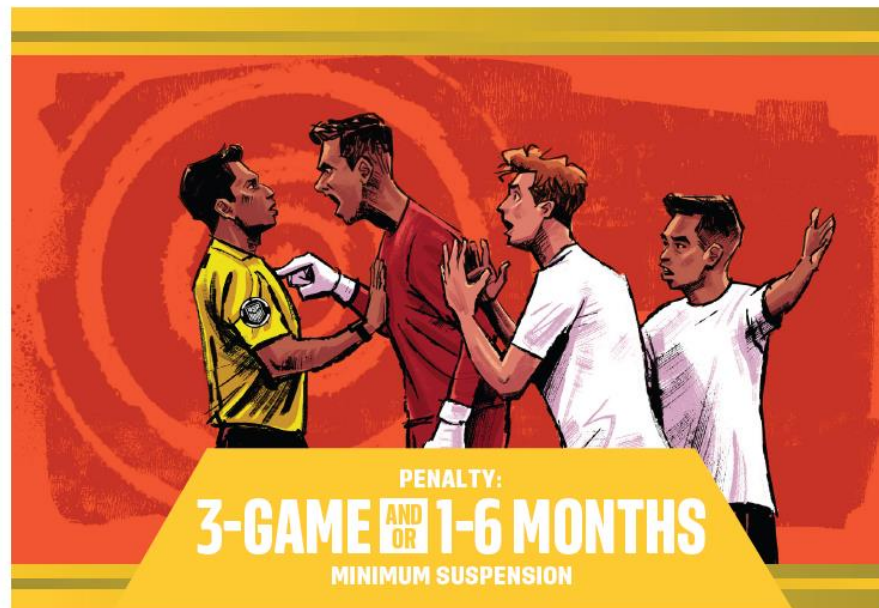
### EXAMPLES

- Tapping the referee's shoulder to get their attention.
- Touching the referee's chest with your finger.
- Grabbing the referee's jersey to get their attention.
- Intentionally bumping lightly into the referee.

### RECOMMENDED APPROACH

Respectfully get the referee's attention without touching them – and, even in the heat of the moment, make a conscious effort to keep your hands to yourself.

*Disclaimer: These are only a few examples of abuse – other actions or statements may also fall into this category.*





## PHYSICAL ABUSE

# LEVEL 2: INTENTIONAL CONFRONTATION



Escalation of using contact to intimidate or provoke a physical confrontation – or causing damage to property – without the intent to cause bodily harm.

## DEFINITION

Pushing, Grabbing, Pulling, Squeezing, Pinching, Lightly Slapping, Use of Object in Non-Striking Manner, or Physical Property Damage

## EXAMPLES

- Shoving the referee.
- Forcefully grabbing the referee's arm.
- Throwing a water bottle at the ground in front of the referee.
- Dumping the referee's bag into a trashcan.
- Aggressively grabbing the referee's jersey.
- Following the referee to the parking lot or to their car.

## RECOMMENDED APPROACH

Understand that this behavior not only won't change the outcome on the field, it will keep you out of the game for a long time. Channel that energy to drive better on-field performance. Remove yourself from the situation if you need to calm down.

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## PHYSICAL ABUSE

# LEVEL 3: VIOLENT CONTACT

Malicious, violent contact intended to cause bodily harm – this is considered assault and can result in criminal punishment, legal suits, and medical liability.



### DEFINITION

Hitting, Punching, Elbowing, Kicking, Biting, Spitting, Choking, Tackling, Throwing or Use of Object or Any Part of Body (Forearm, Knee, Head) in a Striking Manner

### EXAMPLES

- Kicking the referee's shin.
- Throwing a punch at the referee.
- Placing hands on the neck to choke the referee.
- Throwing a water bottle with intent to hit the referee.
- Intentionally kicking the ball at the referee.

### RECOMMENDED APPROACH

Before physical abuse ever escalates to this level, there are plenty of opportunities to choose another course of action. Remove yourself from the situation and give yourself time for your anger to defuse before doing something with serious long-term consequences.

*Disclaimer: These are only a few examples of abuse – other actions or statements may also fall into this category.*



# PENALTIES MATRIX



The **Penalties Matrix** defines consequences associated with physical and non-physical offenses against Referees.

## NON-PHYSICAL OFFENSES of gross misconduct, abuse, and / or assault

NON-PHYSICAL *	MIN. GAMES	TIME
Insulting, Belittling, Insinuating or Taunting Behavior Undermining Referee Authority	2	
Harassment, Intimidation, Retaliation, Abusive, or Threatening (Non Physical) Language	4	
Aggression, Attacking, Derogatory, Cyberbullying, Doxing or Threatening (Physical / Violence) Language	6	6 - 24 Months
Offensive or Discriminatory Act	10	12 - 24 Months

Level 1

Level 2

Level 3

Level 4

## PHYSICAL OFFENSES of gross misconduct, abuse, and / or assault

PHYSICAL *	MIN. GAMES	TIME
Minor or Slight Deliberate Touching	3	1 - 6 Months
Pushing, Grabbing, Pulling, Squeezing, Pinching, Lightly Slapping, Use of Object in Non Striking Manner, or Physical Property Damage	10	6 - 24 Months
Hitting, Punching, Elbowing, Kicking, Biting, Spiting, Choking, Tackling, Throwing or Use of Object or Any Part of Body (Forearm, Knee, Head) in a Striking Manner		12 Months - Lifetime

Level 1

Level 2

Level 3

(\*) **Disclaimer:** These are only a few examples of abuse – other actions or statements may also fall into this category.


### KEY PENALTY FACTORS

- Single offenses are at **minimum the prescribed game penalty or time penalty** for non red zone offenses
- Penalties can be **both game and time depending on severity / circumstances**
- Second time offenders receive **double punishment**
- Third time offenders receive a **lifetime ban**
- More than one offense at the same time is **at least the punishment for the most serious offense**
- Offenses against minors are automatically subject to a **"minor multiplier" resulting in triple punishment**
- **One offense warning per league** to be managed by states and leagues collaboratively
- Game consequences are **inclusive of 1 game penalty for any red cards given**
- Optionality for **50% penalty for first offense from a minor**

Please follow your current reporting structure – updated reporting procedure will be a part of Phase 3..

It is not the Referee's responsibility to determine, educate or debate with the offender the penalties/sanctions which may be imposed. This is the responsibility of the RAP Program Administrator and the RAP Program's Disciplinary Panel.

## Incident Report for Spectators

 <b>AYSO INCIDENT REPORT FORM</b>		Return <u>completed</u> form to the Regional Commissioner, Safety Director, Area Director, or Tournament Director.	
Complete this form for any of the following: (check type) <input type="checkbox"/> Injury/illness <input type="checkbox"/> Threats <input type="checkbox"/> Fights <input type="checkbox"/> Property damage <input type="checkbox"/> Calls to Police <input type="checkbox"/> Other			
AFFECTED PARTY: <input type="checkbox"/> Player <input type="checkbox"/> Official <input type="checkbox"/> Coach <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Spectator <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer <input type="checkbox"/> Other		AYSO ID # (Required)	Region # 1/D/18 (Required)
Last Name: Rhonda First Name: Bignmouth MI:		Birth date:	
Address:		City:	State: Zip:
Does the injured person have medical insurance? YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>		If yes, please provide name of company and policy #:	
<b>GUARDIAN/PARENT (if affected party is a minor):</b>			
Last Name:		First Name:	Address (if different than above):
Email 1:		Cell Ph:	
Email 2:		Cell Ph:	
Email 3:		Cell Ph:	
<b>INCIDENT INFO:</b> Date of Incident: 4/13/2025		Age Division: 16UG	<input type="checkbox"/> Boys <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Girls <input type="checkbox"/> Co-ed
Location (if applicable-Tournament name): Marine Avenue Park		Time of Incident: 1:30 PM	
Team Involved #1: Blue Warriors		Coach Name: Holmes	
Team Involved #2: Green Goblins		Coach Name: Sorenson	
Region # 1/D/18		Region # 1/D/18	
<b>FOR INJURIES: BODY PART INJURED</b>		<b>TYPE OF INJURY/ILLNESS</b>	<b>FIELD SURFACE</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Ankle (L/R) <input type="checkbox"/> Shoulder(L/R) <input type="checkbox"/> Tooth <input type="checkbox"/> Knee (L/R) <input type="checkbox"/> Wrist (L/R) <input type="checkbox"/> Back <input type="checkbox"/> Leg <input type="checkbox"/> Finger <input type="checkbox"/> Neck <input type="checkbox"/> Foot <input type="checkbox"/> Eye (L/R) <input type="checkbox"/> Internal <input type="checkbox"/> Toe <input type="checkbox"/> Ear (L/R) <input type="checkbox"/> No injury <input type="checkbox"/> Arm <input type="checkbox"/> Nose <input type="checkbox"/> Contusion <input type="checkbox"/> Hand <input type="checkbox"/> Head		<input type="checkbox"/> Abrasion <input type="checkbox"/> Dislocation <input type="checkbox"/> Pain <input type="checkbox"/> Burn <input type="checkbox"/> Foreign Body <input type="checkbox"/> Seizures <input type="checkbox"/> Cardiac <input type="checkbox"/> Fracture <input type="checkbox"/> Sting/Bite <input type="checkbox"/> Cold Injury <input type="checkbox"/> Heat Exhaustion <input type="checkbox"/> Strain <input type="checkbox"/> Concussion <input type="checkbox"/> Laceration <input type="checkbox"/> Sprain <input type="checkbox"/> Contusion <input type="checkbox"/> Nausea <input type="checkbox"/> COVID-19	<input type="checkbox"/> Dirt <input type="checkbox"/> Grass <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Turf <input type="checkbox"/> Indoor
<b>LOCATION</b>		<input type="checkbox"/> Before Competition/Event <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> During Competition/Event <input type="checkbox"/> After Competition/Event <input type="checkbox"/> Concession Area <input type="checkbox"/> Parking Lot <input type="checkbox"/> Restrooms	
<b>CAUSE</b>		<b>OUTCOME</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Collision (participant/spectator) <input type="checkbox"/> Struck by falling/flying object <input type="checkbox"/> Struck by or fell into goal <input type="checkbox"/> Animal/insect bite/sting <input type="checkbox"/> Slip/Fall <input type="checkbox"/> Assault/Sexual <input type="checkbox"/> Assault/Non-Sexual <input type="checkbox"/> Property Damage		No care given: <input type="checkbox"/> Not Needed <input type="checkbox"/> Patient Refused Released: <input type="checkbox"/> To Parent <input type="checkbox"/> To Personal Vehicle	
Referral: <input type="checkbox"/> To Doctor <input type="checkbox"/> To Hospital/Clinic		EMS transport: <input type="checkbox"/> Region Recommended <input type="checkbox"/> Patient/Parent Requested	
<b>POLICE REPORT FILED:</b>		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Report No:		Officer's Name & Contact No:	
Describe how the incident, injury or property damage occurred: (use the backside or attach a separate sheet if necessary – may attach a copy of the Referee Game Misconduct Report)			
In the 35th minute, a spectator (later identified as Rhonda Bignmouth) publicly yelled, "You're the worst referee in the history of referees!". This is a violation of the Referee Abuse Prevention program, Level 2 (Harassment/Intimidation). The spectator was located on the Blue Warriors side of the field. The Coach (Holmes) was asked by the Referee to (1) identify the spectator and (2) dismiss (eject) her from the field and general vicinity. Play was suspended by the Referee until after the spectator had left the vicinity of the field.			
<b>WITNESS INFORMATION – Confidential</b>			
Name	Address	Phone Number	
Name	Address	Phone Number	
<b>Person/volunteer completing/submitting this form:</b>			
Name: Richard Ballard	Signature:	Cell: (310) 555-1212	
Position Title: Referee	E-mail address: referee.richard@gmail.com	Date: 4/13/2025	
RC or Safety Director (print name):	Signature:	Date:	
AYSO Staff ONLY: Email completed form to riskmanagement@ayso.org. Questions? Email or call 800-872-2976.			

Rev 06-2021 hv

Ask for help from the Coach regarding the name of the offending spectator. *It is the Coach's responsibility to manage their sideline and assist the Referee in this regard* (failure to do so is considered Referee Abuse committed by the Coach).

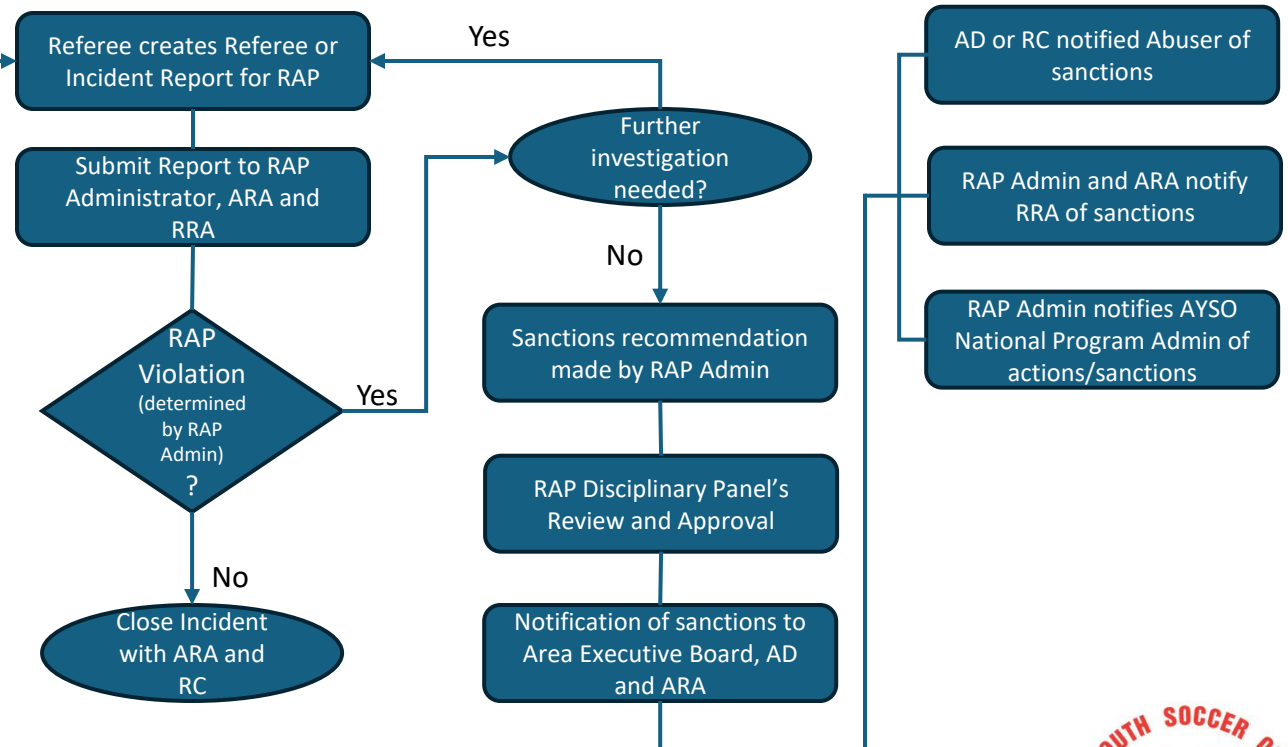
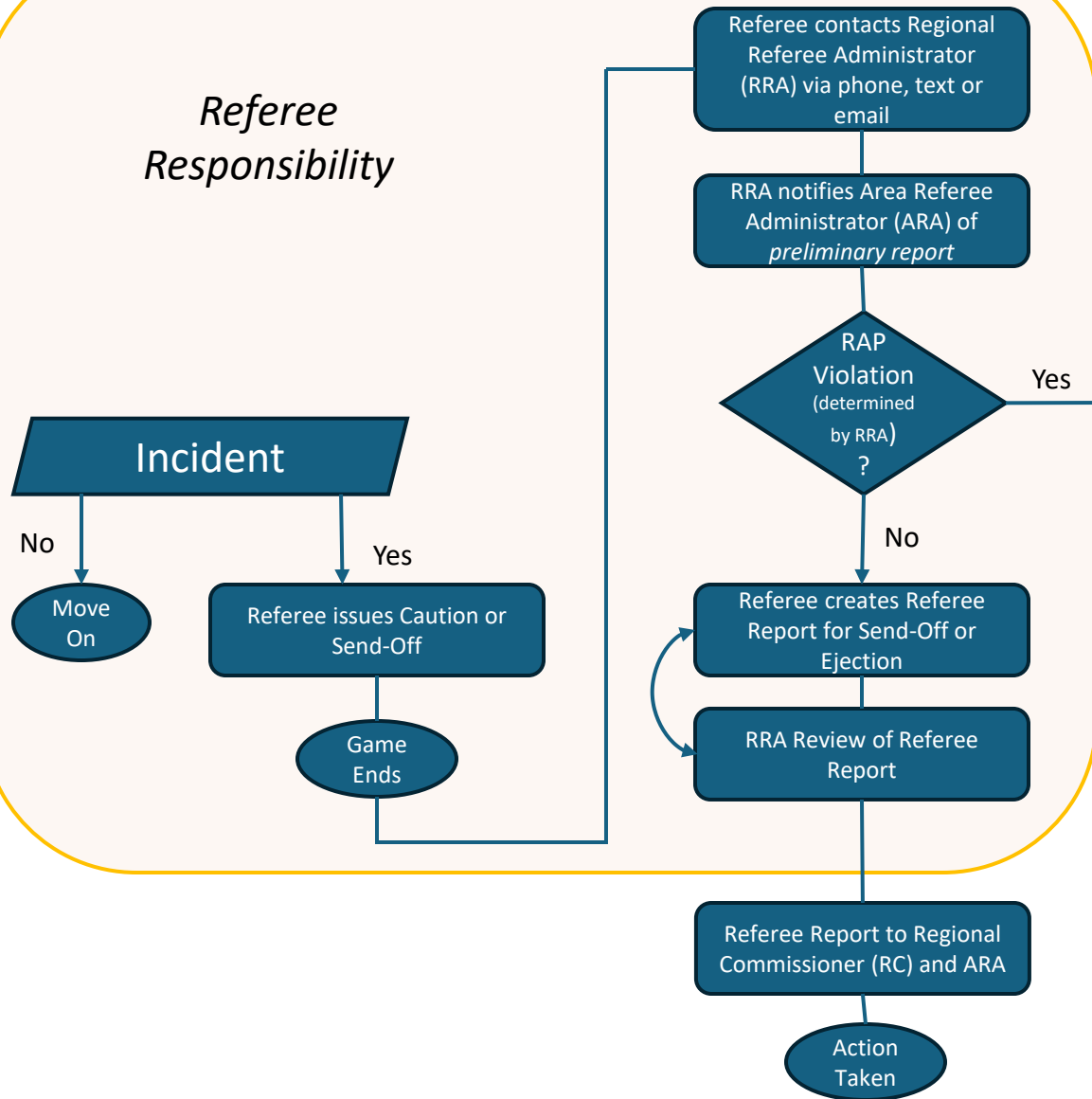
If the Coach tries, but cannot get the name, provide a simple description of the offending spectator (e.g., female, short hair, glasses, etc.).

If the Coach *refuses* to get the name, include the refusal in this Report and a simple description of the offending spectator.



# RAP Program Reporting Process

## Referee Responsibility



# Questions?

RAP Program Administrator

Scott Jarus, [ayso1daara@gmail.com](mailto:ayso1daara@gmail.com)

Area Referee Administrator (ARA)

Chris Wong, [ayso1dara@gmail.com](mailto:ayso1dara@gmail.com)

The full RAP presentation is posted on the Area 1D Website.