



# Respecting Our Referees

This document outlines the expected standards of behavior towards referees in accordance with the U.S. Soccer Referee Abuse Prevention policy, as adopted by AYSO.

Referees are essential to the game and deserve to be treated with respect. We are all responsible for helping kids have fun playing soccer, and taking anger out on referees negatively impacts everyone and the future of soccer.

## **Key Principles**

- Respect the Call: The call on the field stands.
- Protecting Our Referees: We are committed to ensuring the emotional and physical well-being of our referees.
- No Physical Abuse: There is never a reason to touch a referee outside of friendly handshakes.

## **Levels of Unacceptable Verbal Behavior**

The following outlines different levels of *verbal* abuse against referees:

- LEVEL 1: VERBAL TAUNTING  
This includes insulting, belittling, insinuating, or taunting behavior that undermines referee authority.
- LEVEL 2: HARASSMENT/INTIMIDATION  
This includes harassment, intimidation, retaliation, abusive or threatening language.
- LEVEL 3: THREATS/DEROGATORY LANGUAGE  
This involves aggression, attacking, derogatory, cyberbullying, doxing, or threatening (physical/violence) language.
- LEVEL 4: OFFENSIVE OR DISCRIMINATORY ACT  
This includes discriminatory or derogatory words or actions based on race, skin color, ethnicity, nationality, social origin, gender, disability, sexual orientation, language, or religion. PHYSICAL ABUSE: There is never a reason to touch a referee outside of friendly handshakes.

## **Levels of Unacceptable Physical Behavior**

The following outlines different levels of *physical* abuse against referees:

- LEVEL 1: MINOR OR SLIGHT DELIBERATE TOUCHING  
This includes tapping the referee's shoulder, touching the referee's chest, intentionally bumping the referee, or pulling on the referee's jersey.

- **LEVEL 2: INTENTIONAL CONFRONTATION**

This involves pushing, grabbing, pulling, squeezing, pinching, lightly slapping, use of an object in a non-striking manner, or physical property damage.

- **LEVEL 3: VIOLENT CONTACT**

This includes hitting, punching, elbowing, kicking, biting, spitting, choking, tackling, throwing or use of object, or any part of the body in a striking manner.

## **Consequences**

The Penalties Matrix from U.S. Soccer defines consequences (sanctions) for non-physical and physical abuse against Referees.

# 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

## 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

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

For more information, please visit [ussoccer.com/rap](https://ussoccer.com/rap).