



Referee Abuse Prevention Program (RAPP)

A How-To Guide for Policy, People, Process, Procedures & Protocols

Bringing the World's Game to Communities Everywhere

Record of updates

- 2026-03-28: Original release at 2026 EXPO 1-10-11
- 2026-03-31: Update for the wiki removing EXPO specific content
- 2026-04-06: Update to Process map on p 15 adding participant witness

RAP Program Policy

What is the RAPP? Why do we need it?

How many of you have difficulty getting referees?

We (all soccer programs) are losing referees all the time!

From U.S. Soccer

- 90% of Referees reported that abuse has increased in the past 5 years
- 60% of referees choose not to re-certify due to harassment and threats
- Youth soccer needs to grow, and we can't do it without referees.

In 2025, U.S. Soccer created and implemented to all participating organizations the Referee Abuse Prevention Policy (RAPP). This policy is designed to eliminate referee abuse, identify what abuse is and give guidance for discipline should referee abuse occur. AYSO has adopted this as policy and added that spectators and parents are also subject to the rules and regulations of the RAPP.

AYSO's Ethical Expectations



COACHES

- Teach respect for the Laws of the Game
- Teach respect for other participants (opponents, coaches and referees)
- Display positive & respectful behavior

SPECTATORS

- Support players, coaches and referees
- Positive cheering
- Reinforce a positive game experiences off the field



REFEREES

- Enforce the Laws equally, fairly and with knowledge
- Remain in control despite difficult events and actions
- Show respect for all participants

PLAYERS

- Practice fair play and sportsmanship
- Work together as a team
- Respect the Referee's authority
- Have FUN



Referees are members of our community, friends & neighbors

- ⚽ They volunteer their time so that “our children” can enjoy a safe, fun and fair game
- ⚽ They most certainly are undeserving of verbal or physical abuse by others at the field... be they players, coaches or spectators



The Spectrum of Bad Behavior

Frustration

Referee
Action

- ⚽ Do nothing
- ⚽ Player counseling
- ⚽ Non-verbal warning
- ⚽ Verbal warning

“Frustration” is not the same as “Dissent”

Frustrating verbal outbursts are common during games. Most of the time, they are simply reactive statements of frustration and not directed as dissent against the Referee.

Examples of Frustration include:

- A player kicks the ball to an opponent and mutters, “Shit!”
- A player misses what you perceive as an easy goal opportunity and the Coach exclaims to the player, “Come on. Focus!”.
- The referee, *in your opinion*, misses a call and the Coach say, “That was a foul, Ref!”

The event happens, a reactive outburst is made, the referee responds with a look or the “enough” hand signal, and we move on. If it is too public, perhaps there is a verbal warning from the Referee.

The Spectrum of Bad Behavior

Frustration

Dissent

Referee
Action

- ⚽ Do nothing
- ⚽ Player counseling
- ⚽ Non-verbal warning
- ⚽ Verbal warning

- ⚽ Verbal warning
- ⚽ Caution
- ⚽ Send-Off / Dismissal
- ⚽ Referee or Incident Report, as appropriate

“Dissent” is not the same as “Referee Abuse”

*Dissent is defined as “a public protest or disagreement (verbal and/or physical) with a match official’s decision; punishable by a Caution (yellow card)” to a player and/or team official (e.g., coach). * IFAB Laws of the Game Glossary*

Examples of Dissent include:

- ⚽ “Hey ref! Are you paying attention to the game?”
- ⚽ “Call the foul. That was an obvious trip.”
- ⚽ A player picks up the ball and throws it down hard when a free kick is awarded to the other team

* Spectators are not Cautioned (yellow card) or Sent-Off (red card) – they are warned and dismissed (ejected).

The Spectrum of Bad Behavior

Frustration

Dissent

Referee Abuse

Referee
Action

- ⚽ Do nothing
- ⚽ Player counseling
- ⚽ Non-verbal warning
- ⚽ Verbal warning

- ⚽ Verbal warning
- ⚽ Caution
- ⚽ Send-Off / Dismissal
- ⚽ Referee or Incident Report, as appropriate

- ⚽ Send-Off / Dismissal
- ⚽ Coaches conference during match
- ⚽ Referee or Incident Report, as appropriate

Abuse is an extreme form of Dissent

*Referee Abuse is **extreme**, intentional, and non-contact behavior that causes a Referee significant distress or demonstrates a material lack of respect.*

Referee Assault is any deliberate physical action against a Referee.

Any and all forms of Referee Abuse or Assault require the submission of a Referee Report or an Incident Report.

When Dissent becomes Referee Abuse...

Characteristic	Dissent	Abuse
Appears as	Questioning a referee's decision (e.g., call, foul, offside).	Comments directed at the referee <i>personally</i> or other individuals (e.g., players, coaches, spectators).
Examples of Actions	Verbal disagreement, questioning calls, sarcastic clapping, throwing/kicking water bottles.	Offensive, insulting, or abusive language; physical or aggressive behavior; targeting discriminatory characteristics.
Severity	Less severe; often results in a yellow card (caution).	More severe; often results in a red card (send-off) and possible disciplinary action, such as suspension.
Impact on Referee	Can disrupt game flow and erode authority if persistent.	Creates a hostile environment and affects the well-being of the individual being abused.
Examples of Language	"Hey Ref, what was that call?"	"Hey Ref, what the f**k was that call you a**hole?!" "You don't know what you're doing."

RAPP is not...

- ⚽ a replacement for in-game Warnings, Cautions or Send-Offs to players or coaches by the Referee. In the case of spectators, warnings or ejections
- ⚽ a threat made by the Referee to a player, coach or spectator
- ⚽ a tool to be used by a Referee *during a match*

RAPP is...

- ⚽ a post-game administrative tool to correct abusive behavior against a referee
- ⚽ a disciplinary action
- ⚽ a support mechanism for Referees

RAP Program People

- ⚽ **RAPP Administrator:** Manages implementation/enforcement of RAP Program throughout the Area. Provides investigatory work, documentation and recommended actions to the RAPP Disciplinary Panel.
- ⚽ **RAPP Disciplinary Panel:** Based upon input from the RAPP Administrator, it determines sanctions for referee abuse violations in accordance with the RAP Program guidelines (with potential enhancements at the discretion of the Area Executive Board, i.e., ARA and RCs).
 - ⚽ Comprised of the ARA, ACA and a “neutral” party selected by the Area Director
- ⚽ **Regional Commissioner (RC) or Area Director (AD):** Supports coach, referee and spectator education. Enforces sanctions from the RAPP Disciplinary Panel.
- ⚽ **Regional Referee Administrators (RRAs) and Area Referee Administrator (ARA):** Support referee education and compliance with RAP Program protocols.
- ⚽ **Area Coach Administrator (ACA):** Supports coach education and compliance with the RAP Program.

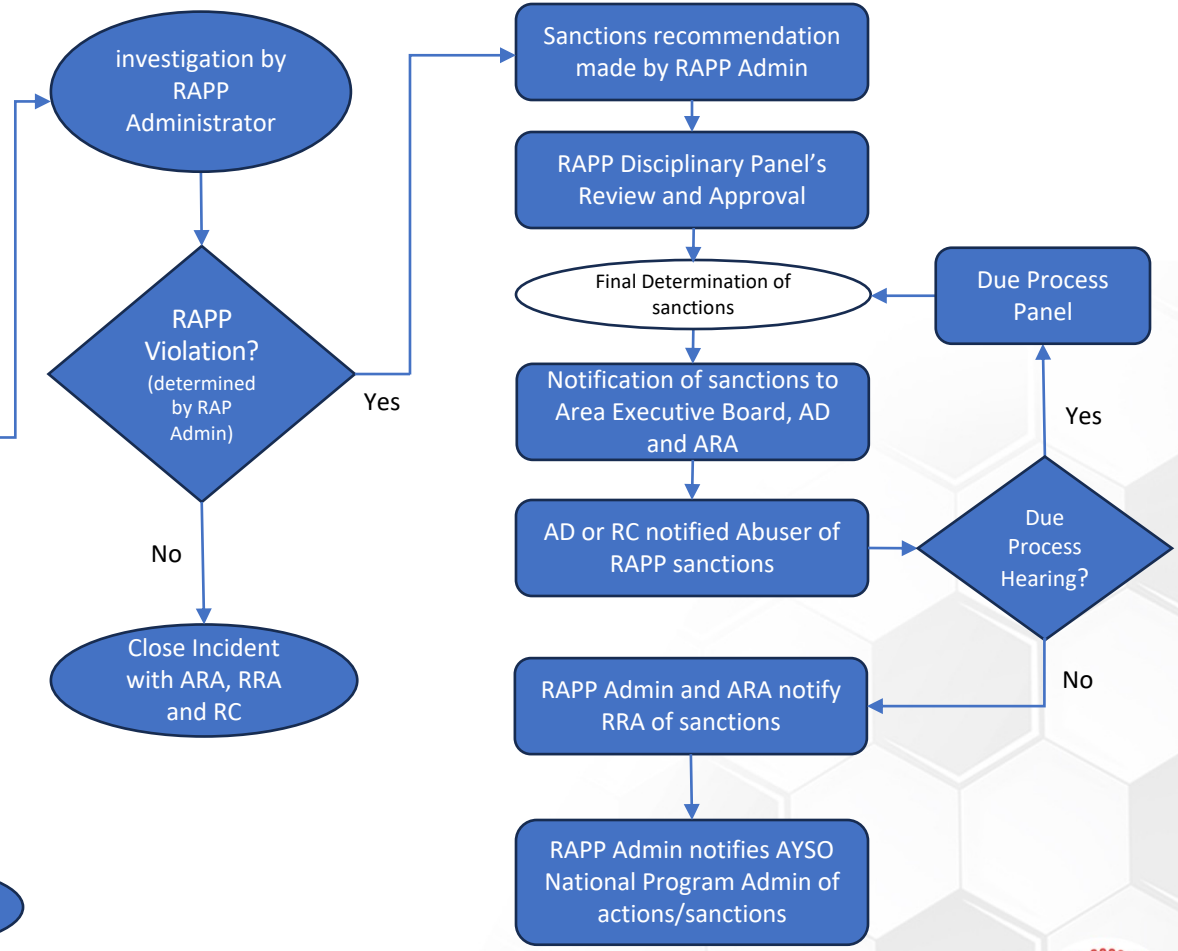
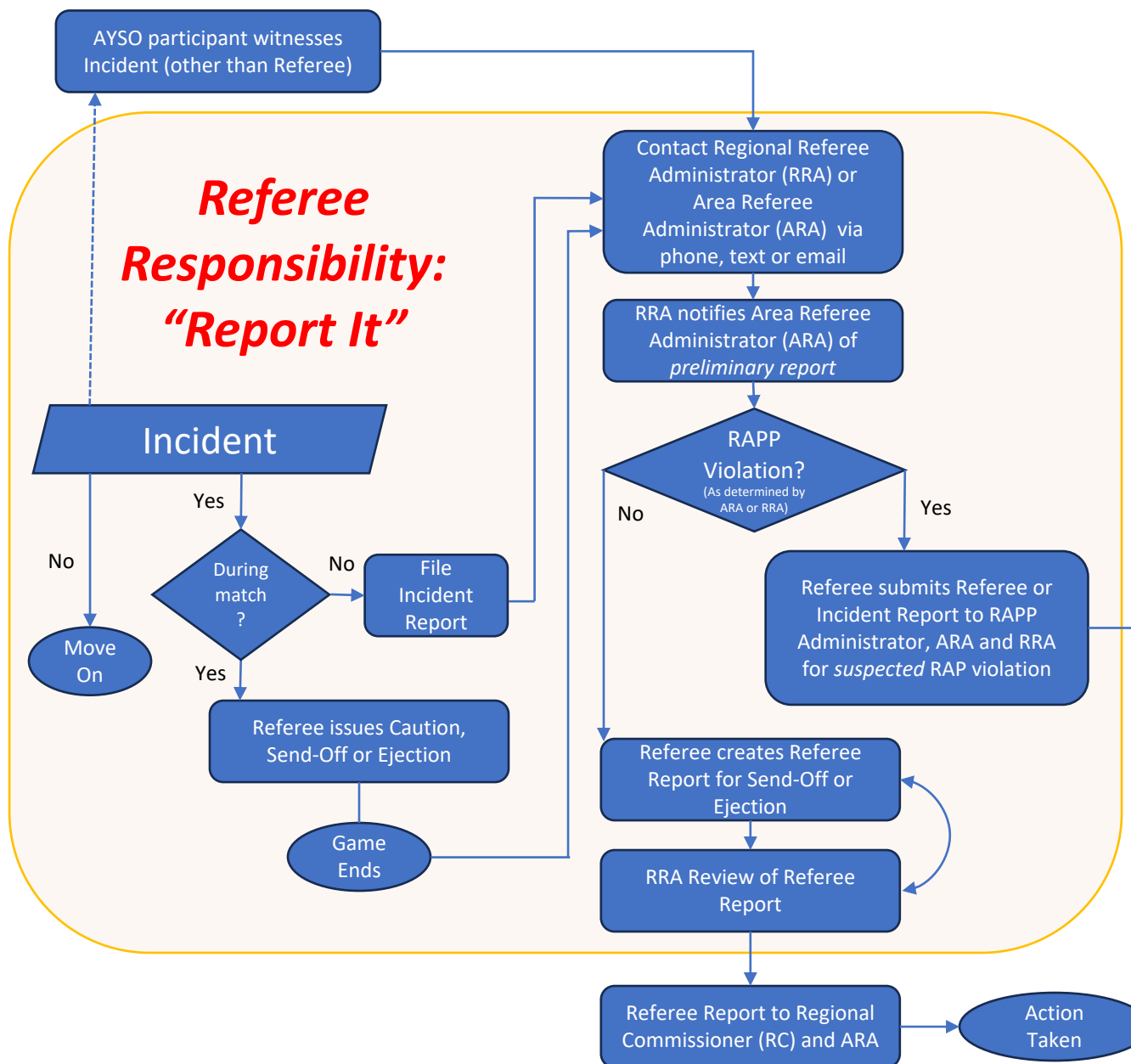
RAP Administrator and Disciplinary Panel are appointed each year by the Area Director (with input from the Regional Commissioners).

RAP Program People

The RAP Program Administrator is...

- ⚽ the RAP Program *educator* to the coach, referee and administrators.
- ⚽ the *investigator* of suspected RAPP incidents.
- ⚽ the *scribe* who documents a RAPP incident.
- ⚽ the *arbiter* in deciding if an incident is or is not a RAPP violation.
- ⚽ the *recommender* of disciplinary action (sanctions) against the RAPP offender based upon the facts, situational analysis and protocols.
- ⚽ the *communicator* of the final action taken by the RAPP Disciplinary Panel.
- ⚽ *not* the judge or jury. This is the role of the RAPP Disciplinary Panel.

RAP Program Reporting Process



RAP Program Procedure

It is not the Referee's responsibility to administer the penalties associated with the respective levels of referee abuse. Nor should Referees describe the potential penalties to the person causing the referee abuse. Decisions regarding penalties will be made by the appropriate administrative authorities within the Region, Area or Section, as appropriate.

The Referee is only responsible for:

- ⚽ Enforcing the Laws and rules involving Dissent and Referee Abuse.
- ⚽ Properly reporting instances of Dissent and Referee Abuse, including providing a detailed description, including specific language or actions used, of the Dissent and/or Referee Abuse used by a Player, Coach or Spectator.
- ⚽ Keeping personal notes about incidents of Dissent and Referee Abuse should additional information be needed for adjudication.

RAP Program Procedure

In almost all circumstances, a RAPP report from a Referee will include:

- ⚽ A Referee Report (indicating the Send-Off of a player or coach); or Incident Report (indicating the ejection of a spectator).
- ⚽ If the Referee or Incident Report does not include all of the ugly details of a suspected RAPP violation, a supplemental document (or email) from the Referee is necessary.
- ⚽ It may be necessary for the RAPP Administrator to have a conversation with the Referee to glean additional details about the suspected RAPP violation.
- ⚽ Any corroborating witness testimony.
- ⚽ Copies of the front and back of Line-Up/Game Cards for both teams.



American Youth Soccer Organization
REFEREE REPORT

Home: Red Rockstars FC Final Score: 3 Visitor: Yellow Dragons FC Final Score: 2
 [Home Team] [Visiting Team]
 Home Coach: Smith Visitor Coach: Hamilton
 Section/Area/Region: 20 / Z / 1 Section/Area/Region: 20 / Z / 2

Date of Game: 4/12/2025
 Field Location: Village F

Referee: Robert
 Ass't Referee: Judy St
 Ass't Referee: Steve J
 4th Official: _____

SERIOUS INJURY during
 Name

Participants CAUTIONED
 Name
Roger Rabbitt
Sam Paderschmidt

Participants SENT-OFF
 Name
Coach Smith

*If player passes/ID cards are used in this competition, each Player's pass/card must be retained after the game and returned to the proper authority with this report. If a Coach is removed from the game, his/her ID card must also be retained and returned with this report. Check with the competition authority for requirements.



American Youth Soccer Organization
REFEREE REPORT DETAILS

Home: Red Rockstars FC Visitor: Yellow Dragons FC Gender/Age Group: 19 / B U
 [Home Team] [Visiting Team]
 Section/Area/Region: 20 / Z / 1 Section/Area/Region: 20 / Z / 2

Describe Any Unusual Incident or Send-Off

In the 21st minute, Coach Smith (20/Z/1) publicly expressed his displeasure with a foul call, stating, "That was a fair tackle". The Referee asked the Coach to control his public comments. In the 38th minute, the Coach publicly expressed his displeasure with a non-call, stating, "You're not protecting the players!". The Coach was warned by the Referee. In the 53rd minute, the Coach again publicly expressed his displeasure with a foul call by stating, "Do you even know the rules?". The Coach was Sent-Off for Offensive, Insulting and Abusive Language, Law 12-3. A properly credentialed Assistant Coach for the team was present, so the game continued after Coach Smith left the field. There were no further incidents.

The RAPP Administrator may consider the Coach's comment a RAPP Verbal Abuse Level 1 (Taunting) violation.

Email: robert.daniel@ayso.com
 Date: 4/12/2025

[For additional description or remarks, use additional sheets.]

In situations involving *Serious Assault* or *Serious Injury*, a copy of this report must also be submitted to the Regional Safety Director, Regional Commissioner, Area Director and Section Director.


Referee Report for Players, Substitutes, and Coaches

Any referee officiating the game (i.e., Referee, Assistant Referee or 4th Official) may submit a Referee Report on a particular incident.



Incident Report

for Spectators
(before, during and/or after a match)

 AYSO INCIDENT REPORT FORM		Return <u>completed</u> form to the Regional Commissioner, Safety Director, Area Director, or Tournament Director.
Complete this form for any of the following: (check type) <input type="checkbox"/> Injury/illness <input type="checkbox"/> Threats <input type="checkbox"/> Fights <input type="checkbox"/> Property damage <input type="checkbox"/> Calls to Police <input type="checkbox"/> Other		
AFFECTED PARTY: <input type="checkbox"/> Player <input type="checkbox"/> Official <input type="checkbox"/> Coach <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Spectator <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer <input type="checkbox"/> Other		AYSO ID # (Required) _____ Region # 1/D/18 (Required) _____
Last Name: Rhonda First Name: Bigmouth MI: _____ Birth date: _____		Phone: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Address: _____ City: _____		
Does the injured person have medical insurance? YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>		If yes, please provide name of company and policy #: _____
<p>In the 35th minute, a spectator (later identified as Rhonda Bigmouth) publicly yelled, "You're the worst referee in the history of referees!". This is a violation of the Referee Abuse Prevention program, Level 2 (Harassment/Intimidation). The spectator was located on the Blue Warriors side of the field. The Coach (Holmes) was asked by the Referee to (1) identify the spectator and (2) dismiss (eject) her from the field and general vicinity. Play was suspended by the Referee until after the spectator had left the vicinity of the field.</p>		
Person/volunteer completing/submitting this form:		
Name: Richard Ballard	Signature: _____	Cell: (310) 555-1212
Position Title: Referee	E-mail address: referee.richard@gmail.com	Date: 4/13/2025
RC or Safety Director (print name): _____	Signature: _____	Date: _____
AYSO Staff ONLY: Email completed form to riskmanagement@ayso.org. Questions? Email or call 800-872-2976.		
Rev 06-2021 hv		

Ask for help from the Coach regarding the name of the offending spectator. *It is the Coach's responsibility to manage their sideline and assist the Referee in this regard* (failure to do so is considered Referee Abuse committed by the Coach).

If the Coach tries, but cannot get the name, provide a simple description of the offending spectator (e.g., female, short hair, glasses, etc.).

If the Coach *refuses* to get the name, include the refusal in this Report and a simple description of the offending spectator.

RAP Program Procedure

The RAP Program Administrator...

- ⚽ conducts an investigation based upon the materials provided by the referee(s) and witnesses.
- ⚽ as needed, has conversations with the referee(s) and/or witnesses to gather additional details and clearly understand the incident.
- ⚽ creates a *RAP Investigatory Report & Recommendations* document, which is submitted to the RAP Disciplinary Panel.
- ⚽ as requested, answers any questions that the Disciplinary Panel may have about the Report & Recommendations.
- ⚽ awaits final adjudication from the RAP Disciplinary Panel.

PENALTIES MATRIX



The **Penalties Matrix** defines consequences associated with physical and non-physical offenses against Referees.

NON-PHYSICAL OFFENSES of gross misconduct, abuse, and / or assault

NON-PHYSICAL *	MIN. GAMES	TIME
Insulting, Belittling, Insinuating or Taunting Behavior Undermining Referee Authority	2	
Harassment, Intimidation, Retaliation, Abusive, or Threatening (Non Physical) Language	4	
Aggression, Attacking, Derogatory, Cyberbullying, Doxing or Threatening (Physical / Violence) Language	6	6 - 24 Months
Offensive or Discriminatory Act	10	12 - 24 Months

- Level 1
- Level 2
- Level 3
- Level 4

PHYSICAL OFFENSES of gross misconduct, abuse, and / or assault

PHYSICAL *	MIN. GAMES	TIME
Minor or Slight Deliberate Touching	3	1 - 6 Months
Pushing, Grabbing, Pulling, Squeezing, Pinching, Lightly Slapping, Use of Object in Non Striking Manner, or Physical Property Damage	10	6 - 24 Months
Hitting, Punching, Elbowing, Kicking, Biting, Spiting, Choking, Tackling, Throwing or Use of Object or Any Part of Body (Forearm, Knee, Head) in a Striking Manner		12 Months - Lifetime

- Level 1
- Level 2
- Level 3

(*) **Disclaimer:** These are only a few examples of abuse – other actions or statements may also fall into this category.

KEY PENALTY FACTORS

- Single offenses are at **minimum the prescribed game penalty or time penalty** for non red zone offenses
- Penalties can be **both game and time depending on severity / circumstances**
- Second time offenders receive **double punishment**
- Third time offenders receive a **lifetime ban**
- More than one offense at the same time is **at least the punishment for the most serious offense**
- Offenses against minors are automatically subject to a **"minor multiplier" resulting in triple punishment**
- **One offense warning per league** to be managed by states and leagues collaboratively
- Game consequences are **inclusive of 1 game penalty for any red cards given**
- Optionality for **50% penalty for first offense from a minor**

Please follow your current reporting structure – updated reporting procedure will be a part of Phase 3..

It is not the Referee's responsibility to determine, educate or debate with the offender the penalties/sanctions which may be imposed. This is the responsibility of the RAP Program Administrator and the RAP Program's Disciplinary Panel.

RAP Program **Protocols**

Once a recommended determination regarding sanctions have been made by the RAPP Disciplinary Panel...

- ⚽ The RAPP Disciplinary Panel emails the Area Director and Regional Commissioner the recommended adjudication (results) of the investigation.
- ⚽ The Area Director or Regional Commissioner will notify the offender who *may* request and receive a Due Process Hearing before an independent Due Process Panel (appointed by the Area Director).
- ⚽ If no Due Process Hearing is requested, the RAPP Disciplinary Panel will notify the RAPP Administrator of its final determination (or, after a Due Process Hearing is completed, the final result).

RAP Program **Protocols**

Once a final determination regarding sanctions have been made by the RAPP Disciplinary Panel...

- ⚽ The RAPP Administrator emails the Section Referee Administrator and National Referee Program Administrator the final adjudication (results) of the investigation. Included in the email are all of the materials provided to the RAPP Disciplinary Panel and the final notice (email) from the Disciplinary Panel describing the sanctions being imposed.
- ⚽ The RAPP Administrator will provide a final RAPP *summary report* (which will not include names) to the Area Director and Regional Commissioners typically following the end of a season.

RAP Program **Protocols**

As a follow-up to the RAPP process...

- ⚽ AYSO's Privacy Policies prevent the public dissemination of the (i) Referee or Incident Report, (ii) the RAPP Administrator's investigatory findings, conclusions and recommendations; (iii) the RAPP Disciplinary Panel's sanction determination; and (iv) the details or outcome of a Due Process Hearing regarding the RAPP incident.
- ⚽ The RRA or ARA *may*, at their discretion, provide *verbal* feedback to the Referee involved in the RAPP violation regarding the imposed sanctions.
- ⚽ This also provides an opportunity to coach the Referee on game management tactics used to de-escalate a challenging and/or abusive incident.



Scott Jarus



RAPP Resources: Templates and Materials

<https://bit.ly/4dcTRNp>

Scan this QR Code to access a Google drive with shared templates and other materials presented here today.



Resources: RAPP Proposal Email

From: Area Referee Administrator
To: Area Director, Area Regional Commissioners
Subject: AYSO - Area Board Meeting: Implementing Referee Abuse Prevention Program (RAP)

I've been working on a system that our Area can use to implement the new Referee Abuse Prevention policies (RAP) adopted by US Soccer and the AYSO National Board.

As you all know, the USSF/AYSO guidelines provide details about what constitutes "referee abuse" and what the suspensions should be for the various levels of violations. However, they did not provide guidance on the nuts-and-bolts of how the system should work (including, among other things, with respect to instructing referees, processing reports of violations, and determining penalties within the range of the proposed sanctions).

I've had many, many discussions and received lots of excellent suggestions and input. That includes meeting with all of our Regional Referee Administrators and <RAPP Administrator> (who has agreed to take on the position responsible for managing the Program in our Area). I've attached a summary of the proposal so that all of you can review it before our meeting on Monday.

The proposal is designed to address the specific concerns that were expressed during our last meeting. In particular, to do our best to make sure that we are only imposing RAP penalties in response to serious misbehavior that rises to the level of actual "abuse" (as opposed to less serious forms of dissent) and that violations are addressed in a consistent manner across all six Regions. No system will be perfect, but I believe that we've come up with a very good proposal.

I look forward to speaking further about this at our Area Board Meeting on Monday.

I've just sent this document to the RCs and our Area Director. If you all want me to circulate it more broadly to other Board members, let me know.

Thanks, everyone!

Resources: Implementation Template

Referee Abuse Prevention (RAP) Program for Area <section>/</area>



The AYSO National Board approved, effective March 1, 2025, the addition of the Referee Abuse Prevention (RAP) standards in the [AYSO National Policies \(Section 2.F.e\)](#). It is based upon direction and guidance from [U.S. Soccer's Policy 531-9](#). Commencing this upcoming Fall Season, the RAP program will be implemented and enforced throughout Area <section>/</area> as described below.

Staff and Responsibilities

- RAP Administrator: Manages implementation/enforcement of RAP program throughout Area <section>/</area>.
- RAP Disciplinary Panel: Determines penalties for referee abuse violations in accordance with the RAP program guidelines (with potential enhancements at the discretion of the Area Executive Board, i.e., AD and RCs).
- Regional Referee Administrators (RRAs) and Area Referee Administrator (ARA): Support referee education and compliance with RAP program protocols.
- Area Coach Administrator (ACA): Supports coach education and compliance with the RAP program.
 - RAP Administrator and Disciplinary Panel to be appointed each year by the Area Director (with input from the Regional Commissioners).
 - For the MY2025-26 Season: <name> will serve as RAP Administrator; and RAP Disciplinary Panel will consist of the ACA, <name>; 16U/19U Program Director, <name>; and ARA, <name>.

Implementation of RAP Program in Area <section>/</area>

Main Principles to be Applied

- The written guidelines issued by USSF/AYSO will govern the determinations regarding: (i) what language and actions qualify as "referee abuse", and (ii) what the recommended [suspensions/sanctions](#) will be for violations of said guidelines.
- Having the RAP program applied in a manner that is *reasonable, fair, and consistent* across the six Area <section>/</area> regions is an essential principle. Not all forms of dissent or misbehavior will qualify as referee abuse (though they may still be addressed by traditional methods, e.g., the Referee issuing a Caution for Dissent). For purposes of the RAP program, "referee abuse" is limited to language/behavior that is "extreme and deliberate" and that "causes significant harm" or "demonstrates a material lack of respect" (as detailed in the [USSF/AYSO RAP guidelines](#)).
- These RAP protocols are intended to encourage reporting by the referees and to ensure reasonable, fair and consistent treatment of referee abuse across the <# of> Area <section>/</area> Regions and the Area at large. The RAP Administrator, Area personnel (AD, ARA, ADRI), and Region personnel (RC, RRA, RDRI) will all be involved in the process.

Coaches

- The RAP Administrator will provide support and coordinate with each RC for messaging to coaches about how the program will work.
- Each Region is responsible for making sure that the RAP program has been explained, in detail, to its coaches (including what is expected of coaches before, during, and after matches). It will be emphasized that coaches and referees must cooperate and work together to address referee abuse.

Players & Parents

- The RAP Administrator will provide support and coordinate with each RC for messaging to players and parents about how the RAP program works.
- Each Region is responsible for making sure that the RAP program has been explained, in detail, to its players, player parents and other spectators – including what language/actions qualify as "referee abuse" and what the recommended suspension periods are under the USSF/[AYSO RAP Guidelines](#).

Referees

- The RAP Administrator will provide support and coordinate with each RRA for instruction of current referees about the RAP protocols. The protocols are designed to be simple and easy to apply – with the goal of increasing the likelihood of referee recognition and reporting of RAP violations.
- Additionally, the RAP Administrator and RRA will educate the referee community on the distinction between RAP violations (i.e., referee abuse) versus common dissent, which will continue to be addressed by way of warnings, Cautions and/or Send-Offs of players and coaches, and the ejections of spectators.
- The Area Director of Referee Instruction (ADRI) will work with each Regional Director of Referee Instruction (RDRI) to include instruction about the RAP program in future referee courses (in particular, instruction designed for new referees in Regional Referee courses).
- The protocols for reporting referee abuse consist of the following:
 - Before, during, or after a match, any member of a referee crew may determine that referee abuse, per the AYSO RAP guidelines, has occurred. The Referee is responsible for recording and reporting the relevant facts. During a match, the Referee is authorized to signal a stoppage of play and request the assistance of the coaches, if necessary. Coaches and the referee team will work together to address referee abuse or potential referee abuse (including, but not limited to, obtaining the name of a spectator who has committed referee abuse).
 - If referee abuse has been experienced, the Referee will report the incident to the applicable RRA. The report will be made to the RRA by email, text or a phone call *immediately after the match*. (The ARA must also be notified by the Referee or RRA that a report has been made to the RRA.)

- The RRA will determine whether the language/action qualifies as "referee abuse" under the RAP standards. If so, the RRA will ask the Referee to promptly submit a written [Referee Report](#) (relating to players and coaches) or [Incident Report](#) (relating to spectators), which must include a description of the specific referee abuse language/actions, the name of the individual causing the referee abuse, and any other match details which provide context and understanding of the situation. The appropriate Report will be sent via email to the RAP Administrator and ARA.
- The RAP Administrator will review the Referee Report or Incident Report, conduct any additional investigation needed, and determine whether the incident requires a determination of potential sanctions by the RAP Disciplinary Panel. If so, the RAP Administrator will advise the Disciplinary Panel, AD, ARA, and applicable RC.

Penalty Determination Process

- The RAP Disciplinary Panel will schedule and conduct a hearing (in-person or online) to determine what sanctions, if any, are appropriate. The hearing will be conducted at a time, place, and in accordance with the procedures set by the Panel. It is the intention of this protocol within Area <section>/</area> that this hearing be conducted as quickly as possible following the incident.
- At the hearing, the RAP Administrator will present the details of the incident to the Disciplinary Panel and provide any materials obtained or prepared (including any witness statements). The RAP Administrator may provide recommendations regarding sanctions to be imposed and the justification for such action.
- In making its determination about the appropriateness of the recommended [sanctions](#), the Panel will apply the USSF/AYSO guidelines and any additional standards or instructions provided by the Area <section>/</area> Executive Board (AD and RCs).
- The Panel will promptly notify the Area <section>/</area> Executive Board, the RAP Administrator, the ARA and the ACA of the Panel's decision.
- As per AYSO guidance, the RAP Administrator will notify the AYSO National Referee Program Administrator of the RAP Program violations and sanctions. This is done to enforce individual offender sanction compliance across all related USSF member organizations, e.g., club soccer, AYSO and other youth soccer entities.

Sanction Enforcement Process

- The applicable Area <section>/</area> Executive Board Member (AD or RC) or other designated official will be responsible for advising the offender (in writing) of the Disciplinary Panel's findings, any sanctions imposed, and the right to due process. The AD or applicable RC will also be responsible for ensuring enforcement of any sanctions.
- The RAP Administrator and the ARA will be responsible for communicating with the RRAs about the Panel's decision for the purpose of promoting consistency in the enforcement of the RAP program across the Regions in Area <section>/</area>.
- All proceedings, communications and materials in connection with this process will comply with applicable AYSO policies (e.g., due process and privacy requirements).

Resources: Sample Investigatory Report

**AYSO Area 1D
Referee Abuse Prevention (RAP) Program
Investigatory Report and Recommendations**
9/8/2025

Game Date: 9/7/2025 Game Time: 8:00am Division: 19UB
Location: XXXXXXX Home Team: A1 Away Team: B1
Referee: Richard Smith AR1: Sam Jones AR2: David Miller

Referee Report attached Incident Report attached Game Card attached

Investigation Narrative

As clearly described in the Referee Report, A1 player #19 exhibited extreme behavior which went from ordinary dissent to Referee Abuse. This verbal abuse was initially evident in the first half when the player publicly stated that “the referee was going to fail [his assessment] because he was making so many bad calls”. Then, in the 35th minute of play, the dissent following a foul call against a teammate, included the multiple use of profanity (“fuck”). For this, the player was Cautioned. At half-time, as the players exited from the field, A1 #19 publicly used a derogatory statement about the Referee (using the term “retarded”). This prompted the Referee to issue the player a second Caution, followed by a Send-Off. This action by the Referee was followed by a litany of foul language pejoratives and verbal abuse until the player was successfully convinced to leave the field area. Unfortunately, he returned to the field after the game.

Based upon the Referee Report, it also appears that the Coach did very little to control his own behavior and that of the spectators on his side-line *during the first half of the game*. He was eventually Cautioned for dissent in the 40th minute, which was followed by a conversation between the Referee and the Coach during half-time.

The Referee described the 2nd half of the game as calm and cool. There were no further issues with the players, coach or spectators. “Comparing the first half to the second half – they were like two different games.”

Recommended Actions

It appears that the Referee did his best to control the game, though I would ask him (and his referee teammates) to consider whether they could have tamped down on the dissent earlier in the first half of the game (e.g., cutting off the players’ references to the Referee’s Assessment) and more assertively managing the A1 coach’s dissent behavior earlier in the match. Additionally, the Referee could have overtly asked the A1 Coach to quiet the spectators on his side-line.

With regard to a RAP violation, it is the opinion of the RAP Program Administrator that A1 player #19 did indeed commit multiple instances of Level 1 and 3 RAP violations per the RAP Program guidelines for Verbal Taunting and Derogatory Language, respectively. In and of themselves, this would result in a cumulative eight (8) game suspension. However, the public comment made by A1 player #19 calling the

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Referee a “retard” is a RAP Level 4 violation for using Offensive and Discriminatory language. As such, it is recommended that A1 player #14 receive a ten (10) game suspension from all AYSO participation.

With regard to the A1 1 coach, it doesn’t appear from the Referee Report or a subsequent conversation between the Referee and the RAP Program Administrator, that the Coach committed any RAP violations. That being said, he clearly committed multiple acts of ordinary dissent in the first half, but, apparently, not a sufficient number of acts to warrant a second Caution and/or Send-Off. As noted, the second half of the match was calm, so, apparently, the Referee’s half-time conversation with the Coach worked. It is recommended that the Regional Commissioner have a conversation with the Coach to remind him of proper coach behavior and the protocols involving his responsibilities for the behavior of the spectators on his side-line.

<Signature>

Scott Jarus
Area 1D RAP Program Administrator

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Resources: Information & Forms

AYSO wiki wiki.AYSO.org

U.S. Soccer Referee Abuse Prevention Policy <https://ussoccer.com/rap>

AYSO Referee Report [https://wiki.ayso.org/wiki/Fill out a Match Report](https://wiki.ayso.org/wiki/Fill_out_a_Match_Report)

AYSO Incident Report [https://wiki.ayso.org/wiki/Fill Out an Incident Report](https://wiki.ayso.org/wiki/Fill_Out_an_Incident_Report)

RAP Resources <https://wiki.ayso.org/wiki/Category:Referee/RAP>

Resources: Your Instructors

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