**ZERO TOLERANCE VOLUNTEER ABUSE POLICY**

**Purpose of this Policy:**

Youth development is the central purpose of the AYSO program. This includes development of youth whether they are soccer players, soccer coaches, soccer referees or assistant referees, and any adult volunteer. All the AYSO guidelines and policies on providing a "Safe, Fair and Fun" environment for youth also apply to any volunteer. Only "Positive and Encouraging" comments are allowed to be directed at players and volunteers. The purpose of this policy is to make clear that verbal abuse to any volunteer is as unacceptable as verbal abuse of youth players and to adopt basic standard sanctions for improper conduct.

This policy is not intended to imply that volunteers are always "right". Just as youth players will make mistakes during play, volunteers will make mistakes in officiating or instructing, particularly in younger divisions where they are learning how to referee or coach. In addition, sometimes volunteers are "in over their head" because of a particularly challenging game, an assignment beyond their experience or comfort level, etc. which is generally due to a lack of volunteers.

**Policy on Referee Abuse:**

1. It is **NEVER** acceptable to abuse or criticize volunteers, verbally or otherwise, in any situation.

2. A coach or spectator should only communicate in a positive way and should not express any disagreement or dissatisfaction with the performance of a referee or coach. A coach or spectator should not, before, during or after the game, discuss with a referee or coach their critique of the volunteer’s performance, other than to thank and compliment them.

3. Any criticism or critique of a volunteer’s performance may only be communicated to the volunteer via a designated Mentor or Regional Board Member. Mentors or Board Members present at the game shall, if necessary, intervene if any coach, player, spectator or other adult is criticizing or abusing a volunteer, verbally or otherwise, and may take immediate appropriate action. This may include directing the offender to leave the site, and/or suspending or terminating the game.

4. Any AYSO certified volunteer observing behavior not following these guidelines shall report the incident to a Regional Board Member within 24 hours of the incident, and fill out the appropriate incident reports, so that an appropriate review can take place.

5. There are appropriate avenues for coaches or spectators to share concerns about the quality of volunteers. The regional staff welcomes constructive feedback on any volunteer. The Region 605 web site (www.ayso605.com) provides the necessary contact information.

**Disciplinary Sanctions for Volunteer Abuse:**

The Region Executive Board, upon receipt of any reported abuse of a volunteer, shall investigate the incident and shall implement appropriate discipline, before the next game if possible. The offending person shall be notified of the disciplinary action in writing.

The following sanctions will be applied until and unless modified by an Appeals and Disciplinary Committee (A&D Committee) convened to hear the matter (see below).

**Type of Abuse:** Verbal abuse of a volunteer (serious dissent, criticism or demeaning language but which DOES NOT include offensive, insulting, or foul language).

**First Offense:** 1 game/week suspension. Additional or more serious discipline may be added based on a review of each case.

**Second Offense:** Suspension for the remainder of the season. Additional or more serious discipline may be added based on a review of each case.

**Type of Abuse:** Serious verbal abuse of a volunteer (e.g. using offensive, insulting or foul language).

**First Offense:**  Suspension for the remainder of the season. Additional or more serious discipline may be added based on a review of each case.

**Second Offense:** Any future offense of this nature, regardless of the time period between offenses, shall constitute immediate permanent removal of the offender from participation in AYSO Region 605 soccer program.

**Type of Abuse:** Coming onto the field to confront the volunteer, or threatening the volunteer (by word or action).

**First Offense:**  Permanent removal of the offender from participation in AYSO Region 605 soccer program.

**Supplementary Conditions**

1. A suspended person may not, during their suspension, attend any AYSO Region 605 soccer game located on any field. The suspended person may attend practices unless notified of additional restrictions by the Regional Executive Board. NOTE: The term "may not attend" means the person may not be in view of the game.

2. These sanctions apply ONLY to the discipline of adult spectators, parents and coaches. Sanctions necessary for any youth players or spectators that exhibit inappropriate behavior will be issued by the Regional Executive Board on a case by case basis and can range from verbal warning to permanent removal from the AYSO Region 605 soccer program.

3. These sanctions do not limit, prevent, or replace any voluntary or required report or referral of improper conduct, by any adult toward any volunteer, to any law enforcement or child protection agency.

4. These sanctions may be reported to one or more levels of the AYSO comanization - Area, Section and /or National - based on the review of each case.

**Right of Appeal**

Any person suspended or permanently removed from AYSO Region 605 participation has the right of appeal for any sanctions imposed by the Regional Executive Board. All appeals must be made in writing to the Regional Commissioner within 72 hours of the sanction being imposed.

Upon receipt of appeal, the Regional Commissioner shall convene the Appeals and Disciplinary Committee (A&D Committee) to hear the matter. The A&D Committee is made up of the following:

1. Regional Referee Administrator

2. Regional Coach Administrator

3. One Adult Volunteer Coach chosen by the Regional Coach Administrator at the beginning of the season.

4. One Adult Volunteer Referee as chosen by the Regional Referee Administrator at the beginning of the season.

5. Regional Child and Volunteer Protection Advocate (CVPA)

The Regional Commissioner shall also be present at any A&D Committee meeting in a non-voting capacity.

Upon convening, the A&D Committee shall review any documentation of the incident, including letters presented by spectators, players or other volunteers present during the incident. All A&D Committee meetings are closed to the public, but will be announced at least one week prior to convening in order to gather any additional documentation from interested parties.

The decision of the A&D Committee is final and no opportunity for additional appeal is available.