



NMYSA Zero Tolerance Policy for Inappropriate Behavior Towards Referees

We have a severe shortage of referees, due in large part to the abuse they are subjected to by coaches, players, and sidelines. The behavior towards referees must change. Effective immediately, NMYSA will enact a ZERO TOLERANCE policy regarding any inappropriate behavior towards referees. Policy

1. Spectators shall not address any member of the referee crew in a negative manner – physically, verbally, or with gestures before, during or after a game.
2. Spectators shall not make any comments to any referee to make a call, or to comment on a call made or not made.
3. Complimenting a referee briefly after a game may be acceptable and probably appreciated. However, sitting back and watching the game unfold while letting the referees do their job to the best of their ability is the best approach.
4. Referees make mistakes like everyone else – and that's okay. Many of our youth referees are learning their craft and the transferable life skills of how to make educated decisions in split seconds. There are procedures for coaches and officials to report concerns regarding the quality of the officiating. Spectators are to leave this process to the coaches and officials to handle. Regardless of the quality of the officiating, it is NEVER acceptable for a spectator to abuse or criticize a referee.
5. Ignorance of this policy is not excusable.

Sanctions for Inappropriate Behavior Towards Referees

1. If an individual is required to leave a game by the center referee or other official, at a minimum, individual may not be a spectator at the following game (two games for a youth referee).
2. If more than one individual is engaged in a negative manner – physically, verbally or with gestures, all spectators may be disqualified for at least the following game (two games if directed towards a youth referee).
3. If a second occurrence of a spectator or coach engaging in a negative manner towards a referee (#1 or #2), a strict no spectator for the rest of the season may be enforced. That team will not be allowed to have any spectators on the sideline for the remainder of the fall or spring season.



Enforcement

1. Local leagues and clubs will enforce this policy.
2. Coaches will be responsible to not allow an individual spectator of his or her team to be a spectator as required.
3. The center referee will be informed of sideline suspensions before games begin.
4. Referees, game officials, field marshals, league officials or tournament officials may report infractions of inappropriate behavior towards referees as defined by this policy subject to local league policies and procedures.

Referee Assault/Abuse

Referee assault, or abuse is defined by the United States Soccer Federation, (USSF), and is different from “inappropriate behavior” towards a referee as described in the Zero Tolerance policy. Referee Assault and Abuse must be reported to New Mexico Youth Soccer within 48 hours of occurrence and is subject to a hearing and sanctions defined by the United States Soccer Federation, (USSF) for both minor and adult referees.

Referee Assault/Abuse/Gross Mistreatment

- Referee assault is any deliberate physical action against a Referee. Referee abuse is extreme, deliberate, and non-contact behavior that causes a Referee to Protected Party significant harm. Actions in this category may be subject to an immediate suspension, meaning that the perpetrator cannot appear at the next sanctioned match. Assault and abuse include, but are not limited to, the following actions or behaviors committed against a Referee or Protected Parties:
 - i. Imposing physical harm upon a Referee or a Protected Party, including by use of objects or equipment.
 - ii. Any act that endangers the Referee’s physical wellbeing, whether deliberate or merely reckless.
 - iii. Any form of unwanted physical contact, including but not limited to pushing, hitting, striking, kicking, choking, or spitting at the Referee.
 - iv. Any behavior that constitutes a criminal offense under any applicable law.
 - v. Threatening, either directly or in insinuation, physical harm, including by use of objects or equipment, to a Referee or a Protected Party or property. Threatening is defined as any statement or action that instills reasonable fear of acts of violence to a person’s safety or property.

- vi. Threats of harm or any retaliatory action against the Referee or their Protected Parties, including threat of exclusion from assignment or future participation opportunity.
- Actions that do not meet above assault or abuse definitions, but cause a Referee or Protected Party harm, may be subject to U>S> Soccer's gross mistreatment framework. Gross mistreatment means any deliberate, non-contact behavior that is expected to cause harm to a Referee. Gross mistreatment includes, but is not limited to, the following actions or behavior committed against a Referee or Protected Parties:
 - a. Severe or repeated harassment, including hate speech or discriminatory remarks based on race, gender, national origin, sexual orientation, disabilities, or any other legally protected characteristic.
 - b. Extreme verbal attacks that would cause emotional harm to a reasonable person.
 - c. Approaching a Referee when they arrive or depart the venue with aggression (e.g., intimidation).
 - d. Any form of cyberbullying, including spreading false information about the Referee, sharing the Referee's personal information (aka doxing), or publicly posting content that ridicules or mocks the Referee or uses hate speech.
 - e. Questioning the Referee's character, integrity, honesty, truthfulness, or impartiality.
 - f. Yelling insults, taunting, making or expressing derogatory/belittling remarks towards a Referee.
 - g. Pervasive action that belittles or undermines the Referee's authority or intended to cast doubt on the Referee.