

Date: November 18, 2019
Subject: AREA 2D ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY

Dear AYSO families of Area 2D
(Regions of Davis, Winters, Capay, Colusa, Antelope and Rio Linda)

This season a rising number of incidents including referee abuse have been reported. Area 2D is taking a stand against referee, youth referee and volunteer abuse and the following policy has been set for all regions of Area 2D.

The purpose of this policy is to clarify that referee abuse of any kind is unacceptable and to define the standard sanctions for all reported abuse.

AYSO referees are *volunteers* charged with the responsibility to see that games are conducted safely and fairly and in a manner that fosters the enjoyment of the game by the players, coaches and spectators.

Individual abilities will vary, depending on their training, experience and personality. Regardless of their abilities, the referee is empowered by the IFAB/FIFA 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 (*Laws of The Game, Law 5*). Please remember that 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 you can show a clear video that it did not. These and other judgment calls are not subject to review and cannot be contested through protest.

- No coach or spectator shall question decisions by the referee. Mistakes are part of gaining experience and learning how to officiate matches.
- Any and all forms of abuse – especially emotional, psychological, and verbal abuse – of referees will not be tolerated. The referee subjected to abuse is authorized to dismiss the abuser immediately and without warning in accordance with this policy and Law 5 of the Laws of the Game.
- The referee may, at their discretion, provide clarification or an explanation of a decision to a coach or both coaches. Coaches and spectators are not entitled to clarifications or an explanation for referee decisions.
- The coach is responsible for controlling the behavior of all spectators associated with their team. A coach can enlist the help of the referee to address spectator misbehavior. Yet, enlisting the help of the referee does not release the coach from responsibility for controlling spectator behavior.
- The following Board Members are authorized to: 1) Intervene on behalf of the referee; and/or, 2) Take immediate action including, but not limited to: a) Dismiss a coach or spectator, or b) Suspend or terminate the match:
 - Regional Commissioner or Area Director (RC/AD)
 - Assistant Regional Commissioner or Assistant Area Director (ARC/AAD)
 - Regional or Area Coach Administrator (RCA/ACA)
 - Regional or Area Referee Administrator (RRA/ARA)
 - Child and Volunteer Protection Advocate (CVPA)

Article 1. Coaches Responsibilities

Coaches are responsible for the behavior and conduct of their spectators. **It is never acceptable to verbally abuse a referee, a volunteer, a youth volunteer or a player.** A coach/spectator may not, before, during or after a game, criticize or discuss with a referee his performance other than to thank or compliment the referee.

If considered necessary, complaints, criticisms or recommendations concerning a referee's performance by a coach shall be directed to the Referee Administrator. Parents who feel this need shall discuss the situation with their coach and allow them to communicate their concerns. While dissent, either by word or action with, and public criticism of a referee is never appropriate, *abusive language or conduct directed toward a referee will not be tolerated*. Abusive language can be, but not limited to, rude speech, critical language (including yelling) addressed to the referee, and expressing disapproval or blame (throwing objects out of anger for example).

Article 2. Reporting the abuse

Report of abuse should be filed with the Regional Commissioner, Area Director or the Referee and Coach administrators within 24 hours.

The administrators, upon receipt of any reported abuse of a volunteer (referee, youth referee, coach or other volunteer) shall investigate the incident and deliver any reports to the Regional Commissioner or Area Director who shall recommend appropriate discipline. A disciplinary committee may be asked to make recommendations to the Regional Commissioner or Area Director.

Article 3. Misconduct and Disciplinary Action

The disciplinary action may include but is not limited to warnings, mentoring, single or multi-game suspensions, or a complete ban of all AYSO activities for either a determined time frame or in extreme cases, a lifetime ban.

A suspended person may not, during their suspension, attend, or approach within "sight or sound" any local or inter-region AYSO games. However, a suspended coach may attend team practices.

Those affected by complete bans may not attend any AYSO function for the duration of the ban.

The subject of any disciplinary action may request an appeal through AYSO's due process procedures. It is the responsibility of the party affected to request the appeal.

These sanctions do not limit, prevent, or replace any voluntary or required report or referral of improper conduct, by any adult toward any child, to any law enforcement or child protection agency.

In the State of California, assault on a sports official carries a mandatory jail sentence with the law designed to be considered as akin to assault on a police officer.

Article 4. Special Consideration Concerning Youth Referees

Abuse of Youth Referees will NOT be Tolerated by AYSO

In the event that the misconduct by an adult is directed at a youth referee, AYSO will take a stronger stance and invoke stronger sanctions. It is not uncommon for at least an additional game suspension to be added on if the referee involved is a minor.

Addendum 1: Example of potential disciplinary actions

The Regional Commissioner or the Area Director may take the following actions (up to and including all the actions noted in this chart) against any spectator including parents, coaches or other volunteers.

These disciplinary actions do not include youth spectators or players.

TYPE OF ABUSE	RECOMMENDATION TO DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE
i. Verbal Abuse of a referee (serious, repetitious dissent to provoke an argument, criticism or demeaning language, but which doesn't include offensive, insulting or foul language)-first offense	1 game/week suspension
ii. Serious verbal abuse of a referee (e.g. using offensive, insulting, or foul language Or repeated incident of less serious abuse	2 game/week suspension
iii. Stepping onto the field or other threat to a referee (by word or action)	4 game/week suspension

Note: these are not final and will be evaluated case by case by the Regional Commissioner or the Area Director and can go up to and include banning of AYSO if abuse has been found excessive.

For reported abuse of a youth referee or volunteer, these disciplinary actions can be doubled at the discretion of the Regional Commissioner or the Area Director.

Addendum 2: [Codes Of Conduct - Be A Good Sport](#)

AYSO has always encouraged good sportsmanship in its programs. In fact, "Good Sportsmanship" is one of the six philosophies listed in the AYSO National Bylaws. AYSO strongly recommends that its individual Regions promote good sportsmanship through dynamic programs.

Elements of these programs may vary from Region to Region, but all define the conduct of players, coaches, referees and even parents. They explain the fundamentals of good behavior-which is simply showing courtesy and respect for all involved in the game.

We figure that if players, volunteers and parents understand what is expected of them when it comes to good sportsmanship, that's probably how they will act. AYSO is proud of its many good sports, but understands that good sportsmanship doesn't just happen. It needs to be taught, encouraged and demonstrated.

Player's Code

- Play for the fun of it, not just to please your parents or coach.
- Play by the Laws of the Game.
- Never argue with or complain about referees' calls or decisions.
- Control your temper. Most of all, resist the temptation to retaliate when you feel you have been wronged.
- Concentrate on playing soccer with your best efforts. Work equally hard for your team as for yourself.
- Be a good sport by cheering all good plays, whether it is your team's or your opponent's.
- Treat all players as you would like to be treated.

- Remember that the goals of the game are to have fun, improve skills and feel good. Don't be a showoff or a ball hog.
- Cooperate with your coaches, teammates, opponents and the referees.

Referees Code

- Always remember that the game is for the players. Player safety and fair play come first.
- Study and learn the Laws of the Game and understand the "spirit" of the Laws. Help fellow referees do the same.
- Encourage and enforce the AYSO philosophies of "Everyone Plays," "Positive Coaching" and "Good Sportsmanship."
- Respect other referees' decisions, and do not publicly criticize another official.
- Wear the proper uniform and keep it in good condition.
- Maintain good physical condition so you can keep up with the action.
- Stay calm when confronted with emotional reactions from players, coaches and parents.
- Honor accepted game assignments. In an emergency, find a replacement.
- Support good sportsmanship with a kind word to players, coaches and parents of both teams when deserved.
- Always be fair and impartial, avoiding conflicts of interest. Decisions based on personal bias are dishonest and unacceptable.

Parents Code

As a parent, you have a special role in contributing to the needs and development of these youngsters. Through your encouragement and good example, you can help assure the effectiveness of the AYSO program.

Support Your Child

Support your child by giving encouragement and showing an interest in his or her team. Help your child work toward skill improvement and good sportsmanship in every game. Teach your child that hard work and an honest effort are often more important than victory. Your child will be a winner, even in defeat.

Always Be Positive

Parents are not participants on their child's team. However, they do contribute to the success experienced by their child and the team. Parents serve as role models for their children. Applaud good plays by your child's team and by the opposing team. Support all efforts to remove verbal and physical abuse from youth sporting activities.

Be Enthusiastic and Supportive

Let children set their own goals and play the game for themselves. Be careful not to impose your own standards and goals on your child. Don't put too heavy a burden on your child to win games. Surveys reveal that 72 percent of children would rather play for a losing team than ride the bench for a winner.

Reinforce Positive Behavior

The best way to help a child to achieve goals and reduce the natural fear of failure is through positive reinforcement. No one likes to make a mistake. If your child does make one, remember that he or she is still learning. Encourage your child's efforts and point out the good things your child accomplished.

Let Coaches Coach and Refs Ref

Coaches and referees are usually parents. They volunteer their time to help make your child's youth soccer experience a positive one. They need your support, too. What coaches and referees don't need is your help in coaching from the sidelines. So please refrain from coaching during games and practices. Referees are not the "bad guys." They are volunteers, too, and need your support and encouragement. Treat them and their calls fairly and respectfully.

Coaches Code

Enthusiastically support and practice the "Everyone Plays," "Good Sportsmanship," "Positive Coaching" and "Player Development" philosophies of AYSO.

Be reasonable in your demands on a young player's time, energy, enthusiasm and performance on the soccer field.

Impress on your players that they must abide by the Laws of the Game at all times.

Develop team respect for the ability of opponents, and for the judgment of referees and opposing coaches.

Ensure that your players' soccer experience is one of fun and enjoyment (winning is only part of it). Players should never be yelled at or ridiculed for making mistakes or losing a game.

Set a good example and be generous with your praise when it is deserved. Children need a coach they can respect.

Keep informed of sound principles of coaching, growth and child development.

Check your equipment and playing facilities. They should meet safety standards and be appropriate for the age and ability of your players.

Follow the advice of a physician when determining when an injured child is ready to play again.

Addendum 3: Recommended referee handling of abuse

The Regional Commissioner and Area Director recommend referees handle abuse using a one (1) to three (3) step process.

- The referee (and only the referee) shall at each step:
 - Suspend the match.
 - Isolate the abuser from all players and spectators.
 - If the abuser is a spectator, then ask the coach to join the conversation.
 - Be very clear about what step the coach or spectator is on and the consequences if another step is taken. The assistant referee being subjected to abuse enlists the help of the referee to handle the situation.
- Steps
 - **One Step Process (Dismiss):** Youth referees subjected to any form of abuse shall dismiss the coach or spectator immediately and without warning. Serious, threatening, or physical abuse of any referee requires an immediate dismissal. Physical abuse and serious threats of injury need be reported to the police – call 911.
 - **Two Step Process (Tell-Dismiss):** Inexperienced referees subjected to any form of abuse shall: 1) Tell the individual to stop the misbehavior and provide a clear warning that the next time will result in a dismissal; and, 2) If they repeat the behavior or continue to abuse the referee after they have been told to stop, then dismiss them. Do not continue to provide additional warnings.
 - **Three Step Process (Ask-Tell-Dismiss):** Experienced referees are encouraged to use three (3) steps: 1) Ask the person to stop their misbehavior; 2) Tell them the next time you have to speak with/to them it will be to dismiss them; and, 3) Dismiss them.
- If the referee dismisses a spectator or coach, then that person must leave sufficiently to no longer be seen by the referee for as long as the referee is on or near the field (including after the match has ended).

- A report must be filed – within 24 hours of the dismissal – documenting the events leading up to the dismissal of a coach or spectator. The report must be accurate – even if the individual is uncomfortable using inappropriate language.