



Respect the Referee Policy

AYSO is premised on putting *the kids first*. Games are about *the kids*, not the adults. Each game is the opportunity to put core values at the forefront, including “Good Sportsmanship” and “Player Development.” When the adults at a game lose the focus on *the kids* and coaches and parents yell at or disparage our volunteer referees, it not only fails to model Good Sportsmanship, but it also interferes with Player Development. The kids notice what their coaches and parents are doing, and instead of focusing on playing the game and having fun, the kids also turn their attention to complaining about the referee. Everyone suffers. This Respect the Referee Policy is designed to ensure that *the kids* stay the focus of every game. A simple slogan can help explain the policy: “Referees ref, Coaches coach, and Parents cheer.”

Our Referees and Assistant Referees are volunteers. Most our parents or former parents out there to let the kids play. To maintain the best environment for the kids and our volunteer referees, Region 13 maintains a **Zero Tolerance** policy for player, coach and spectator misconduct toward the referee volunteers in our programs before, during, and after the match. “Zero Tolerance” generally means that any show of disrespect to a referee - including but not limited to shouting disapproval of a referee's decision, continually questioning referee decisions, attempting to influence referee decisions, or making derisive comments to the referee will not be tolerated.

The primary responsibility for maintaining discipline and control of the players, coaches and spectators from a team lies with the coach. Players, coaches, and spectators shall display positive aspects of Good Sportsmanship at all times, in keeping with AYSO philosophies. Coaches will be held accountable for the behavior of the players and spectators from their team.

Parents and coaches need to remember that our referees are all volunteers with widely varying levels of experience. While all have been trained as referees, the reality is that referees (like players and coaches!) need experience to develop. And as anyone who watches professional soccer (or any other professional sport) knows, even the best referees make mistakes and have off days. Regardless of their abilities or the day they are having, the referee is empowered by the Laws of the Game to control the match, enforce the Laws, and to take action against team officials who fail to conduct themselves in a responsible manner (Law 5). Under the Laws of the Game, the referee decides the facts of the game, regardless of any witness, photographic or video evidence to the contrary. For instance, if the referee states the ball crossed the line, for purposes of the game the ball did in fact cross the line, even if there is a video that it did not. These and other judgment calls are not subject to review and cannot be contested through protest.



In addition to ensuring that matches are conducted with appropriate conduct, Region 13 is committed to the development and improvement of our referees. Coaches should communicate concerns or recommendations for improving a referee's performance to your Regional Referee Administrator, Division Coordinator, or Regional Commissioner. Please remember that for most things this person is your first line of communication. Parents who have concerns should discuss the situation with their coach and allow the coach to communicate the concerns.

To be clear, the following are all examples of *unacceptable* behavior by coaches and parents:

- "C'mon Ref!"
- "That's a terrible call."
- "This ref doesn't know what he's doing."
- "Get it together ref, someone is going to get hurt."
- "Call it both ways, ref!"
- "Don't worry kids, we're playing against 12 today."
- Stepping onto the field.
- Coaches leaving the technical area (10 yards from center line).
- Language that can't be used in a G rated move.
- Includes comments made out loud, even if not specifically directed to the Referee or Assistant Referee - "I was just talking to my assistant coach" does *not* justify inappropriate comments.

Coaches and spectators are *not* entitled to explanations of referee decisions. Coaches (not spectators) may *politely* ask for explanations, but the referee is not required to explain, and often will wait to have a conversation at half time or after the game. *Asking a question should never be a stealth argument with the referee.*

While we hope that this policy is taken to heart by all coaches and parents, we nonetheless want to make clear that there are immediate and extended consequences that will arise for the failure to respect referees before, during, and after matches.

With respect to coaches, Referees have the authority to warn, caution (show a yellow card), or dismiss (show a red card) coaches who do not conduct themselves responsibly and in accordance with this policy. *There is no requirement that a warning or caution be given before a coach is dismissed (shown a red card); the steps the referee will take will depend on the severity of the actions by the coach.* While only the Referee (not the Assistant Referees) has the authority to caution or dismiss a coach, Assistant Referees may recommend that a coach be cautioned or dismissed, and those recommendations will generally be followed by the Referee.

Abusive behavior by a coach is grounds for *immediate* dismissal (red card). Examples of abusive behavior include loud and personal yelling, physical intimidation, or entering the field to argue with a referee



We not only have youth who play soccer, but we also have youth who volunteer as Referees and Assistant Referees. *Coaches must be particularly vigilant about their behavior (and that of spectators) to our youth Referees and Assistant Referees.* The level at which misbehavior will result in dismissal is much lower when directed at youth referees. (Our youth referees are often referred to as “PRO” referees; PRO stands for “Player Referee Organization.”)

If the Referee dismisses a coach, then the coach must leave the sight and sound of the field (including after the match has ended). The Referee will not restart the game until the coach does so. *If the coach does not immediately leave, the Referee will terminate the game and report the incident to the Region. (The Region will determine appropriate sanctions, which will typically include a forfeit and additional suspension of the coach.)*

Coaches are responsible for the behavior of their spectators. When spectators (most often this means parents) are not behaving appropriately, the Referee or Assistant Referee may ask the coach to control the spectators in general or direct the coach to particular spectators causing a problem. Where the problem continues (or if the problem is severe in the first instance), the Referee will advise the coach that the game will not continue until the spectator has left the sight and sound of the field. The coach is responsible for speaking to the spectator and ensuring the spectator leaves. If the Referee deems it appropriate, the Referee may assist the coach in communicating the requirement to the spectator, but in no circumstance is the referee expected to explain the decision to or negotiate with the spectator. If the spectator does not leave promptly, the Referee will terminate the game. In the event the game is terminated, the Region will determine the appropriate sanctions. The Region may also take actions with respect to teams or spectators based on inappropriate behavior, even if no one was required to leave.

Referees will report warnings, cautions, and send offs of coaches and dismissals of parents on the game reports to inform the Region of the misconduct.

Any coach who is dismissed from a game or spectator who is asked to leave a game will face additional discipline as determined by the Regional Commissioner or a Discipline Committee established by the Regional Commissioner. *A minimum one game suspension will apply to any coach or spectator dismissed. [unless the Regional Commissioner grants an unusual exception to the minimum ban].*

The length of the suspension may be increased where conduct is severe, such as

- Misbehavior involved a youth referee
- The person has been previously dismissed from a game.
- The person entered the field.
- There was misconduct directed at a player.



- More misbehavior occurred after the person was dismissed.
- Discriminatory comments (e.g., race, gender)
- Other egregious misconduct

Discipline for egregious offenses may include, but is not limited to, suspension for the season, suspension for multiple seasons, "rehabilitation" (e.g. taking the child/volunteer protection training, taking referee training, referee a set number of games, or other remedial education and training), or expulsion of the person and/or their child from further participation in AYSO.

Unless the terms of the suspension state otherwise,

- A suspended person may not attend any Region 13 games (as coach, referee, or spectator) until the suspension is served.
- A suspended coach may still conduct practices for any teams they coach.

Any coach or other adult participant who is sent off the field of play or subject to any other disciplinary action may, at the Regional Commissioner's discretion, be prevented from coaching (either as "head" or "assistant") an All Star or Tournament team, regardless of whether he or she has already been selected for such a team.