



## Discipline and Procedures Policy

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## **I. INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL INFORMATION**

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### **A. Introduction**

The purpose of this manual is to provide general information regarding the policies and procedures in cases involving misconduct by players, coaches, game officials, referee program persons, and others, and guidelines for disciplinary hearings and appeals. It is designed to assist leagues, clubs, coaches, and players affiliated with the Nebraska State Soccer Association (“NSSA”) in understanding what actions constitute misconduct, the possible sanctions for such misconduct, and the proper administration of disciplinary actions and appeals in such cases.

### **B. Definitions**

#### 1. Appeal

Appeals may arise as a result of an adverse decision from a disciplinary hearing or other sanction imposed by a league, tournament, event, or other Affiliate Member of NSSA.<sup>1</sup> Only those parties involved in the original hearing shall be allowed to appeal. The original decisions will stay in force pending the result of the appeal.

#### 2. Charge

A Charge is an allegation of inappropriate conduct that is not specific to the Laws of the Game or does not otherwise constitute a violation of a published rule, regulation, or procedure of NSSA or its Affiliate Members. It may be heard informally by the appropriate authority.

#### 3. Game Official<sup>2</sup>

“Game official” includes the following:

- a. All currently registered USSF referees, assistant referees, fourth officials or others appointed to assist in officiating in a match.
- b. Any non-licensed, non-registered person serving in an emergency capacity as a referee.
- c. any club assistant referee.
- d. any Referee Program Person performing any official function in connection with a match.

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<sup>1</sup> “Affiliate Member” is as referenced in the NSSA Rules and Regulations, as amended.

<sup>2</sup> This definition is set forth in Policy 531-10, Section 1(A), of the United States Soccer Federation (“USSF”), as amended.

#### 4. Game Misconduct

Game Misconduct refers to misconduct resulting in a player or team official being cautioned or sent-off pursuant to Law 12, IFAB, *Laws of the Game*, in effect at the time of the misconduct. Misconduct sanctioned pursuant to Law 12 may also be constitute Misconduct Toward Referees as defined below.

#### 5. Hearings

Hearings are where evidence, either by documents or by testimony, is received and considered, and include the following:

- a. Disciplinary Hearing – an informal or formal hearing before a league, competition, NSSA, or other entity, which results in some disciplinary sanction.
- b. Appeal Hearing – which involves an appeal by an aggrieved party to the NSSA from an adverse decision by a league, competition, or other entity (not including the NSSA itself).

#### 6. Misconduct By Referee Program Persons

Misconduct by Referee Program Persons shall include, but is not limited to, (i) a violation of the Code of Ethics set forth in Section 4 of Policy 531-11 of the Policies of USSF, as amended, (ii) violation of a published rule, regulation, or procedure of NSSA or its Affiliate Members, (iii) violation of legal requirements either civil or criminal, including failures to adhere to legally recognized standards of care.

Misconduct by Referee Program Persons can:

- a. Be committed by a referee program person toward a referee, game official, another referee program person, participant, or spectator, or a conflict of interest in connection with a particular match;<sup>3</sup> or
- b. Consist of unethical conduct, misuse or abuse of authority, or conflict of interest by a referee program person in any matter which may affect the individual's ability to act for or on behalf of USSF, NSSA, NRDP, or other appropriate authority.<sup>4</sup>

#### 7. Misconduct Toward Referees

Misconduct Toward Referees shall include, but is not limited to, (i) "Referee Assault," "Referee Abuse," and "Referee Mistreatment" as defined herein, (ii) violation of a published rule, regulation or procedure of NSSA or its Affiliate Members, (iii) violation

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<sup>3</sup> As provided in Policy 531-10, Section 2(A), of the Policies of the USSF, as amended.

<sup>4</sup> As provided in Policy 531-10, Section 2(B), of the Policies of the USSF, as amended.

of legal requirements either civil or criminal, including failures to adhere to legally recognized standards of care.

Misconduct Toward Referees may occur before, during and after the match, including travel to or from the match. It may occur also at later times when directly related to duties of a game official as a referee.<sup>5</sup>

#### 8. Referee<sup>6</sup>

“Referee” includes the following:

- a. All currently registered USSF referees, assistant referees, fourth officials or others duly appointed to assist in officiating in a match.
- b. Any non-licensed, non-registered person serving in an emergency capacity as a referee.
- c. Any club assistant referee.

#### 9. Referee Abuse<sup>7</sup>

Referee Abuse is a verbal statement or physical act not resulting in bodily contact which implies or threatens physical harm to a referee or the referee’s property or equipment.

Referee Abuse includes, but is not limited to, the following acts committed upon a referee: using foul or abusive language toward a referee that implies or threatens physical harm; spewing any beverage on a referee’s personal property; or spitting at (but not on) the referee.

#### 10. Referee Assault<sup>8</sup>

- a. Referee Assault is an intentional act of physical violence at or upon a referee.
- b. For purposes of this policy, “intentional act” shall mean an act intended to bring about a result which will invade the interests of another in a way that is socially unacceptable. Unintended consequences of the act are irrelevant.

Referee Assault includes, but is not limited to the following acts committed upon a referee: hitting, kicking, punching, choking, spitting on, grabbing or bodily running into a referee; head butting; the act of kicking or throwing any object at a referee that could inflict injury; damaging the referee’s uniform or personal property, i.e. car, equipment, etc.

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<sup>5</sup> As provided in Policy 531-9, Section 1, of the Policies of USSF, as amended.

<sup>6</sup> This definition is set forth in Policy 531-9, Section 3, paragraph 1, of the Policies of USSF, as amended.

<sup>7</sup> This definition is set forth in Policy 531-9, Section 3, paragraph 4, of the Policies of USSF, as amended.

<sup>8</sup> This definition is set forth in Policy 531-9, Section 3, paragraph 3, of the Policies of USSF, as amended.

## 11. Referee Mistreatment

Referee Mistreatment is any verbal statement and/or gesture which does not imply or threaten physical harm to a referee or the referee's property or equipment, but which forcefully criticizes, insults, degrades, demeans, or denounces the referee.

Referee Mistreatment includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- a. Use of any term or phrase, or any gesture, which refers or references the referee's race, color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, age, national origin (ancestry), sexual orientation, or any other physical feature or attribute of the referee;
- b. Use of any term or phrase, or any gesture, which calls into question the referee's character, integrity, honesty, truthfulness, or impartiality; and
- c. Use of any other using offensive, insulting, humiliating, or abusive language and/or gestures.

## 12. Referee Program Person<sup>9</sup>

"Referee Program Person" includes any referee, referee administrator, referee assessor, referee instructor, referee assignor, or other person serving in such capacity in a line or supervisory position, including members of NSSA, the Nebraska Referee Development Program ("NRDP"), or other appropriate authority.

### **C. Authority**

The policies and procedures set forth herein shall be applicable to all affiliated amateur or professional players, coaches, managers, club officials, game officials, and referee program persons. In addition, consistent with Section 2(B) of Policy 531-9 of the Policies of USSF, as amended, these policies and procedures shall also be applicable to other individuals as identified herein (e.g., a spectator associated with a club or team).

### **D. Compliance with United States Soccer Federation**

Nothing set forth herein shall supersede any inconsistent rules adopted by the USSF as such rules pertain to game misconduct, to assaults or abuse upon referees, assistant referees, misconduct by referee program persons, the manner and means of hearings, appeals, and rehearings in matters pertaining thereto.

### **E. Disciplinary and Appeals Committee Composition**

1. In cases involving game misconduct or misconduct toward game officials, the Disciplinary and Appeals Committee ("DAC") must be comprised of either three (3)

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<sup>9</sup> This definition is set forth in Policy 531-9, Section 3(2), of the Policies of USSF, as amended.

- or five (5) members as provided herein, one of whom shall be selected as a Chair. Each DAC member shall have one vote.<sup>10</sup>
2. In cases involving alleged misconduct by game officials or referee program persons, the DAC must be comprised of five (5) members as provided herein, and shall not include the State Referee Administrator, the State Director of Referee Instruction, the State Director of Referee Assessment, a Federation National or FIFA Referee, or any other member of NRDP administration.<sup>11</sup>
  3. The members of the DAC for a specific matter shall be selected by the Executive Director of the NSSA from a pool of available committee members identified by the Executive Director as being willing and able to serve on the DAC.
  4. Members selected to serve on the DAC may vary from case to case but in all instances the DAC shall be comprised of persons having no conflict of interest in the matters being heard and having no association with the principal parties in a manner which would affect such persons' ability to be impartial.

#### **F. Exhaustion of Remedies**

In the matter of disciplinary hearings and appeals, no person(s) may invoke the aid of the courts of any state or of the United States without first exhausting all available remedies within USSF/USYSA/NSSA/NRDP and any applicable league or competition (referred to collectively as the "Governing Entities"), including a final appeal to the USSF pursuant to applicable USSF Bylaws and Policies, as amended.

Violation of this rule will result in the offending party(s) being subject to suspension and fines. In addition, such party shall be liable to the Governing Entities for all expenses incurred by the Governing Entities in defending each court action, including, but not limited to, the following:

1. Courts costs and attorney fees.
2. Reasonable compensation for time spent by officers, employees, and representatives of the Governing Entities in responding to and defending against allegations in the action, including responses to discovery and court appearances.
3. All expenses including those incurred from holding special meetings of the Governing Entities necessitated by the court action.

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<sup>10</sup> This definition is set forth in Policy 531-9, Section 3(2), of the Policies of USSF, as amended.

<sup>11</sup> This definition is set forth in Policy 531-10, Section 1(C), of the Policies of USSF, as amended.

## II. DISCIPLINARY HEARINGS

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### A. Description

A disciplinary hearing is an administrative action in response to a written allegation(s) of various types of misconduct, as defined in Article I, Section B, above.

### B. General Rules

#### 1. Use of Attorneys

During hearings, an attorney may advise their client but may not participate directly in the proceedings and shall restrict their comments and advice to their client. The attorney shall not question witnesses, present oral arguments, interrupt, or object to the conduct of the proceedings. The DAC Chair may order the attorney out of the hearing room if he or she fails to properly conduct themselves according to these rules.

#### 2. Evidence and Testimony

- a. Disciplinary hearings and appeals are administrative hearings and not a court of law. Federal, state, and local Rules of Evidence or Civil Procedure shall not be applicable.
- b. Written evidence will be submitted at least twenty-four (24) hours prior to all hearings with copies provided to all parties. Evidence not submitted at least twenty-four (24) hours in advance of the hearing may not be considered, at the sole discretion of the DAC.
- c. Identifying information (e.g., addresses, telephone numbers, personal information) contained in any written evidence shall be redacted prior to being provided to the involved parties. Names of minors shall also be omitted from any written evidence.
- d. The Chair of the DAC may limit attendance at hearings to the principal parties, witnesses, and recognized authorities concerning the allegations or previous findings.
- e. Although the parties shall have the right to question and cross exam witnesses subject to the limitations set forth herein, the DAC may, in its sole discretion, rule that a specific question or a line of questioning is irrelevant, argumentative, or otherwise inappropriate, and direct a witness not to answer. In the event that a party continues to proceed in an inappropriate manner, the DAC may restrict or limit a party's right to participate in the hearing.

- f. Audio or video recordings may be accepted by the DAC and copies must be made available for all principal parties and the DAC. If such recordings are presented on a flash drive, CD, or similar media, they will not be returned.
- g. Documents not submitted in English shall not be considered as part of the official record unless accompanied by a certified translation. The DAC shall not undertake or be responsible for translating non-English documents.

3. Record of Proceedings

All hearings shall have an official record generated and maintained for the proceedings. Electronic recording or written notes may be kept. No one other than the designated DAC recording member shall be authorized to make any audio or video recording of the hearing. A transcript may be prepared upon the request of any party at the expense of the requestor, provided that arrangements for recording of the hearing are made with and approved by the Chair prior to the hearing.

4. Minors

Minors under the age of 19 years should be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian. In the alternative, at the option of the minor and/or his/her parent(s) or legal guardian(s), the testimony of any minor at the hearing may be presented by written statement.

5. Communication

The appropriate method of communication for hearing notification and decisions shall be by certified mail, return receipt requested, or via email, provided that the sending party receives confirmation of receipt of said email.

**C. Initiation of Disciplinary Proceedings – General**

- 1. Disciplinary hearings may be initiated as a result of evidence received from any source, including other hearings, legal action, official game reports, or from letters written by administrators, referees, coaches, parents, spectators, or players.
- 2. NRDP is authorized to file and prosecute a complaint on behalf of any licensed referee with the consent of such person.
- 3. The entity initiating the action (the “Complainant”) shall submit a written letter or statement outlining the allegation(s) of misconduct. This letter or statement shall be sent to the following:

Casey Mann, Executive Director  
Nebraska State Soccer Association  
P.O. Box 485  
Boys Town, Nebraska 68010  
Email: [executive@nebraskastatesoccer.org](mailto:executive@nebraskastatesoccer.org)

4. The filings by the Complainant must include (i) the identities of the parties involved, (ii) detailed description(s) of the alleged violation(s), and (iii) must cite the rule(s) or standards that have been allegedly violated. Failure to include these requirements may result in the disciplinary hearing being delayed or not considered.
5. Requests for a disciplinary hearing may be sent by certified mail, return receipt requested, or via email, provided that the sending party receives confirmation of receipt of said email.
6. Parties against whom such proceedings have been brought may be suspended, barred completely, or otherwise disciplined as more fully set forth herein.

#### **D. Initiation of Disciplinary Proceedings – State Level**

1. The Board of Directors, Executive Committee of NSSA, NRDP, or the DAC may initiate disciplinary proceedings against any player, coach, manager, team assistant, league officer, or spectator from any member team, league, or organization. The proceedings may be initiated based on information brought to the attention of the Board of Directors, Executive Committee, NRDP, or the DAC through complaints, reports of incidents, information obtained during the course of protests, appeals and/or disciplinary hearings, and otherwise.
2. As the entity through which referee program persons are registered, NRDP shall have exclusive jurisdiction over all matters involving or relating to alleged misconduct by game officials and referee program persons.<sup>12</sup>
3. Disciplinary proceedings shall be initiated by sending written notice to the appropriate party containing a brief statement of the reasons for the initiation of the proceedings.
4. Notice of the initiation of proceedings may be sent by certified mail, return receipt requested, or via email, provided that the sending party receives confirmation of receipt of said email.
5. Parties against whom such proceedings have been brought may be suspended, barred completely, or otherwise disciplined as more fully set forth herein.

#### **E. Action Prior to Hearing**

1. The Executive Committee of NSSA may sanction any person, team or league prior to the commencement of disciplinary proceedings if, in the opinion of the Executive Committee, there is adequate evidence to believe that it is in the best interests of NSSA, its Affiliate Members, or their administrators, board members, coaches,

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<sup>12</sup> As set forth in Policy 531-10, Section 2(A) and 2(B), of the Policies of USSF, as amended.

- players, parents/guardians, referee program persons, game officials, or the general public.
2. The Board of NRDP may sanction a referee program person or game official prior to the commencement of disciplinary proceedings if, in the opinion of the NRDP, there is adequate evidence to believe that it is in the best interests of NSSA, its Affiliate Members, or their administrators, board members, coaches, players, parents/guardians, other referee program persons or game officials, or the general public.
  3. For the purposes of this section, “adequate evidence” means information sufficient to support the reasonable belief that a particular act or omission has occurred.

#### **F. Scheduling and Notification of a Disciplinary Hearing**

Once the filing has been reviewed and validated (principal parties identified and filing requirements satisfied), the Executive Director of NSSA shall:

1. Schedule the Hearing.<sup>13</sup>
2. Notify all principal parties involved including the appropriate authorities of the hearing date, time, and location by certified mail, return receipt requested, or via email, provided that the sending party receives confirmation of receipt of said email.
3. Request confirmation of attendance at the hearing from the principal parties involved.
4. Present the basis for the complaint (e.g., specific League/NSSA/USSF rules) and the alleged violations.
5. Describe the possible penalties if the allegations are determined to be true.
6. Outline the procedures to be followed during the hearing.
7. Request that any additional written documentation from either party be submitted prior to the hearing.
8. Provide contact information for questions.

#### **G. Rights at Hearing**

Consistent with Policy 701-1 of the Policies of USSF, as amended, a party appearing before the DAC shall have, at a minimum, the following rights:

1. Each party at a hearing shall have the right to have an individual present at the hearing to assist the party in presenting the party’s case. Such individual may, but shall not be required to be, an attorney.

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<sup>13</sup> The hearing should be scheduled within thirty (30) days of the date disciplinary proceedings are initiated.

2. If the Complainant or member of the Complainant is represented by another individual at any hearing, and the DAC allows that individual to speak, question the parties and/or witnesses, or grants that individual any other rights, then it shall afford all other parties, or the individual representing the party, including an attorney, the same rights during the course of the hearing as is allowed to the individual representing the Complainant.
3. If an attorney is present at a hearing to assist a party in presenting the party's case, it shall be made clear at the commencement of any such hearing that the hearing shall proceed in accordance with the hearing rules and procedures set forth herein. Federal, State, or local Rules of Evidence or Civil Procedure shall not be applicable.
4. An individual assisting the party in presenting the party's case shall have the right to be physically present in the hearing room and, so as not to interfere with the hearing procedure, that individual shall be seated close to the party (either behind or next to the party) so that the party may seek assistance when desired during the course of the hearing.
5. During the course of the hearing, the party may confer briefly with the individual who is assisting before making a statement or request, or prior to responding to a question. The DAC may limit the frequency and duration of the conferences so as not to unduly interfere with the proceeding.
6. If there is confusion or concern, a party may request a recess to confer with the individual assisting the party. Such a request should be granted unless the number of requests by a party becomes unreasonable or the length of a requested recess is deemed by the DAC to be unreasonable.
7. An individual assisting a party may prepare written materials for the party and collect documents for the party. However, the party must submit or present the materials and documents as materials and documents of the party, and not of the individual assisting. The party has complete responsibility for those materials and documents and is subject to questioning about them.
8. Nothing contained in this policy shall prohibit the DAC from allowing greater rights to assistance than those set forth in paragraphs 1 through 8 above. For example, the DAC may, but shall not be obligated to, allow more than one individual to assist a party at any given time.
9. The rights, either mandatory or permissible under this policy, shall be consistently applied, and the DAC shall not arbitrarily allow or disallow the rights set forth above to those individuals assisting a party in the presentation or defense of the party's case.

**H. Obligations of the Disciplinary and Appeals Committee**

The DAC shall:

1. Provide notice of the specific charges or alleged violations in writing and possible consequences if the charges are found to be true.
2. Allow for a reasonable time between receipt of the notice of charges and the hearing to allow sufficient opportunity to prepare a defense.
3. Conduct the hearing at such time and place so as to make it practicable for the person charged to attend. Such hearing may be conducted by video conference or telephonically as determined by the DAC.
4. Have the matter heard before a disinterested and impartial body of fact finders.
5. Allow the Complainant and the person charged to be assisted in the presentation of one’s case.
6. Allow the parties to call witnesses and present oral and written evidence and argument.
7. Allow the parties to confront witnesses that appear at the hearing.
8. Allow the party charged to have a copy of the record made of the hearing if desired.
9. Render in a timely manner a written decision, with reasons for the decision, based solely on the evidence of record.

**I. Disciplinary Hearing Format**

Each party will be accorded the opportunity to present an opening statement concerning their case. The Complainant shall then present its evidence with the accused party being permitted to cross exam any witnesses presented. The accused party shall then present its evidence with the same right of cross examination afforded to the Complainant. Each party will be accorded the opportunity to present a closing statement concerning their case. The parties will then be excused, and the DAC will deliberate in private. Such deliberations may be done on a different day if the DAC shall so choose.

Set forth below is the format with time limitations noted. The DAC can provide for additional time as the matter may warrant provided that each party is afforded the same amount of time to present their respective cases.

Opening Statement – Complainant .....	15 minutes
Opening Statement – Accused Party.....	15 minutes
Presentation of Evidence – Complainant.....	1 hour
Presentation of Evidence – Accused Party .....	1 hour

Closing Statement – Complainant .....	15 minutes
Closing Statement – Accused Party .....	15 minutes
DAC Deliberation .....	Unlimited

Each party has the right to have witnesses speak on their behalf; however, witness testimony must be presented within the time accorded each party.

**J. Decision Notification**

Within seven (7) days of the hearing, the Chair must mail to each party the findings and decision of the DAC. All correspondence shall be sent by certified mail, return receipt requested, or via email, provided that the sending party receives confirmation of receipt of said email. The decision notification letter shall:

1. Notify all principal parties involved including the appropriate authorities of the decision of the DAC.
2. Present the basis for the complaint (e.g., specific NSSA/USYSA/USSF rule or policy).
3. Describe the findings of the DAC and the basis for their decision.
4. Outline the penalty (if applicable) including a detailed description of the penalty, length of the penalty and probation (specific dates).
5. Provide general information concerning the process of appeal to the USSF Appeals Committee (e.g., who and where to send the appeal, the appropriate fee, and the deadline for submitting the appeal) pursuant to USSF Bylaw 704, as amended.
6. Provide contact information for questions.

**K. Time for Appeal**

**Any individual who is found guilty of misconduct by the DAC may appeal the decision of the DAC to the USSF Appeals Committee pursuant to USSF Bylaw 704, as amended. The party appealing shall have fourteen (14) days from the date the decision of the DAC is received to file the appeal.<sup>14</sup>**

**III. PENALTIES AND SANCTIONS**

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The DACs shall act on all disciplinary matters and shall have discretionary powers in determining disciplinary action applied to team personnel, players, referees, game officials, referee program persons, and spectators. The following recommended minimum penalties will be

<sup>14</sup> As provided in Policy 531-9, Section 6, and Policy 531-10, Section 4(B), of the Policies of the USSF, as amended.

used as guidelines for violations depending on the findings of the DAC. Penalties may be increased according to the gravity of the violations. Reasons for increases must be documented in the official record of the DAC.

#### **A. Game Misconduct – Recommended Minimum Penalties**

Any designated league, tournament, event, or NSSA representative is authorized to impose on the offending player, coach, manager, or team official the recommended minimum sanctions for the specific offenses described in this Section, including the imposition of additional sanctions pursuant to Section D and E, below, without a hearing before the DAC. Any designated league, tournament, event, or NSSA representative may impose less than the recommended minimum sanctions set forth below at its discretion and as circumstances warrant.

In the event that an aggrieved party objects to the imposition of said recommended minimum sanctions, said aggrieved party may appeal the sanctions imposed by filing a Notice of Appeal and complying with the provisions set forth in Article IV, below.

The recommended minimum penalties are as follows:

1. Denying an Obvious Goal Scoring Opportunity  
All Age Groups – Suspension for a minimum of one (1) game.<sup>15</sup>
2. Serious Foul Play  
All Age Groups – Suspension for a minimum of one (1) game.
3. Biting or Spitting
  - a. Players (all age groups) – Suspension for a minimum of two (2) games, , three (3) months’ probation.
  - b. Coaches, managers, or team officials (all age groups) – Suspension for a minimum of two (2) games, , three (3) months’ probation, \$200.00 fine.
4. Violent Conduct
  - a. Players (all age groups) – Suspension for a minimum of two (2) games, three (3) months’ probation,
  - b. Coaches, managers, or team officials (all age groups) – Suspension for a minimum of two games (2) games, three (3) months’ probation, \$200.00 fine.
5. Offensive, Insulting, or Abusive Language
  - a. Players (all age groups) – Suspension for a minimum of one (1) game.

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<sup>15</sup> The suspensions indicated for game misconduct are for games in addition to the game in which the player, coach, manager, or team official, was cautioned or sent-off.

- b. Coaches, managers, or team officials (all age groups) – Suspension for a minimum of one (1) game.

6. Second Caution

- a. Players (all age groups) – Suspension for a minimum of one (1) game.
- b. Coaches, managers, or team officials (all age groups) – Suspension for a minimum of one (1) game.

7. All Other Sending-Off Offenses Under Law 12

Coaches, managers, or team officials (all age groups) – Suspension for a minimum of one (1) game.

**B. Misconduct Toward Referees – Recommended Minimum Penalties**

Any designated league, tournament, event, or NSSA representative is authorized to impose on the offending player, coach, manager, or team certain sanctions for the specific offenses described in this Section, including the imposition of additional sanctions pursuant to Section D and E, below, only with the agreement of the party subject to sanction. Absent such agreement, the entity desiring to impose a sanction must initiate an action as described in Article II, Sections C and Section D, above.

The recommended minimum penalties are as follows:

1. Referee Mistreatment

- a. Players (Youth Player<sup>16</sup>) – Suspension for a minimum of two (2) games, three (3) months’ probation.
- b. Players (Non-Youth Player) – Suspension for a minimum of two (2) games, three (3) months’ probation, \$200.00 fine.
- c. Coaches, managers, or team officials (all age groups) – Suspension for a minimum of two (2) games, three (3) months’ probation, \$200.00 fine.
- d. Spectator – Suspension for a minimum of two (2) games, three (3) months’ probation, \$200.00 fine.

2. Referee Abuse<sup>17</sup>

- a. Players (Youth Player) – Suspension for a minimum of three (3) games, six (6) months’ probation.

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<sup>16</sup> “Youth Player” means an individual who is an amateur player and who has not reached 20 years of age prior to December 31 of the current seasonal year, unless the offense arises out of the player’s participation in an adult or “open” league or competition.

<sup>17</sup> As set forth in Policy 531-9, Section 5(B), of the Policies of USSF, as amended. Note that 531-9 mandates minimum penalties for referee abuse and the DAC is obligated to adhere to those requirements.

- b. Players (Non-Youth Player) – Suspension for a minimum of five (5) games, six (6) months’ probation, \$500.00 fine.
  - c. Coaches, managers, or team officials (all age groups) – Suspension for a minimum of five (5) games, one (1) years’ probation, \$500.00 fine.
  - d. Spectator – Suspension for a minimum of five (5) games, six (6) months’ probation, \$300.00 fine.
3. Referee Assault<sup>18</sup>
- a. For a minor or slight touching of the referee or the referee's uniform or personal property, suspension for a minimum of six (6) months from the time of the assault and one (1) years’ probation, \$500.00 fine.
  - b. Except as provided in clause (i) or (ii), below, for any other assault, suspension for at least one (1) year from the time of the assault and three (3) years’ probation, \$1,000.00 fine:
    - i. For an assault committed by an adult and the referee is 17 years of age or younger, a minimum of five (5) years suspension and five (5) years’ probation; or
    - ii. For an assault when serious injuries are inflicted, a lifetime suspension.

**C. Misconduct by Referee Program Persons – Penalties<sup>19</sup>**

- 1. NRDP is authorized to issue a letter of reprimand as described below without a hearing before the DAC. However, in the event that the aggrieved party objects to the issuing of a letter of reprimand, said aggrieved party may appeal such action by filing a Notice of Appeal and complying with the provisions set forth in Article IV, below.
- 2. Any other sanction other than a letter of reprimand may only be imposed by NRDP with the agreement of the party subject to sanction. Absent such agreement, NRDP must initiate an action and follow the process as outlined in Article II, Section D, above.
- 3. The severity of the penalty imposed upon a referee program person shall be at the sole discretion of NRDP but shall be imposed pursuant to the policies adopted by the organization.

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<sup>18</sup> As set forth in Policy 531-9, Section 5(A), of the Policies of USSF, as amended. Note that 531-9 mandates minimum penalties for referee assault and the DAC is obligated to adhere to those requirements.

<sup>19</sup> These penalties are set forth in Policy 531-10, Section 3, of the Policies of USSF, as amended.

4. Penalties may be, but are not limited to, the following:<sup>20</sup>
  - a. letter of reprimand;
  - b. a fine;
  - c. suspension from all active participation as a USSF-sanctioned referee for a fixed period of time;
  - d. suspension from all active participation in USSF for a fixed period of time;
  - e. any combination of clauses (a), (b), (c) or (d) of this subsection; and
  - f. dismissal from USSF.
5. Any individual while under suspension from all USSF activity may not take part in any activity sponsored by the USSF or its members.

#### **D. Referees Who Are Minors**

As a general practice, the DAC or the sanctioning entity will impose greater sanctions than the recommended minimum set forth above when the referee involved is a minor including, but not limited to, doubling the sanctions outlined in Section B, above.

#### **E. Repeated Offenses – Game Misconduct and Misconduct Toward Referees**

##### **1. Second Offenses**

- a. Individuals who have been sent off one time in the previous twelve (12) months for offenses pursuant to paragraphs 1, 2, 5, 6, or 7 of Section A shall receive a minimum of an additional one (1) game suspension and six (6) months' probation. If such individual is a coach, manager, or team official, a \$300.00 fine will also be levied.
- b. Individuals who have been sent off one time in the previous twelve (12) months for offenses pursuant to paragraphs 3 or 4 of Section A shall receive a minimum of an additional two (2) game suspension, one (1) years' probation, \$400.00 fine.
- c. The sanction imposed on individuals who have been penalized previously for Referee Mistreatment, Referee Abuse, or Referee Assault shall, at a minimum, shall have sanctions imposed that are at least double those set forth in Section B, above.

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<sup>20</sup> As provided in Policy 531-10, Section 3(B), of the Policies of the USSF, as amended.

## 2. Additional Offenses

Individuals who have been sent off more than two times in the previous twelve (12) months for any of the offenses described in Section A, or who have been sanctioned previously for Referee Mistreatment, Referee Abuse, or Referee Assault, shall be subject to additional suspensions at the discretion of the DAC including, but not limited to, a lifetime ban.

### **F. Use of Discriminatory Language**

If, in the act of committing any of the offenses listed in Sections A., B., or C., above, the offending party makes any type of racial or other discriminatory comment directed at another person, a minimum of an additional two (2) games shall be added to the suspension imposed for the underlying offense.

### **G. Term of Suspension**

1. The term of suspension for disciplinary reasons involving a player, coach or individual for game misconduct or misconduct toward referees will begin immediately and include the next NSSA sanctioned competition (i.e. league, tournament, or Cup event). The suspension will be continued until the term of suspension has been completed. Friendly games and scrimmages will not be credited toward fulfillment of the suspension requirements. Any disciplinary action will carry over from seasonal year to seasonal year. Coaches of multiple teams must serve their suspension with the original team that they incurred the suspension. If they cannot complete their suspension with the original team, their term of suspension will be reassigned to their next team as determined by NSSA.
2. The term of suspension for a game official or referee program person shall begin immediately and, as noted above, may be limited to suspension from active participation as a USSF-sanctioned referee for a fixed period of time, or, in the alternative, suspension from all active participation in USSF, for a fixed period of time.

### **H. Probation**

The DAC may place an individual on probation in addition to their suspension. The specific terms of the individual's probation shall be provided at the time the DAC renders its decision. The probationary period may exceed a period of time longer than the length of the suspension. The probationary period is to be served immediately following the suspension and is intended to monitor an individual's degree of reformation. An individual that violates their probation during the probationary period will be immediately suspended and a disciplinary hearing will be scheduled.

## **I. Suspension Due to Litigation**

1. Pursuant to Article VII, Section 2, of the Bylaws of the United States Youth Soccer Association, Inc., (“USYSA”) any person participating in a USYSA program, or in a program of NSSA, or a program of a member of NSSA, who becomes a defendant in litigation detrimental to the welfare of youth players or litigation based on activities detrimental to the welfare of youth players, shall be immediately suspended from all soccer-related activities. Suspensions under this bylaw shall be determined by NRDP in matters involving referee program persons, by the Executive Committee of NSSA in all other cases, or by the USYSA Board of Directors. Matters detrimental to the welfare of youth players shall include, but not be limited to, crimes of moral turpitude and felonies. The person has a right to appeal the suspension pursuant to the Bylaws of the USYSA only over whether the matter which is the substance of the accusation, if true, is detrimental to the welfare of youth players.
2. On completion of the litigation, the suspended person may inform the body suspending the person under paragraph 1, above, that the litigation has been completed and request that the suspension be terminated, and the person reinstated. The entity issuing the suspension may grant the request of the person or, if the decision of the litigation was adverse to the person, may continue the suspension for a period specified by NRDP or the Executive Committee of NSSA, as the case may be, fine the person, terminate all membership of that person with the NSSA and its members, or any combination of those authorized penalties.

## **IV. APPEAL HEARINGS**

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### **A. Description**

Appeals to the DAC may arise as a result of an adverse decision by a club, league, competition, or other Affiliate Member, or from a protest by a league, club, competition, or similar entity. Only those parties involved in the original action hearing shall be allowed to appeal. The original decisions will stay in force pending the result of the appeal.

### **B. Exhaustion of Remedies**

The right to appeal must be exhausted within the rules of that competition or league before being appealed to the DAC. Appeals arising from any Cup, tournament or league game shall first be determined by the protest and appeals committee of the competition or league as outlined by that entity’s rules, if such right of appeal is available. In the event of an adverse decision, that party may then file their appeal with the DAC. The DAC shall also have jurisdiction over appeals from any Olympic Development or International Youth competition.

### **C. Same Procedure as Disciplinary Hearings**

The general rules, matters relating to scheduling and notification, rights of parties, obligations of the DAC, and hearing format for disciplinary hearings as set forth in Section II, above, shall apply to Appeals Hearings unless specifically modified herein.

### **D. Initiation of Appeal**

1. Appeals are filed by those parties involved in the original action. Official filings involve submission of the “Notice of Filing of Appeal to the Disciplinary and Appeals Committee” (“Notice of Appeal”) and a written statement describing the basis for the appeal including the specific rule or policy that allegedly has been violated or misapplied.
2. All supporting documentation must be included along with a filing fee of \$100.00. The appeal filing fee will be returned if the DAC finds in favor of the appealing party. The fee shall be retained if the decision of the league, club, competition, or other entity is affirmed or otherwise modified to increase the sanctions imposed unless the decision is subsequently overruled by a higher authority.
3. This letter or statement referenced above as well as all supporting documentation shall be sent to the following:

Casey Mann, Executive Director  
Nebraska State Soccer Association  
P.O. Box 485  
Boys Town, Nebraska 68010  
Email: [executive@nebraskastatesoccer.org](mailto:executive@nebraskastatesoccer.org)

4. Requests for an appeal hearing may be sent by certified mail, return receipt requested, or via email, provided that the sending party receives confirmation of receipt of said email.

### **E. Deadline for Filing of Appeal**

1. The Notice of Appeal, written statement describing the basis for the appeal, all supporting documentation, and the filing fee must be postmarked (if sent via certified mail, return receipt requested) or emailed within fourteen (14) days of the appealing party receiving notice of the adverse decision rendered by the club, league, competition, or other Affiliate Member.
2. Failure to mail or email the Notice of Appeal, written statement, supporting documentation, and filing fee within such fourteen (14) period will result in the DAC not considering the appeal.

## **F. Modification of Sanction**

On review, the DAC has discretion to decrease, increase, or otherwise modify the sanction imposed by the club, league, competition, or other Affiliate Member.

## **G. Decision Notification**

Within seven (7) days of the hearing, the Chair must mail to each party the findings and decision of the DAC. All correspondence shall be sent by certified mail, return receipt requested, or via email, provided that the sending party receives confirmation of receipt of said email. The decision notification letter shall:

1. Notify all principal parties involved including the appropriate authorities of the decision of the DAC.
2. Present the basis for the appeal (e.g., specific NSSA/USYSA/USSF rule or policy).
3. Describe the findings of the DAC and the basis for their decision.
4. Outline actions to be taken based on the decision of the DAC.
5. Provide specific information concerning the process of further appeal (who and where to send the appeal, the appropriate fee, and the deadline for submitting the appeal).

## **H. Further Appeal to the USSF**

Consistent with Policy 701-2 of the Policies of USSF, as amended, the DAC shall prepare the appeals record for submission to the USSF upon receipt of a Notice of Further Appeal from an aggrieved party.

## **V. AMENDMENT TO POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

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Notwithstanding anything set forth herein to the contrary, these Policies and Procedures for Discipline and Appeals may be altered, amended or repealed and new Rules may be adopted by the Board of Directors of NSSA by a majority vote provided that written notice of such intent to amend or repeal and a draft copy of the proposed amendment or repeal shall be presented to the various members of the Board of Directors of NSSA at least thirty (30) days prior to the meeting at which action on a proposed amendment or repeal is to take place.

## **VI. APPENDIX OF FORMS**

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### **A. General**

1. Notice of Sanction and Waiver – League, Club, Tournament
2. Notice of Sanction and Waiver – NSSA

**B. Disciplinary Hearings**

1. Notice of Hearing Before the DAC – Game Misconduct
2. Notice of Hearing Before the DAC – Misconduct Toward Referees
3. Notice of Hearing Before the DAC – Misconduct Toward Referees (Minor)
4. Notice of Hearing Before the DAC – Misconduct By Referee Program Persons
5. Notice of Disciplinary Hearing Decision – Finding of Not Guilty
6. Notice of Disciplinary Hearing Decision – Finding of Guilty (Mistreatment)
7. Notice of Disciplinary Hearing Decision – Finding of Guilty (Abuse or Assault)
8. Terms of Probation – possible conditions

**C. Appeal Hearings**

1. Petition for Hearing Before the Disciplinary and Appeals Committee
2. Notice of Receipt of Appeal and Instructions to Appellant
3. Notice of Appeal Hearing Decision – DAC Decision Affirmed
4. Notice of Appeal Hearing Decision – DAC Decision Reversed or Modified