

Zero Tolerance Policy of Referee Abuse

Revised 4/16/2022

Policy Summary

While most of our volunteers behave appropriately, there are some occasions that require a formal means to address concerns. This policy is being implemented to eliminate referee abuse, both physical and verbal, and to discourage public dissent of a referee. Public dissent is not in keeping with the ACSC 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 Coordinator welcomes written 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 ACSC is Positive Coaching. As youth referees are players, they should only be addressed in a positive, constructive manner. **Abuse or dissent of youth referees will not be tolerated.**

Violations of the policy will result in disciplinary actions ranging from verbal reprimand to expulsion. The details are outlined in the policy below.

This policy is above and beyond the authority granted to the referee by the FIFA Laws of the Game to “takes action against team officials (coaches, parents, spectators) who fail to conduct themselves in a responsible manner and may, at his discretion, expel them from the field of play and its immediate surrounds.”¹

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.

For purposes of this policy, verbal abuse is defined as any negative public comment directed at a referee before, during or after the match. This would include dissent which is defined as behavior that challenges the authority of the referee. This policy applies to **ALL** coaches & spectators during normal season matches played at home or away and postseason play, such as tournaments, whether held by ACSC or another AYSO organization.

Youth development is the central focus of the ACSC program. This includes development of youth whether they are soccer players or soccer referees. All the ACSC guidelines and policies on providing a Safe, Fair, and Fun environment for players also apply to youth referees. Only Positive 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. Any criticism or critique of a youth referee’s performance should only be communicated to the youth by a properly trained Referee Mentor. 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.

¹ FIFA Laws of the Game, Law 5, “Powers and Duties”

Policy on Referee Abuse

1. All ACSC 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 a 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 and encouraging comments are allowed to be directed at youth referees.
2. All ACSC members shall report any incident of referee abuse to the Referee Coordinator (RC). This report must be written and should happen within 24 hours of the incident, if possible. Reports can be made by email (referees@acsc1.com) or sent to the ACSC PO Box 2793, Alliance, OH 44601.
3. The Referee Coordinator shall handle, when possible, disputes arising out of game conduct. Offenses deemed to warrant a Letter of Policy Violation shall be sent by the ACSC Board to the offending party such that a proof of receipt is documented. Notification of disciplinary action shall be given to the ACSC Board if the incident involves a coach. If suspension is recommended by the ACSC Board, the ACSC Board will appoint a disinterested review board to investigate and recommend appropriate discipline action. The following are guidelines for disciplinary action and may be implemented as necessary based on the seriousness of the offense. This listing does not constitute a hierarchy of actions.

A letter of apology and/or public apology to the offended parties is recommended. Immediate and sincere remorse on the part of the offending spectator or coach may be taken into consideration when implementing the discipline.

Offence	Example Offence	Disciplinary Action
Verbal abuse	Arguing a call	Verbal warning by the referee Letter of policy violation Suspension
Serious verbal abuse	Using foul language	Review Board / Suspension
Persistent verbal abuse	Offences at multiple matches	Review Board / Suspension
Threat by word or action	Stepping onto the field or other threat to referee	Review Board / Expulsion / criminal charges

4. This policy is above and beyond the authority granted to the referee by the FIFA Laws of the Game to "takes action against team officials (coaches, parents, spectators) who fail to conduct themselves in a responsible manner and may, at his discretion, expel them from the field of play and its immediate surrounds." ¹
5. Suspension may mean that you are unable to attend some or all ACSC events for the duration of the suspension.
6. Expulsion means that you are unable to attend any ACSC events indefinitely.
7. The Board shall enforce the disciplinary action by making sure the offending spectator or coach is not attending ACSC events during his or her suspension.
8. This policy only applies to the discipline of adult spectators and coaches. The policy does not apply to players or youth spectators. The FIFA Laws of the Game specify actions that can be taken, including a red card sendoff, for player misconduct that occurs anywhere, at any time.

¹ FIFA Laws of the Game, Law 5, "Powers and Duties"