

Youth Referee Protection Policy, AYSO Region 218

Purpose of the Policy

Youth development is a central focus of the AYSO program. As adult volunteers, it is our responsibility to foster a safe learning environment for youth referees as well as players. All of 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. The purpose of this policy is to make clear that verbal abuse of youth referees is as unacceptable as verbal abuse of youth players and to adopt basic standard sanctions for improper conduct. The term referee is used for simplicity throughout this document to refer to both Referees and Assistant Referees.

We expect our volunteers to behave as outlined in the National Rules and Regulations, and "conduct himself/herself in a manner becoming [of] a member of AYSO and consistent with the AYSO philosophies and the highest standards of conduct." This includes the expectation that volunteers will "prohibit and abstain from making negative comments and complaints about officiating."

This policy is not intended to imply that youth referees are always "right" and the adult spectator or coach is always "wrong". 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. In addition, sometimes youth referees are "in over their head" because of a particularly challenging game, an assignment beyond their experience or comfort level, etc.

Policy on Youth Referee Abuse

1. It is never acceptable to abuse youth referees verbally or otherwise, in any situation. Region 218 will not tolerate any verbal or other abuse or criticism of a youth referee by any coach or spectator. Abuse includes, but is not limited to, any verbal or non-verbal conduct which questions the referee's authority, derides the referee or questions his/her judgment in making/not making calls during the game.
2. Any Board Member, Division Coach Administrator, or AYSO-certified adult referee shall, if necessary, intervene if any coach, spectator, or other adult is abusing a youth referee, verbally or otherwise, and may take immediate appropriate action, up to and including directing the offender to leave the site, and/or to recommend to the referee that the game be suspended, or terminated.
3. Any adult volunteer who observes youth referee abuse shall report the incident to the Regional Referee Administrator within 24 hours. The Regional Referee Administrator will implement the "Region 218 Disciplinary Sanctions for Youth Referee Abuse" (below).

4. There are appropriate avenues for coaches or spectators to share concerns about the quality of officiating. The Region 218 Referee Staff welcomes constructive comments about youth referees. However, any criticism or critique of a youth referee's performance may only be communicated to the youth by a designated Referee Mentor or the Regional Referee Administrator.

The Regional Referee Administrator can be contacted at: refereeadmin@davisayso.org.

Disciplinary Sanctions for Youth Referee Abuse, AYSO Region 218

1. Disciplinary sanctions will be applied on a case by case basis either by the RC independently, or by agreement of the Appeals and Disciplinary Committee (A&D Committee), subject to AYSO Standard Policies & Protocols.
2. The A&D Committee is made up of the following individuals:
 - a) Regional Commissioner (RC)
 - b) Child and Volunteer Protection Advocate (CVPA)
 - c) Regional Referee Administrator (RRA)
 - d) Regional Coach Administrator (RCA)
3. The RRA, upon receipt of any reported abuse of a youth referee, will notify the RC.
4. If the RC decides to not make a decision on the incident independently, the RRA shall investigate the incident and notify the A&D Committee of the findings.
5. If after receiving this additional information, the RC decides to not make a decision on the incident independently, then the A&D Committee will consider the available information, and determine if, and what disciplinary action to take.
6. The offending person shall be notified of the disciplinary action by the CVPA as soon as possible, preferably before the next game.
7. In addition, if the sanction for the offending person involves game suspensions, the non-offending coaches of any teams the individual is suspended from will be notified by the RCA, and the referees of any games that the offending person is suspended from will be notified by the RRA.
8. The following sanctions will be applied by the RC or A&D Committee:

Type of Abuse	Minimum Suspension
Verbal abuse of a youth referee (dissent, criticism or demeaning language but which <u>does not</u> include offensive, insulting, or foul language) – first offense	A one (1) game/week suspension.
Serious verbal abuse of a youth referee. For example: using offensive, insulting, or abusive language or second reported incident of less serious abuse	A two (2) game/week suspension.
Stepping onto the field during game time or other threat to a youth referee (by word or action)	A four (4) game/week suspension.

9. In addition to the suspensions listed above, additional requirements may be imposed by the RC or A&D Committee before the suspension is lifted. Examples of these requirements include the following:
 - a) A letter of apology to the youth referee.
 - b) A letter of apology to the players, coaches and parents of the teams affected by the conduct.
10. Sincere remorse on the part of the offender may be taken into account by the RC or A&D Committee when determining whether a lesser level of sanction should be applied.
11. Egregious offenses shall result in immediate and continuing suspension of the offending person pending an A&D Committee hearing. These offenses may include, but are not limited to, repeated or multiple abusive situations, physical contact with a youth referee, or exceptionally inappropriate misbehavior directed toward a youth referee. The A&D Committee will determine further or more serious discipline if warranted. 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 or training (e.g. taking the child/volunteer protection training, or other remedial education and training).
12. The suspended person has the right of appeal for any sanctions imposed up to the Area level. All appeals must be made in writing to the Regional Commissioner (RC).
13. During the suspension, a coach or spectator may not attend any AYSO games, but may attend practices unless notified of additional restrictions imposed by the RC or A&D Committee. During their suspension, individuals (either coaches or spectators) may watch games from off of the playing area outside of verbal range if they so choose.
14. The Regional Board of Directors shall be notified of all suspensions at its next regular meeting and shall, subject to any further action of an A&D Committee and any right of appeal, enforce the disciplinary action.
15. These sanctions apply only to the discipline of adult spectators and coaches. This policy does not apply to AYSO players or youth (under age 18) spectators. This policy does 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.