

Zero Tolerance Policy on Referee Abuse

AYSO Soccer for Rancho Cucamonga Region 65

Everyone Plays ~ Balanced Teams ~ Open Registration ~ Positive Coaching ~ Good Sportsmanship

Policy Summary

This policy is being implemented to eliminate referee abuse, both physical and verbal, and to discourage public dissent of a referee. Even though public dissent may not be considered abuse it is not in keeping with the AYSO principles of positive coaching and good sportsmanship and therefore will not be tolerated. There are appropriate avenues for coaches or spectators to share concerns about the quality of officiating. The Referee Administrator is welcome to hear any constructive comments on referees.

The Zero Tolerance Policy of Referee Abuse highlights the special circumstances for youth players as referees. One of the founding principles of AYSO is Positive Coaching. As youth referees are players, they should only be talked to positively and constructively. Therefore, abuse or dissent of youth referees will not be tolerated.

Guidelines for disciplinary action range from a one-game/week suspension for verbal abuse to expulsion from AYSO for egregious offenses. The details are outlined in the policy below.

Purpose of the Policy

This policy is being implemented to eliminate referee abuse, both physical and verbal, and to discourage public dissent of a referee.

It is never acceptable to verbally abuse referees in any situation. There are appropriate avenues for coaches or spectators to share concerns about the quality of officiating. The Referee Administrator is welcome to hear any constructive comments on referees. **But, any criticism or critique of a youth referee's performance should only be communicated to the youth by a properly trained Referee Mentor.**

Youth development is the central focus of the AYSO program. This includes development of youth whether they are soccer players or soccer referees. All the AYSO guidelines and policies on providing a Safe, Fair, and Fun environment for players also apply to youth referees. Only Positive, Instructive, and Encouraging comments are allowed to be directed at youth players or youth referees. **Verbal abuse of youth referees is as unacceptable as verbal abuse of youth players.** The purpose of this policy is to make clear that verbal abuse of referees is unacceptable and to adopt basic standard sanctions for improper conduct.

This policy is not intended to imply that referees are always right and the adult spectator or coach is always wrong. However, we must remember that just as youth players will make mistakes during play, youth referees will make mistakes in officiating, particularly in the younger divisions where they are learning how to referee.

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Policy on Referee Abuse

1. All AYSO members (coaches, board members, other referees, and parents) shall, if necessary, intervene if a coach or spectator is verbally abusing a referee.
 - a. Handling general dissent is part of a referee's job. If the referee appears to be managing the dissent appropriately, no intervention is necessary. **However, in the case of a youth referee, dissent is not allowed. Only positive, instructive, and encouraging comments are allowed to be directed at youth referees.**
2. All AYSO members shall report any incident of abuse of referees to the Regional Commissioner and the Regional Referee Administrator. This report should happen within 24 hours of the incident if possible.
3. The Regional Commissioner and the Regional Referee Administrator, upon investigating the incident and after hearing from all parties, shall implement appropriate discipline before the next game if possible. The offending parent or coach, Regional Coach Administrator and the Division Coordinator shall be notified of the disciplinary action. The following are guidelines for disciplinary action:
 - a. Verbal abuse of a referee = 1 game/week suspension
Serious verbal abuse of a referee (e.g. using foul language) = 2 game/week suspension
 - b. Stepping onto the field or other threat to = 4 game/week suspension a referee (by word or action)
 - c. A letter of apology and/or public apology to the players and parents is recommended.
 - d. Immediate and sincere remorse on the part of the offending spectator or coach may be taken into consideration when implementing the discipline.
4. Egregious offenses (e.g. multiple abusive situations, physical contact with a referee, or exceptional misbehavior directed toward a referee) shall result in immediate suspension of the offending spectator/coach by the Regional Commissioner and the Regional Referee Administrator. The JCYSL Board of Directors will determine further discipline. An egregious offense violates the fundamental mission of AYSO and requires strong action. Discipline may include, but is not limited to, suspension for the season, suspension for multiple seasons, "rehabilitation" (e.g. referee 10 games), or expulsion from the AYSO program.
5. Suspension: This is defined as being suspended from attending any AYSO game in the division where the incident occurred. Therefore, if a spectator is suspended, he or she may not attend any game at that division level during the suspension. A coach may not coach nor attend any AYSO game at that division level during the suspension. The coach may still attend team practices during the suspension so as to not disrupt the skill development of his or her players. For egregious offenses, the suspension can include a ban from attending all AYSO events (e.g. games, practices, meetings) in all divisions.
6. The Division Coordinator shall enforce the disciplinary action by making sure the offending spectator or coach is not attending AYSO games during his or her suspension.
7. This policy only applies to the discipline of adult spectators and coaches. The policy does not apply to players or youth spectators. The *Laws of the Game* specify actions that can be taken, including a red card dismissal, for player misconduct that occurs anywhere, at any time.