

# SAY ABUSE PREVENTION AND REPORTING POLICY

## Abuse Prevention

### **Purpose**

This policy establishes how SAY Soccer, USA intends to prevent the physical, emotional and sexual abuse of children and youth by the coaches, referees, administrators and volunteers, hereinafter referred to as the "Staff Member". SAY seeks to create a welcoming and nurturing environment for those in attendance and has zero tolerance for those whose actions may jeopardize the safety, health or innocence of a minor.

### **Definitions**

**Abuse** – Because it takes many forms, abuse can be broken down into the following subtypes, all of which are prohibited within the scope of this policy.

- *Physical Abuse* – Injury inflicted on a child or youth
- *Sexual Abuse* – Contact or activity of a sexual nature between an adult and a child or youth
- *Emotional Abuse* – Mental or emotional injury inflicted on a child or youth by the actions of an adult
- *Neglect* – Failure to provide adequate care for a child or youth
- *Economic abuse* – Deliberate misuse of the money or belongings of a child or youth

**Child** – A child is defined as anyone under the age of 12.

**Youth** – a youth is defined as anyone between 12 and 18 years of age.

## **POLICY GUIDELINES**

Safeguards in the process of selecting coaches, contracting with independent contractors (referees) or the solicitation of volunteers will be used to eliminate from consideration any candidates who display characteristics that could classify them at a high risk for violating this policy.

Candidates for positions will be screened and selected using the following:

- Standard SAY volunteer screening application for any adult having "unsupervised" access to a youth member of SAY. "Unsupervised" access is defined as a 50 yard radius around a youth member of SAY without another adult within that same radius. At the very least this will include all coaches, both head and assistant coaches.
- The Volunteer screening application will include an authorized signature to perform necessary background checks. When a background check is performed it will include:
  - o Criminal background checks in any and all states where the candidate has lived in the past seven years
  - o Sexual offender registry checks in any and all states where the candidate has lived for the last several years

All information collected about a candidate will be reviewed and used to determine if they are appropriate for the respective position. If retained, all information collected during the screening process will be included in the Area/District administrative files.

## **Structural guideline for Programs**

All SAY programs are designed to encourage safe interaction between coaches, contractors, volunteers, children or youth. The following guidelines are meant to keep established safeguards effective:

- The “Times Two” policy must be implemented in ALL SAY sponsored events. This includes practices, games, social activities, etc.

## **General Conduct**

In an effort to provide a safe and healthy environment for both mind and body, the following guidelines are meant to guide Staff during their interactions with children and youth. These guidelines do not and cannot outline every situation that may be encountered requiring Staff to act with a certain degree of personal discretion. Because a certain action is not prohibited in this section does not mean it is acceptable behavior. SAY reserves the right to take disciplinary action against any Staff member whose actions are found to be inappropriate regardless of whether they appear in this section.

- Staff will treat all children and youth with respect and consideration. Treatment must be fair and equal, and must not be based on sex, race, religion, sexual orientation or economic or social status. All effort must be made to avoid favoritism, or the appearance of favoritism.
- While representing SAY, Staff must not possess, distribute, use or allow others to use any alcohol or drugs.
- Staff must not use harsh or inappropriate language, degrading punishment or any type of restraining device in the name of behavior management.
- Staff must not participate in or allow others to engage in any form of hazing.
- Staff must not have sexual contact with children or youth.
- Staff must not dress, undress, shower or bathe with or in the presence of children or youth.
- Staff must not use physical punishment in any form. The only time physical force is allowed to be used against a child or youth is when their actions are placing others at an immediate risk for serious harm.
- Staff is prohibited from sharing sleeping locations with children or youth. This includes beds, tents, hotel rooms and other similar areas. Staff can sleep in open areas with children or youth as long as the area is large enough for the Staff member to have their own defined sleeping areas and other Staff are present.
- Staff must not discuss their own sexual history, preferences or fantasies nor their use of illicit or pornographic materials while in the company of children or youth.
- Staff are not allowed to possess any sexually oriented materials (books, magazines, videos, clothing) when conducting business in the name of SAY.
- When one-on-one discussion or counseling is warranted, Staff interaction with a child or youth will take place in an area that allows for private conversation while in the presence of another Staff member.

If, for any reason, a Staff member feels there is a need to make an exception to these guidelines, they must submit to the Area/District President a written description of the incident and why their actions were necessary. Their report will be reviewed for

wrongdoing. A copy of the original report along with any additional findings will be retained by SAY pending further investigation.

## **Reporting Policy**

### Suspected Child Abuse Reporting Procedures.

In the course of operating a SAY program any staff who knows or has reasonable cause to suspect based on facts that would cause a reasonable person in a similar position to suspect, that a child under the age of eighteen years of age, intellectually disabled, developmentally disabled, or physically impaired child under the age of twenty-one years of age has suffered or faces a threat of suffering any physical or mental wound, injury, disability, or condition of a nature that reasonably indicates abuse or neglect of a child, MUST report this to the child services agency or the local police. The report can be made either by telephone or in person and shall be followed by a written report, if requested by the receiving agency or officer. The report must be made within 24 hours of witnessing abuse or gaining knowledge that leads one to believe there may be abuse. SAY Soccer recommends NOT making anonymous reports if possible. This is done in an effort to protect yourself from possible liability in mandatory reporting laws.

**Safesport.org is SAY Soccer' recommended resource** for athlete well-being as all athletes deserve to participate in sports free from bullying, hazing, sexual misconduct or any form of emotional or physical abuse. SAY members can also report abuse at Safesport.org

The report must be made by the person having knowledge or reason to believe that the condition exists. In the process of providing the information for the report, be sure to note to whom you talked with, date, time and their contact information. After the incident is reported please contact the Area/District President providing the details as reported. A follow up call is recommended with the agency or officer to ensure that an investigation is ongoing and that there is movement towards the resolution of any issues. The information provided in the report is confidential as is the name of the person making the report and shall not be released for use and shall not be used as evidence in any civil action or proceeding brought against the person making the report. In other words, in any case where a good faith report was made and there ended up being no abuse, the person who made the report is immune from any criminal or civil damages. The public policy in Ohio, for example, as it is in other states, is to protect children, even if it means that there may be good faith false allegations from time to time. It is better to over-protect children than to under-protect them by failing to make and follow up on good faith reports.

For any questions regarding this policy please contact the SAY Soccer Executive Director, Doug Wood for clarification. The number is 800\*233\*7291 ext. 1115 or email [dwood@saysoccer.org](mailto:dwood@saysoccer.org)