



U.S. SOCCER

Prohibited Conduct Policy



A. INTRODUCTION

U.S. Soccer supports a culture of compliance, safety, and respect. U.S. Soccer encourages open communication in which all participants feel comfortable reporting concerns as required by this policy, whether the concerns involve suspected abuse, other misconduct, or any other violation of this policy or U.S. Soccer’s Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policy (“MAAPP”).

B. APPLICATION

This policy applies to any individual designated as “U.S. Soccer Program Participants (“USSPPs”)¹, as defined in the chart below, for purposes of jurisdiction of the U.S. Center for SafeSport. In addition, where noted, certain policies apply to adults at a facility operating under U.S. Soccer’s jurisdiction.

For purposes of enforcing this policy, “USSPPs” are:

	Includes:	Does not Include:
U.S. Soccer Staff and contractors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees and interns of the U.S. Soccer • U.S. Soccer Board Members • Medical Staff • Scouts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees of U.S. Soccer’s organization members
Athletes who directly register with U.S. Soccer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Team Players 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Players participating in any professional league sanctioned by U.S. Soccer (unless serving on the National Team); or • Players who register in the National Data Center through a National Member Organization or Local Affiliate Organization or a U.S. Soccer Organization Member unless they are National Team Players
Individuals who are authorized by U.S. Soccer to have regular contact with/authority over minor athletes/participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Level Referees (Grades 1-4) • Referees assigned by U.S. Soccer • National Team: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Coaches ○ Administrators ○ Staff ○ Medical personnel ○ Volunteers • National Coaching Instructors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization Members and their officials • Local Affiliated Organizations and their officials • Referee grades 5-15 (state, amateur and youth), unless assigned by U.S. Soccer

¹ The definition of “USSPPs” for purposes of determining who is covered by this Guide should not be confused with the definition of a “Covered Individual” obligated to report child abuse under the SafeSport Act. Please see the Section below entitled, “[Error! Reference source not found.](#)” on page 15 for more information.

C. STATEMENT ON YOUTH REFEREE SAFETY

The abuse and assault of referees is expressly prohibited by U.S. Soccer Policy 531-9, but a particular note is required regarding referees who are also minors.

Minor aged referees are trained game officials, and many are experienced players, but they are minor participants nonetheless and are therefore entitled to all protections extended to minor athletes by the Safe Soccer Framework.

Without limiting the foregoing, this policy includes protections for minor athletes or other participants, they should also be read as protecting any referee under the age of 18.

D. PROHIBITED CONDUCT

This Policy applies to all U.S. Soccer Program Participants (“USSPPs”) as defined in the Section B above entitled “Application”, as well as conduct by any subcontractor, supplier, customer or third party and their employees in their dealings with U.S. Soccer employees. All definitions in this policy are taken from the SafeSport Code for the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Movement the “**SafeSport Code**”), as may be amended from time to time. In the event of any conflict between this Policy and the SafeSport Code, the SafeSport Code will govern. The most recent SafeSport Code is always available at <https://uscenterforsafesport.org/response-and-resolution/safesport-code/> .

U.S. Soccer is committed to maintaining a work environment that is free from all forms of discrimination, including harassment, based on any legally protected status. Accordingly, U.S. Soccer does not permit any form of unlawful harassment, discrimination, or intimidation against its employees by anyone, including managers, supervisors, coworkers, executives, directors, officers, other employees, vendors, clients, customers or third parties. Protected status includes race, color, age, religion, marital status, sex, ancestry, national origin, citizenship, veteran’s status, pregnancy, disability, sexual orientation, protected activity, or any other characteristic protected by federal, state, or local law. The policy also prohibits harassment based on the protected status of an individual’s relatives, friends or associates.

U.S. Soccer is also committed to maintaining a work environment that is free from all forms of sexual abuse, sexual misconduct, emotional misconduct, physical misconduct, bullying and hazing.

Any violation of this Policy by an USSPP may subject the USSPP to disciplinary action. Appropriate action also will be taken against any subcontractor, supplier, or customer found in violation of this Policy.

1. Harassment

Harassment consists of unwelcome conduct, whether verbal, physical or visual, that is based upon a person’s protected status. U.S. Soccer will not tolerate harassing conduct that affects tangible job benefits, that unreasonably interferes with an individual’s work performance, or safety, or that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

Among the types of conduct prohibited by this policy are epithets, slurs, negative stereotyping, or intimidating acts based on an individual's protected status and the circulation or posting of written or graphic materials that show hostility toward an individual because of his or her protected status.

Prohibited conduct can also include jokes, kidding, or teasing about another person's protected status. While harassing conduct is unlawful only if it affects tangible job benefits and/or interferes unreasonably with work performance and creates an abusive or hostile work environment, this Policy forbids harassing conduct even when it does not rise to the level of a violation of law.

2. Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment deserves special mention. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, written, or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

- submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of the individual's employment;
- submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for an employment decision affecting that individual; or
- such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance and creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

Sexual harassment may involve individuals of the same or different gender. It may also occur between individuals of any employment status.

Examples of conduct which may constitute sexual harassment and are prohibited by this Policy include, but are not limited to:

- unnecessary touching, patting, hugging, pinching, or brushing against a person's body;
- staring, ogling, leering, or whistling at a person;
- continued or repeated verbal abuse of a sexual nature;
- sexually explicit statements, sexual flirtations, advances, propositions, subtle pressure for sexual activity, comments, questions, jokes, or anecdotes;
- graphic or degrading comments about a person's clothing, body or sexual activity;
- sexually suggestive objects, cartoons, posters, calendars, or pictures in the workplace;
- suggestive or obscene letters, notes or invitations;
- harassing use of electronic mail, electronic or instant messaging, or telephone communication systems; or

- other physical or verbal conduct of a sexual nature.

U.S. Soccer prohibits managers and supervisors from threatening or insinuating, either explicitly or implicitly, that an employee's submission to or rejection of sexual advances will in any way influence any personnel decision regarding that employee's wages, assigned duties, advancement, evaluation, shifts, career development, or any other condition of employment.

3. Racial, Religious, or National Origin Harassment

Racial, religious, or national origin harassment deserves special mention as well, and is expressly prohibited by U.S. Soccer. Racial, religious, or national origin harassment includes any verbal, written, or physical act in which race, religion, or national origin is used or implied in a manner which would make a reasonable person uncomfortable in the work environment or which would interfere with the person's ability to perform the job. Examples of race, religious or national origin harassment may include, but are not limited to:

- jokes, which include reference to race, religion, or national origin;
- the display or use of objects or pictures which adversely reflect on a person's race, religion, or national origin; or
- use of pejorative or demeaning language regarding a person's race, religion, or national origin.

4. Child Abuse, Including Child Sexual Abuse

Child abuse is prohibited. Child abuse is defined as the physical or mental injury, sexual abuse or exploitation, or negligent treatment of a child. Mental injury means harm to a child's psychological or intellectual functioning which may be exhibited by severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal or outward aggressive behavior, or a combination of those behaviors, which may be demonstrated by a change in behavior, emotional response, or cognition. Specifically, child sexual abuse includes sexual contact with a child that is accomplished by deception, manipulation, force or threat of force, regardless of the age of the participants, and all sexual interactions between an adult and a child, regardless of whether there is deception, or whether the child understands the sexual nature of the activity.

5. Sexual Misconduct and Power Imbalance

Sexual misconduct is prohibited. Sexual misconduct includes:

- Sexual Harassment as defined in Section E.2. of this policy,
- Non-consensual touching of a sexual nature, however slight,
- Watching, recording, or disseminating images of private sexual activity without the consent of all parties, and
- Engaging in solicitation of prostitution or prostituting or trafficking another person.

Any sexual interaction between an athlete and an individual where there is a power imbalance is prohibited. A power imbalance exists when one person has evaluative, direct, or indirect authority over another. Such relationships involve an imbalance of power and are likely to impair

judgment or be exploitative. This section does not apply to a pre-existing relationship between two spouses or life partners.

6. Emotional Misconduct

Emotional misconduct in all forms is prohibited. Emotional misconduct is a pattern of deliberate, non-contact behavior that has the potential to cause emotional or psychological harm to another person. Non-contact behaviors include verbal acts, physical acts, or acts that deny attention or support; or any act or conduct described as emotional abuse or misconduct under federal or state law (e.g., child abuse, child neglect). Emotional misconduct does not include professionally-accepted coaching methods of skill enhancement, physical conditioning, team building, appropriate discipline or improving athletic performance.

7. Physical Misconduct

Physical misconduct in all forms is prohibited. Physical misconduct is defined as contact or non-contact conduct that results in, or reasonably threatens to, cause physical harm to another person; or any act or conduct described as physical abuse or misconduct under federal or state law (e.g., child abuse, child neglect, assault). Physical misconduct does not include professionally-accepted coaching methods of skill enhancement, physical conditioning, team building, appropriate discipline or improving athletic performance. For example, hitting and punching are well-regulated forms of contact in combat sports but have no place in soccer.

8. Bullying

Intentional, persistent, and repeated pattern of committing or willfully tolerating physical and non-physical behaviors that are intended, or have the reasonable potential, to cause fear, humiliation, or physical harm in an attempt to socially exclude, diminish or isolate the targeted athlete(s), as a condition of membership are prohibited. Bullying does not include group or team behaviors that (a) are meant to establish normative team behaviors, or (b) promote team cohesion.

9. Hazing

Coercing, requiring, forcing, or willfully tolerating any humiliating, unwelcome or dangerous activity that serves as a condition for (a) joining a group or (b) being socially accepted by a group's members are prohibited. Purported consent by the person subject to hazing is not a defense, regardless of the person's willingness to cooperate or participate. Hazing does not include group or team activities that (a) are meant to establish normative team behaviors or (b) promote team cohesion.

10. Retaliation

Retaliation against a person for reporting prohibited conduct or for making a report of misconduct or participating in an investigation of a report of misconduct under this policy, is prohibited before, during or after the response and resolution process. Retaliation means any adverse action, or treat to take an adverse action including, but not limited to threatening, intimidating, harassing, coercing, or any other action or conduct with the potential effect of

dissuading a reasonable person from reporting under this policy or participating in the investigation of a report.

11. Aiding and Abetting

Aiding and abetting is prohibited. Aiding and abetting is defined as:

- Knowingly assisting, in any way, the commission of prohibited conduct under this policy, or
- Allowing any person who has been suspended or ruled ineligible by the U.S. Center for SafeSport to participate, in any capacity as a USSPP.

12. Abuse of Process

Abuse of process is prohibited. Abuse of process is defined as interfering with the U.S. Center for SafeSport's ("the Center's") process by:

- Falsifying, misrepresenting, concealing, or destroying information,
- Attempting to discourage a person's participation in the Center's process,
- Publicly disclosing a claimant's (or victim's) information,
- Failing to comply with a temporary measure or other sanction,
- Distribution or publicizing material created or produced by the Center except as expressly permitted by the Center, or
- Having another person complete any Center required training for them.

13. Misconduct Related to Reporting

Misconduct related to reporting is prohibited. Misconduct related to reporting is defined as:

- Failing to report allegations to the Center or to law enforcement under Section E of this policy, or
- Filing a knowingly false allegation that someone engaged in prohibited conduct.

E. REPORTING OBLIGATIONS

Everyone covered by this policy as outlined in Section B above is required to report prohibited conduct. This section shall not be interpreted to require a victim of abuse to make a report.

1. Reporting to Law Enforcement and the U.S. Center for SafeSport

Any allegation of child abuse, as defined by Section D.4. herein, including child sexual abuse, must be reported within 24 hours to:

- Local law enforcement, and other agency as required by state law, and
- The U.S. Center for SafeSport, at <https://uscenterforsafesport.org/report-a-concern/> or 833-587-7233.

Failure to promptly report suspected child abuse to law enforcement authorities may constitute a violation of federal law and, in any event, constitutes a violation of this policy.

2. Reporting to the U.S. Center for SafeSport

The following allegations must be reported within 24 hours to the U.S. Center for SafeSport, at <https://uscenterforsafesport.org/report-a-concern/> or 833-587-7233:

- Sexual misconduct as defined by Section B.5. herein,
- Retaliation as defined by Section B.10. herein
- Aiding and abetting as defined by Section B.11. herein, when it relates to the Center’s process, and
- Abuse of process as defined by Section B.12. herein, when it relates to the Center’s process.

The reporting obligations in sections E.1. and E.2. above are triggered when a mandatory reporter becomes aware of “facts that give reason to suspect” a child has suffered an incident of child abuse. The Safe Sport Act includes qualified immunity for good faith reports. U.S. Soccer urges all mandatory reporters to refrain from judging or evaluating the credibility of such allegations.

3. Reporting to U.S. Soccer

All other allegations of misconduct prohibited by this policy or the Code, as well as violations of U.S. Soccer’s Minor Abuse Prevention Policy (“MAAPP”), must be reported to U.S. Soccer online at <https://ussoccer.i-sight.com/portal>, or by phone on the Integrity Hotline at 312-528-7004.

Reports may be made anonymously, and there is no cost or fee associated with making a report. That said, we encourage reporters to self-identify so that we may have the best opportunity to follow-up with you and ensure we have addressed the concern you have raised. To the greatest extent possible, all personnel responsible for responding to such reports will maintain the confidentiality of the individual and the matters relating to the report.

U.S. Soccer employees are responsible to help assure that the work environment, on or off-premises, is free from harassment. All employees have an obligation to promptly report any prohibited conduct they are the subject of, that they learn of, or that they witness.

In addition to the reporting options outlined above, a U.S. Soccer employee may report the harassing conduct to either:

- The person to whom they report (supervisor or manager);
- Their Department Head;
- The Human Resources Department;
- The Legal Department;
- The Chief Executive Officer;

Employees are not required to report misconduct to any individual who is accused of misconduct.

All USSPPs have an obligation to cooperate in any investigation of a complaint of misconduct, including providing any information concerning the complaint. Failure to do so may be a violation of this policy.

U.S. Soccer's Prohibited Conduct Policy offers its employees greater protection from misconduct than does the law. Consequently, USSPPs who are found to have violated U.S. Soccer's Prohibited Conduct Policy shall be subject to corrective action, discipline, or termination, even in cases where applicable laws may not have been violated and without regard to whether the conduct constitutes a violation of the law.

An employee wishing to file an employment complaint outside the Federation may also contact either the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission or the fair employment agency in his or her state.