



Referee Abuse and Assault Policy and Procedure

## Zero Tolerance

Florida State Referee Committee (FLSRC)

Policies and Procedures regarding Referee Assault and Abuse

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### 1. Definitions of Abuse and Assault:

\*Soccer referee abuse and assault are very serious crimes against the sport, and they continue to happen to our members. Misconduct against referees may occur before, during, and after a match, including travel to and from a match. It is critical that referees correctly identify and make a report of these incidents.

**\*Referee abuse is a verbal statement or physical act not resulting in bodily contact.** It implies or threatens physical harm to a referee or the referee's property or equipment. Examples may include:

\*Verbal and nonverbal communication which contains foul or abusive language, and which *implies* or *directly threatens* physical harm.

\*Spewing a beverage on or spitting *at a referee* or the referee's *personal property*.

\*Remarks such as: "I'll get you after the game," or: "You won't get out of here in one piece."

\*Dissent can be a form of referee abuse if it is personalized.

\*These examples qualify as an immediate send off from a match along with a Referee Report.

**Referee assault is an intentional act of physical violence at or upon a referee.** US Soccer defines an "intentional act" as an act intended to bring about a result which will invade the interest of another in a way that is *socially unacceptable*. Unintended consequences of the act are *irrelevant*. Examples may include:

- Striking, kicking, choking, head butting, grabbing, or bodily running into a referee.
- Spitting *on a referee* with ostensible intent to do so.
- Kicking or throwing an object at an official that could inflict injury. damaging the referee's uniform or personal property (e.g., car, uniform, or equipment).
- These examples qualify as an immediate send off from the match with a Referee Report.

## 2. Laws of the Game

- Law 5: **Decisions of the referee**
- Decisions will be made to the best of the referee's ability according to the Laws of the Game and the 'spirit of the game' and will be based on the opinion of the referee who has the discretion to take appropriate action within the framework of the Laws of the Game. The decisions of the referee regarding facts connected with play, including whether or not a goal is scored and the result of the match, are final. ***The decisions of the referee, and all other match officials, must always be respected.***

### Law 5: Decisions of the referee

- DISCIPLINARY ACTION: takes action against team officials who fail to act in a responsible manner and warns or shows a yellow card for a caution or a red card for a sending-off from the field of play and its immediate surrounds, including the technical area; if the offender cannot be identified, the senior coach present in the technical area will receive the sanction.
- OUTSIDE INTERFERENCE stops, suspends, or abandons the match for any offences or because of outside interference e.g., if:
  - an object thrown by a spectator hits a match official, a player or team official, the referee may allow the match to continue, or stop, suspend, or abandon it depending on the severity of the incident

### Law 12: Misconduct

- Law 12:
- Only a player, substitute or substituted player or team official may be shown the red or yellow card.
- CAUTIONABLE OFFENCES: (Yellow card)
  - dissent by word or action
  - persistent offences (no specific number or pattern of offences constitutes "persistent")
  - unsporting behavior
- SENDING-OFF OFFENCES: (Red card)
  - violent conduct
  - using offensive, insulting, or abusive language and/or action(s)
  - biting or spitting at someone
  - receiving a second caution in the same match

## 3. Application of the Laws of the Game

- Only a player, substitute or substituted player or team official may be shown the red or yellow card.

#### 4. Civil Law, Florida Statutes:

- **784.081 Assault or battery on specified officials or employees; reclassification of offenses.**—(1) For purposes of this section, the term “sports official” means any person who serves as a referee, an umpire, or a linesman, and any person who serves in a similar capacity as a sports official who may be known by another title, which sports official is duly registered by or is a member of a local, state, regional, or national organization that is engaged in part in providing education and training to sports officials.
- assault or a battery or aggravated battery upon any elected official or employee of: a school district; a private school; the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind; a university lab school; a state university or any other entity of the state system of public education, as defined in s. 1000.04; a sports official; an employee or protective investigator of the Department of Children and Families; an employee of a lead community-based provider and its direct service contract providers; or an employee of the Department of Health or its direct service contract providers, when the person committing the offense knows or has reason to know the identity or position or employment of the victim, the offense for which the person is charged shall be reclassified as follows:
  - (a) In the case of aggravated battery, from a felony of the second degree to a felony of the first degree.
  - (b) In the case of aggravated assault, from a felony of the third degree to a felony of the second degree.
  - (c) In the case of battery, from a misdemeanor of the first degree to a felony of the third degree.
  - (d) In the case of assault, from a misdemeanor of the second degree to a misdemeanor of the first degree.
- (3) An assault, aggravated assault, battery, or aggravated battery upon a sports official shall be reclassified pursuant to subsection (2) only if such offense is committed upon the sports official when he or she is actively participating as a sports official in an athletic contest or immediately following such athletic contest.

#### 5. Abuse Procedure:

- Abuse by spectators (including parents) is to be handled using the same technique of Ask, Tell, Dismiss, but instead of directing your comment to the spectator/parent you will ask/tell/dismiss by asking the coach to handle the issue. **DO NOT EVER** direct your comments to the spectators. Speak to the coach and have him ask the parent to stop their irresponsible behavior (**ASK**). If the behavior continues explain to the coach that if the spectators do not cease their irresponsible behavior the game will be terminated (**TELL**). If the spectator behavior continues then ask the coach to remove the spectator (**DISMISS**). If the coach refuses to act or the spectator refuses to leave, then you may terminate the game.
- If the abuse is so bad that immediate dismissal is required, then inform the coach.

#### 6. Assault Procedure:

- The following is the procedure that **MUST** be followed in the event of an assault on a referee:
- If the game is in progress, the referee **IMMEDIATELY** terminates the contest.
- Under **NO** circumstances is the game to be completed. If a person with a pass (coach/player/trainer) w as involved, and the referee can safely do so, display the red card. Again, if safety permits, after retaining the offender(s) card(s), the Referee may return the others unless local rules require the referee to retain all passes

(Using an intermediary is a good method to avoid any further problems).

- However, even if the referee cannot display the red card or retain the passes, a

Supplemental Game Report still is to be submitted detailing the assault and the misconduct (dismissal/sendoff). If contact was of a nature that a crime was possibly committed

(Physical assault i.e., being hit, bumped, pushed, or spat on), the referee is to contact local law enforcement immediately and fill out a formal complaint at the venue. This way, any witnesses who can support the referee's story will be on record with

the police as well.

## 7. Reporting Procedures

As soon as possible for either assault or abuse

(Preferably the same day) the referee is to contact the following:

- FLSRC: SRA for adults, SYRA for youth
- Contact should preferably be by phone.
- Fill out a USSoccer Referee Game and Supplemental Report and submit to the proper State governing body (FLSRC: SRA for adults, SYRA for youth) for the match.

Be clear and complete, but calm and unemotional. Do not make recommendations or suggestions as to what you feel should be done. Simply state the facts.

. Await contact by either by the SRA, SYRA or State office about further proceedings. Be sure to proceed with any charges with local law enforcement.

Consider filing a SafeSport report:

[Training and Reporting to Prevent Abuse | U.S. Center for SafeSport \(uscenterforsafesport.org\)](https://www.uscenterforsafesport.org/)

## 8. Further Action

- All appropriate governing bodies will be notified by FLSRC, within 48 hours of the incident.
- Action by governing bodies will be monitored for compliance by FLSRC
- Attendance at a hearing (if called) will be considered mandatory.
- FLSRC reserves the right to take all action necessary to protect the safety of referees registered and certified through FLSRC.
- Zero Tolerance