



# U.S. Soccer - Severity of Verbal, Physical, or Sexual Misconduct Matrices

*Updated November 2023 – Safe Soccer Clearance Program in Active Development*

## Overview

- Misconduct matrices are to be used as a guide and framework for categorizing misconduct and determining next steps and appropriate discipline
- Matrices act as a sliding scale, rather than definitive categories of misconduct; when in doubt, err on the side of caution and escalate to the higher tier
- Misconduct matrices are not explicit penal codes
- Matrices provide a non-exhaustive list of examples of misconduct; instances of abuse may exist that are not detailed in these matrices
- For any discipline resulting in a temporary suspension or a permanent expulsion of an individual's ability to participate in soccer, a formal appeals process must be offered
- Context and details surrounding instances of misconduct are important and may aggravate or mitigate severity of incident; therefore, the disciplining body should review aggravating and mitigating factors for proper assessment and response
- When possible, all organizations should strive to document reports of misconduct and their resulting response
- For the purposes of these matrices, any reference to the Member Organization extends to its associated clubs and leagues

## Aggravating or compounding factors that may result in a higher tier of misconduct or more significant discipline

- The victim is a minor
- The victim is in a vulnerable group
- The perpetrator has a history of prior misconduct
- The misconduct was repeated, or there were multiple instances of misconduct
- There were multiple victims of the offending perpetrator
- The harm caused by the misconduct was exceptionally severe (e.g., needing medical attention)
- The perpetrator used excessive force, violence, or aggression
- The misconduct included persistent harassment or grooming
- The likelihood or potential for repeated misconduct is high
- The perpetrator was in a position of power
- The perpetrator used manipulation or coercion to exploit the victim
- The act of abuse was filmed or documented by the perpetrator
- Details regarding the abuse were disseminated to a broader audience

## Mitigating factors that may result in a lower tier of misconduct or less significant discipline

- The misconduct was an accident, unintentional, or committed in error
- The perpetrator has self-reported the misconduct and willingly accepted discipline and rehabilitation
- The perpetrator was responding to an emergency situation

## Verbal Misconduct Matrix

VERBAL	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
<b>Misconduct Examples</b> <i>Non-exhaustive</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minor and brief incident of targeted yelling that is not providing constructive criticism or encouragement</li> <li>Instance of targeted blaming</li> <li>Instance of targeted humiliating</li> <li>Instance of condescension</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consistent berating</li> <li>Multiple instances of targeted yelling / singling out an individual</li> <li>Verbal manipulation to control individual's actions</li> <li>Verbal threats of physical abuse resulting in consistent fear</li> <li>Abusive, derogatory language</li> <li>Threats of retaliation for reporting misconduct</li> <li>Discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, disability, sex, and sexual orientation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consistent verbal harassment as detailed in Tier-2, spanning the duration of a season, multiple seasons, or years</li> <li>Frequent threats of severe physical or sexual abuse that put the player in immediate danger or harm</li> <li>Overt and frequent discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, disability, sex, and sexual orientation</li> </ul>
<b>Reporting</b>	<u>Victim is an adult:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report to member organization</li> </ul> <u>Victim is a minor:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report to member organization</li> </ul>	<u>Victim is an adult:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report to member organization</li> </ul> <u>Victim is a minor:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report to member organization</li> </ul>	<u>Victim is an adult:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report to member organization</li> </ul> <u>Victim is a minor:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report to Center for SafeSport</li> <li>Report to U.S. Soccer's Office of Participant Safety</li> <li>Report to law enforcement</li> </ul>
<b>Jurisdiction &amp; Response</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Member organization is responsible for investigating the report and determining adequate discipline in a timely fashion</li> <li>Member organization communicates status of investigation to victim</li> <li>When discipline affects a Safe Soccer Clearance, U.S. Soccer is notified of resulting decision via member submission in Safe Soccer status dashboard</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Member organization is responsible for investigating the report and determining adequate discipline in a timely fashion</li> <li>Member organization communicates status of investigation to victim</li> <li>When discipline affects a Safe Soccer Clearance, U.S. Soccer is notified of resulting decision via member submission in Safe Soccer status dashboard</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For minors, Center for SafeSport <u>may</u> exercise jurisdiction, but it is likely to be pushed back to member organization for investigation</li> <li>For adults, member organization is responsible for investigating the report and determining adequate discipline in a timely fashion</li> <li>In parallel, U.S. Soccer will take the steps deemed necessary to ensure player safety is upheld</li> <li>Member organization communicates status of investigation to victim</li> <li>When discipline affects a Safe Soccer Clearance, U.S. Soccer is notified of resulting decision via member submission in Safe Soccer status dashboard</li> </ul>
<b>Suggested Discipline</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reprimand, review, and educate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Probation / Temporary suspension</li> <li>Temporary removal of Safe Soccer Clearance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expulsion</li> <li>Permanent removal of Safe Soccer Clearance</li> </ul>

## Physical Misconduct Matrix

PHYSICAL	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
<b>Misconduct Examples</b> <i>Non-exhaustive</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Singular incident of unwarranted physical touch not explicitly sexual in nature (e.g., grabbing an arm)</li> <li>Single instance of physical intimidation using actions or gestures to elicit fear</li> <li>Single instance of destruction of property not directed at a person (e.g., throwing or kicking equipment)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Frequent instances of destruction of property not directed at a person (e.g., throwing or kicking equipment)</li> <li>Instance of destruction of property directed at a person (e.g., throwing equipment at a player)</li> <li>Preventing victim from calling for help</li> <li>Prescribed dieting or other weight-control methods</li> <li>Encouraging a player to return to play prematurely from injury</li> <li>Isolating a player</li> <li>Forcing an athlete to assume a painful stance or position for no athletic purpose</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Battery</li> <li>Any physical assault of a minor</li> <li>Physical assault resulting in hospital visit</li> <li>Any display or threat of use of a weapon for physical harm</li> <li>Overt child neglect</li> <li>Consistent and intentional withholding of adequate hydration, nutrition, medical attention, or sleep</li> <li>Encouraging of forcing doping</li> </ul>
<b>Reporting</b>	<u>Victim is an adult:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report to member organization</li> </ul> <u>Victim is a minor:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report to member organization</li> </ul>	<u>Victim is an adult:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report to member organization</li> </ul> <u>Victim is a minor:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report to Center for SafeSport</li> <li>Report to U.S. Soccer’s Office of Participant Safety</li> <li>Report to law enforcement</li> </ul>	<u>Victim is an adult:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report to member organization</li> </ul> <u>Victim is a minor:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report to Center for SafeSport</li> <li>Report to U.S. Soccer’s Office of Participant Safety</li> <li>Report to law enforcement</li> </ul>
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## Sexual Misconduct Matrix

SEXUAL	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
<b>Misconduct Examples</b> <i>Non-exhaustive</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Singular sexual innuendo, remark, joke, question</li> <li>Viewing or engaging in a sexual behavior without attempts to shield others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Repeated sexual innuendos, remarks, jokes, questions</li> <li>Any type of communication that is sexual in nature, but not including indecent exposure</li> <li>Repeated unsolicited contact</li> <li>Unsolicited visits to player's home, business, class, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Forcible sexual offense</li> <li>Rape (including statutory rape)</li> <li>Indecent exposure</li> <li>Fondling of private areas such as breasts, groin, genitals or buttocks</li> <li>Masturbating in front of the victim, or asking to watch while victim masturbates</li> <li>Non-consensual sharing of sexual activity or nudity</li> <li>Collecting, viewing, or distributing child pornography</li> <li>Any instance of offering to trade a benefit for a sexual behavior</li> <li>Knowingly exposing another individual to a STD</li> <li>Prostituting another person</li> </ul>
<b>Reporting</b>	<u>Victim is an adult:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report to member organization</li> </ul> <u>Victim is a minor:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report to Center for SafeSport</li> <li>Report to U.S. Soccer's Office of Participant Safety</li> </ul>	<u>Victim is an adult:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report to Center for SafeSport</li> <li>Report to U.S. Soccer's Office of Participant Safety</li> </ul> <u>Victim is a minor:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report to Center for SafeSport</li> <li>Report to U.S. Soccer's Office of Participant Safety</li> <li>Report to local law enforcement</li> </ul>	<u>Victim is an adult:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report to Center for SafeSport</li> <li>Report to U.S. Soccer's Office of Participant Safety</li> </ul> <u>Victim is a minor:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report to Center for SafeSport</li> <li>Report to U.S. Soccer's Office of Participant Safety</li> <li>Report to law enforcement</li> </ul>
<b>Jurisdiction &amp; Response</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For minors, Center for SafeSport exercises jurisdiction and investigates</li> <li>For adults, member organization is responsible for investigating the report and determining adequate discipline</li> <li>Center to communicate status of investigation to minor victims</li> <li>Member organization communicates status of investigation to adult victims</li> <li>When discipline affects a Safe Soccer Clearance, U.S. Soccer is notified of resulting decision via member submission in Safe Soccer status dashboard</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Center for SafeSport exercises jurisdiction and investigates</li> <li>In parallel, U.S. Soccer will take the steps deemed necessary to ensure player safety is upheld during and after Center investigation</li> <li>Center to communicate status of investigation to victim</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Center for SafeSport exercises jurisdiction and investigates</li> <li>In parallel, U.S. Soccer will take the steps deemed necessary to ensure player safety is upheld during and after Center investigation</li> <li>Center to communicate status of investigation to victim</li> </ul>
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## Other Misconduct Matrix

OTHER	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
<b>Misconduct Examples</b> <i>Non-exhaustive</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consistent pattern of unexpected tardiness or absence to practice, matches, or team-sanctioned events</li> <li>Singular instance of a legal adult being under the influence during a team event and in the presence of minors</li> <li>Instance of unwarranted retaliation whereas the punishment is not abusive in nature (e.g., cutting playing time)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Misdemeanor criminal offenses not resulting in jail time</li> <li>Possession of legal drugs not prescribed by a physician</li> <li>Failure to complete proper Safe Soccer education</li> <li>Refusal to complete appropriate background screening</li> <li>Multiple instances of alcohol abuse</li> <li>Withholding or impeding in the medical care and safety of a player</li> <li>Making intentionally false or inaccurate statements in a misconduct investigation or inquiry in an attempt to cover-up an incident</li> <li>Providing alcohol to a player under the legal drinking age (if player is under 21, this should be reported to the Center)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Felony criminal offenses</li> <li>Exposing players to dangerous materials such as illegal weapons, hard drugs, or chemicals</li> <li>Exposing players to gang activity</li> <li>Providing or forcing use of illegal or non-prescribed drugs</li> <li>Forcing alcohol consumption</li> </ul>
<b>Reporting</b>	<u>Victim is an adult:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report to member organization</li> </ul> <u>Victim is a minor:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report to member organization</li> </ul>	<u>Victim is an adult:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report to member organization</li> </ul> <u>Victim is a minor:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report to member organization</li> </ul>	<u>Victim is an adult:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report to member organization</li> </ul> <u>Victim is a minor:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report to Center for SafeSport</li> <li>Report to U.S. Soccer's Office of Participant Safety</li> <li>Report to law enforcement</li> </ul>
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