



VIRGINIA-DC YOUTH SOCCER ASSOCIATION

Abuse Prevention Policy

The Virginia-DC Youth Soccer Association is committed to keeping our kids safe and establishing and enforcing federal, state and local laws established to protect our players. VYSA members are now required to comply with Federal Law **S.435 Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and Safe Sport Authorization Act of 2017**, that was signed in February of 2018 and became effective immediately.

VYSA's Board of Directors has reviewed this law extensively and is required by the law to put into place a policy that adheres to the law and enforces compliance of the same. The first step in this process took place on August 8th, 2018, the VYSA Board of Directors unanimously passed the following resolution:

Any individual affiliated with a VYSA member organization to include board members, coaches, assistant coaches, managers and other volunteers or staff must complete sexual abuse training. Sexual Abuse Training must be completed through ABUSE PREVENTION SYSTEMS or SAFE SPORT SYSTEMS no later than October 1, 2018. Sexual Abuse Training must be renewed every two years.

The following complete Abuse Prevention Policy was approved by the VYSA Board of Directors on September 19, 2018.

Article 1

DEFINITIONS

- (a) **Risk Management Liaison:** means the participant appointed by a VYSA Member Organization to undertake the actions outlined within.
- (b) **Family Members:** means parents, domestic partners, step-parents, grandparents, guardians, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles and first cousins
- (c) **Member Organization:** Includes all clubs and leagues affiliated with VYSA and VA Futsal
- (d) **Participant:** means any coach, assistant coach, technical director, team manager, referee, director, employee, officer, independent contractor, or other individual (other than a "Youth Participant") affiliated with (i) VYSA, (ii) a Member Organization, or (iii) a referee organization/in-house referee, and (iv) who has direct or indirect contact with a Youth Participant through Sanctioned Activities.
- (e) **Sanctioned Activities:** means matches, games, tournaments, TopSoccer events, practices, training sessions, tryouts, team meetings, and other similar activities conducted by Member Organizations or VYSA, communication in connection with the foregoing activities (other than communications exclusively with Family Members); travel to and from the foregoing activities other than with Family Members; and overnight lodging in connection with the foregoing activities other than exclusively with Family Members.
- (f) **Youth Participant:** means any minor (person of less than 18 years of age) who is a registered player of VYSA through a member organization or who is otherwise a player participant or minor referee in Sanctioned Activities.

Article II

PROHIBITED CONDUCT

Section 1. Prohibited Substances: Participants shall not be under the influence or consume alcohol or any illegal substance while participating in Sanctioned Activities. Participants shall not provide alcohol or drugs (illegal or otherwise) to Youth Participants.

Section 2. Sexual Misconduct: The following actions in connection with any Sanctioned Activity shall be deemed to constitute sexual misconduct (“Sexual Misconduct”).

- (a) Nudity: No participant should be nude in the presence of a Youth Participant who is not a Family Member.
- (b) Sexually Oriented Conversations: No Participant shall engage in sexually oriented communications with any Youth Participant.
- (c) Sexually Oriented Materials: No Participant should present or provide sexually oriented materials (e.g. magazines, other printed materials, videos, cell phone images etc.) to any Youth Participant.
- (d) Sexually Oriented Physical Contact: No participant may engage in sexually oriented physical contact with a Youth Participant. See Article III for guidance

Section 3. Harassment. No Participant should engage in harassment of any Youth Participant in connection with any Sanctioned Activity. “Harassment” means (a) a repeated pattern of behaviors including foul or abusive language that are intended (i) to cause fear or humiliation, (ii) to offend or degrade, (iii) to create a hostile environment, or (iv) to establish dominance or power over a Youth Participant and any conduct within the definition of “harassment” under applicable federal or state laws.

Section 4. Hazing. No Participant should engage in hazing of any Youth Participant in connection with any Sanctioned Activity. “Hazing” means (a) coercing, requiring, or intentionally tolerating any humiliating or dangerous actor omission that serves as a condition for a Youth Participant joining a group or being socially accepted by a group and (b) conduct within the definition of “hazing” under applicable federal and state laws. “Hazing” does not include group or team activities that are intended to establish normative team behaviors or promote team cohesion.

Article III

PHYSICAL CONTACT

Section 1. Appropriate Physical Contact. Appropriate physical contact between a Participant and a Youth Participant is an inevitable and productive part of youth sports. Such contact may occur in connection with training (positioning a Youth Participant’s body so an athletic skill is more quickly acquired), medical treatment (releasing muscle cramps), celebration (brief hug), consolation (arm around a distressed Youth Participant), or safety concerns (pulling a youth participant out of harm’s way). Physical contact with a Youth Participant in these appropriate circumstances should comply with the following principles:

- Physical contact should take place in public
- The Participant must structure the contact to avoid the potential for (or actual) sexually oriented intimacies during the physical contact (e.g. “side hugs” rather than front to front hugs); and
- The Participant must intend the physical contact to benefit the Youth Participant. Not the needs of the Participant.

Section 2. Inappropriate Physical Contact. Certain physical contact is either (a) ill-advised in that it presents the appearance of inappropriate contact or (b) to a reasonable and objective observer would constitute sexually oriented physical contact, harassment or hazing. Examples of such contact include:

- Lingering or repeated embraces of a Youth Participant
- Slapping, hitting, punching, kicking or similar contact to discipline, punish or achieve compliance from a Youth Participant;
- Continued physical contact that makes a Youth Participant obviously uncomfortable; and
- Any contact that is contrary to a previously expressed personal desire of a Youth Participant for decreased or no physical contact (where such decreased or no physical contact is feasible in the context of the existing athletic environment).

Article IV

MISCONDUCT BETWEEN YOUTH PARTICIPANTS

Participants should be aware that sexual interaction between Youth Participants or between a Youth Participant and another minor within the context of Sanctioned Activities can constitute sexual abuse, whether such conduct constitutes sexual abuse depends on a variety of factors, including whether an imbalance of power (e.g. age difference, disparity in size, existence of physical or mental disability, etc.) is present. If a Participant has a concern that such an interaction has occurred and may constitute sexual abuse, the Participant should review Article VI on Reporting Obligations.

Article V

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS, SOCIAL MEDIA AND OTHER

Section 1. Communications. Electronic communications between a Participant and a Youth Participant must be professional in nature and for the purpose of communicating about Sanctioned Activities. Participants should observe the following guidelines on electronic communications with Youth Participants who are not Family Members.

- The parent (or guardian) of the Youth Participant shall be copied on all electronic communications.
- A Participant shall not request a Youth Participant to join the Participant's personal social media platform. Group social media pages are acceptable but must include parents (or guardians) of Youth Participants
- Encrypted messaging may not be used to "direct message" a Youth Participant.
- Email and text messages between a Participant and Youth Participant should copy the Youth Participant's parent or guardian and group e-mails are recommended.

A parent or guardian of a Youth Participant may request that one or more Participants not contact the Youth Participant through one or more forms of electronic communications. Such requests must be honored.

Section 2. Imagery. From time to time, digital photos, videos of training or competition, or other publicly obtainable images of a Youth Participant in a public setting may be taken by a Participant. This imagery may be used for athletic instruction, team videos or team websites or offered to Family Members of a Youth Participant. Such uses are permissible so long as the imagery is in the best interest of the Youth Participant and no identifiable personal information can be associated with such imagery (i.e., name, school, address etc.). A parent or guardian may request in writing that such imagery of a Youth Participant not be posted on team websites (understanding that group photography or videography may make honoring such a request impracticable without excluding the Youth Participant from some Sanctioned Activities where the imagery is produced). To the extent such a request is practicable it should be honored.

Article VI
REPORTING OBLIGATIONS

Section 1. Reports of Abuse. VYSA has zero tolerance for abuse of Youth Participants by Participants. “Abuse” means sexual or physical abuse of a Youth Participant including all instances of Sexual Misconduct.

- (a) Each Participant who witnesses an event of Abuse (an “Event”) or reasonably suspects an event of Abuse (a “Suspected Abuse”), in either case in connection with a Sanctioned Activity, must promptly report the Event or Suspected Event (an “Abuse Report”) to the appropriate law enforcement authorities in compliance with federal, state and local laws. Failure to make such an Abuse Report is a violation of this policy. Additionally, failure to make such a report could result in a violation of federal, state or local laws.
- (b) The Participant making the Abuse Report, the Risk Management Liaison for the relevant Member Organization, the Member Organization and VYSA must also comply with all federal, state and local laws applicable to reporting of Events and Suspected Events.
- (c) A Member Participant and or Member Organization Risk Management Liaison after making an abuse report to law enforcement must promptly report same to the VYSA Risk Management Liaison at krista@vysa.com. VYSA will then immediately forward the report to both U.S. Soccer and Safe Sport.
- (d) VYSA, its Member Organizations, the Risk Management Liaisons of the Member Organizations and Participants are not obligated, and will not attempt to investigate allegations or suspicions of Abuse or to evaluate the credibility or validity of such allegations or suspicions as a condition of making reports to applicable federal, state or local authorities.
- (e) VYSA Member Organizations are required to bi-annually to file a report with the VYSA Risk Management Liaison detailing any reported Events or Suspected Events filed with the Member Organization detailing the Event or Suspected Event and outcomes. A sample report and filing date deadlines is available at VYSA.com

Section 2. Reports of Other Policy Violations

- (a) Each Participant who witnesses or reasonably suspects violations of this Safe Soccer Policy, other than Events or Suspected Events, should promptly report such witnessed or suspected violations (“Policy Violations”) to the Risk Management Liaison of the Member Organization with which the Participant is affiliated (a “Violation Report”). Failure to make a Violation Report is a violation of this Policy.
- (b) A Risk Management Liaison who receives a Violation Report shall promptly transmit the Violation Report to the President of the Member Organization
- (c) In the event a Risk Management Liaison reasonably concludes that the Violation Report describes an instance of criminal misconduct, the Risk Management Liaison should assist the Participant making the Violation Report in notifying law enforcement authorities. The Risk Management Liaison will then notify the President of the Member Organization and the VYSA Risk Management Liaison.

Article VII

VIOLATIONS OF THIS POLICY

Section 1. Abuse. Any Participant who is (a) the subject of an Abuse Report or (b) is otherwise alleged to have engaged in an Event, in each case that becomes known to the relevant Member Organization and VYSA shall be promptly suspended by the Member Organization and VYSA from participation in Sanctioned Activities. Such suspension shall continue during any pending investigation by applicable legal authorities.

Section 2. Conviction. Any Participant who is convicted of (or pleads guilty to) a crime a material element of which is Abuse of a Youth Participant in connection with Sanctioned Activities shall be prohibited from participation in Sanctioned Activities as provided in VYSA's and USYSA's Risk Management Policies. Any Participant who is convicted (or pleads guilty to) a crime a material element of which is a Policy Violation occurring outside of a Sanctioned Activity shall also be subject to the provisions of VYSA's and USYSA's Risk Management Policy.