



## **Code of Conduct Policy**

### **Section 101. Introduction, Purpose, and Applicability**

- (a) The Code of Conduct Policy of US Youth Soccer establishes the ethical standards for governance and committee volunteers and staff of US Youth Soccer (collectively referred to as “Representatives”) in addition to all members and participants within any and all sanctioned programs, events, activities and competitions.
- (b) The Code of Conduct Policy applies to all staff, volunteers, members and participants who are involved or engage with any sanctioned US Youth Soccer program, event, activity or competition.
- (c) The purposes of the Code of Conduct Policy is to provide evidence of US Youth Soccer’s commitment to the lawful and ethical conduct of its Representatives, members and participants and to protect those who report violations of the Code of Conduct Policy consistent with US Youth Soccer’s Whistleblower Policy.
- (d) The Code of Conduct Policy is intended to supplement but not replace any applicable state or federal laws governing behavior.
- (e) Representatives, members and participants must respect and comply with US Youth Soccer rules and regulations, observe high standards of conduct, and participate in establishing and maintaining such high standards.

### **Section 102. Zero Tolerance**

- (a) US Youth Soccer maintains a zero tolerance regarding abuse.
- (b) The US Youth Soccer Zero Tolerance for abuse extends to all representatives, members and participants in any and all US Youth Soccer sanctioned programs, events, activities and competitions.
- (c) US Youth Soccer requires every representative, coach and volunteer to assist in creating a safe environment for participants at and during any and all sanctioned US Youth Soccer programs, events, activities and competitions.

### **Section 103. Prohibited Substances**

- (a) US Youth Soccer prohibits the use and possession of illegal drugs, alcohol, or, in the case of minors, tobacco for any and all coaches and participants at any and all sanctioned programs, events, activities and competitions.

### **Section 104. Prohibited Activities and Sexual Misconduct**

- (a) US Youth Soccer prohibits nudity and any indecent exposure by any representative, member or participant at any sanctioned programs, events, activities and competitions.
  - 1. An example of prohibited physical contact include a coach asking a minor athlete to sit in their lap or cuddling during training or while on an overnight trip.
- (b) US Youth Soccer prohibits any representative, member or participant from engaging in sexually oriented conversations at any sanctioned programs, events, activities and competitions. This includes sharing information about one’s own personal relationships, dating or sexual activities.
- (c) US Youth Soccer prohibits the possession of any sexually oriented materials to include magazines and videos while participating at any sanctioned program, event, activity and competition.

## Section 105. Physical, Verbal and Emotional Misconduct

(a) The following definitions describe the prohibited conduct for this section:

1. **Physical Misconduct** - any interaction with another person that inflicts physical injury upon another person or reasonably threatens to cause physical injury to another person. Physical Misconduct does not include professionally accepted (in youth soccer) coaching methods of skill enhancement, physical conditioning, team building, appropriate discipline, inspiring motivation, or improved athlete performance. Appropriate physical contact occurs in public when contact is designed for the benefit of the athlete and does not meet an emotional or other need of an adult, and free of potentially creating a physical or sexual intimacy. US Youth Soccer prohibits representatives, members and participants from engaging in any other form of physical contact with and or between athletes.
2. **Verbal Misconduct** - any objectively inappropriate use of language aimed at another person that a reasonable person would find degrading or threatening.
3. **Emotional Misconduct** - any conduct that is objectively and reasonably deemed to have caused harm to another person's psychological or intellectual functioning, which may be exhibited by emotional damage such as severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal, or aggression. When an act qualifies as Emotional Misconduct is determined objectively, and not whether harm is intended or results from the behaviors. Emotional Misconduct includes, but is not limited to
  - a) **Verbal Acts:** any acts that involve repeated and excessive verbal assaults or attacks against someone personally in a manner that serves no productive training or motivational purpose.
  - b) **Physical Acts:** any acts that involve repeated and/or severe physically aggressive behaviors, including but not limited to, throwing sport equipment, water bottles or chairs at or in the presence of others, punching walls, windows or other objects.
  - c) **Acts that Deny Attention or Support:** any acts that involve ignoring or isolating a person for extended periods of time, including routinely or arbitrarily excluding an athlete from practice.
  - d) **Criminal Conduct:** Any act or conduct described as emotional abuse or misconduct under federal or state law (e.g. child abuse, child neglect) would be considered a type of impermissible Emotional Misconduct under this Policy.
  - e) **Stalking:** Stalking occurs when a person purposefully engages in a course of conduct directed at a specific person, and knows or should know, that the course of conduct would cause a reasonable person to (i) fear for their safety, (ii) fear for the safety of a third person, or (iii) experience substantial emotional distress. "Course of conduct" means at least two or more acts in which a person directly, indirectly, or through third parties, by any action, method, device, or means, follows, monitors, observes, surveils, threatens, or communicates to or about another person, or interferes with another person's property. "Substantial emotional distress" means significant mental suffering or anguish. Stalking also includes "cyber-stalking," wherein a person stalks another using electronic media,

such as the internet, social media networks, blogs, cell phones, texts, or other similar devices or forms of contact.

### **Section 106. One-on-One Interactions**

#### (a) Observable and interruptible

1. One-on-One interactions between minors and an adult (who is not the minor's legal guardian) are permitted if they occur at an observable and interruptible distance by another adult.
2. Isolated, one-on-one interactions between minors and an adult (who is not the minor's legal guardian) is prohibited, except under emergency circumstances.

#### (b) Meetings

1. Meetings between adults and minors may only occur if another adult is present, except under emergency circumstances. Such meetings must occur where interactions can be easily observed and at an interruptible distance from another adult.
2. If a one-on-one meeting takes place in an office, the door to the office must remain unlocked and open. If available, it will occur in an office that (if available) has windows, with the windows, blinds, and/or curtains remaining open during the meeting.

#### (c) Individual training sessions

1. Individual training sessions between adults and minors are permitted if the training session is observable and interruptible by another adult. The adult must obtain the written permission of the minor's legal guardian in advance of the individual training session. Parents, guardians, and other caretakers must be allowed to observe the training session. Permission for individual training sessions must be obtained at least every six months.

### **Section 107. Massages and rubdowns**

#### (a) Licensed, certified professional

1. Any massage or rubdown performed by an adult on a minor athlete is prohibited unless such adult is a licensed massage therapist.
2. Any massage or rubdown by a licensed professional must be conducted in open and interruptible locations. Any massage of a minor athlete must be done with at least one other adult present and must never be done with only the minor athlete and licensed massage therapist in the room.
3. Even if the coach is a licensed massage therapist, the coach shall not perform a rubdown or massage of an athlete under any circumstances.

### **Section 108. Locker rooms, rest rooms and changing areas**

#### (a) Use of recording devices

1. Use of any device's (including a cell phone's) recording capabilities, including voice recording, still cameras and video cameras in locker rooms, rest rooms, changing areas, or similar spaces is prohibited. Exceptions may be made for media and championship celebrations, provided that such expectations are approved in advance and two or more adults are present.

#### (b) Undress

1. Under no circumstances shall an unrelated adult be undressed (disrobed or partial or full nudity where private body parts are exposed) in front of minor athletes.
- (c) Isolated one-on-one interactions
  1. At no time are unrelated adults permitted to be alone with a minor in a locker room, rest room, or changing area except under emergency circumstances.
- (d) Monitoring
  1. US Youth Soccer regularly and randomly monitors the use of locker rooms, rest rooms and changing areas at facilities under our jurisdiction to ensure compliance with these policies.
- (e) Safe spaces
  1. Every effort should be made to provide private changing spaces for any youth that requests such an accommodation.
- (f) Non-exclusive facility
  1. If US Youth Soccer uses a facility not under our jurisdiction (for, e.g., training or competition or similar events) and the facility is used by multiple constituents, adults are nonetheless required to adhere to the rules set forth here.

## **Section 109. Social media and electronic communications**

- (a) Content
  1. “Social Media Misconduct” is the use of rumors or false statements about someone to diminish that person’s reputation using electronic communications. It includes, but is not limited to, the use of social media or other technology to harass, frighten, intimidate, humiliate and/or socially exclude someone, and/or asking others to do the same.
  2. All electronic communication originating from participating adults to amateur athletes who are minors must be professional in nature and should generally be group-based and should always be readily available to share with the athlete’s family, the Club, and USYS.
- (b) Open and transparent
  1. If a participating adult needs to communicate directly with an amateur athlete who is a minor via electronic communications, another participating adult or the minor’s legal guardian will be copied.
  2. If a minor athlete communicates to the participating adult privately first, then the participating adult should respond to the minor athlete with a copy to another participating adult or the minor’s legal guardian.
  3. A participating adult communicating electronically to the entire team will copy another participating adult.
  4. Amateur athletes who are minors may “friend” the organization’s official page.
- (c) Prohibited electronic communications
  1. Participating adults are not permitted to communicate privately via electronic communications with amateur athletes who are minors, except under emergency circumstances.
  2. Participating adults are not permitted to “private message,” “instant message,” “direct message”, or send photos via Snapchat or Instagram to a minor athlete privately.

3. Participating adults are not permitted to maintain social media connections with minors; such adults are not permitted to accept new personal page requests on social media platforms from amateur athletes who are minors and existing social media connections with amateur athletes who are minors shall be discontinued.
- (d) Request to discontinue
1. Legal guardians may request in writing that their child not be contacted through any form of electronic communication by the organization or by the organization's participating adults. The organization will abide by any such request that their child not be contacted via electronic communication, absent emergency circumstances.

### **Section 110. Local travel**

- (a) Transportation
1. US Youth Soccer does not arrange for local travel.
  2. Participating adults who are not also acting as a legal guardian, shall not ride in a vehicle alone with an unrelated athlete who is a minor, absent emergency circumstances, and may only drive with at least two other minor athletes or another adult at all times, unless otherwise agreed to in writing by the minor athlete's parent/legal guardian in advance of each local travel.

### **Section 111. Team travel**

- (a) Team/competition travel
1. When only one participating adult and one minor athlete travel to a competition, the
- (b) minor athlete must have his/her legal guardian's written permission in advance and for each competition to travel alone with the participating adult.
- (c) Hotel rooms
1. Participating adults shall not share a hotel room or other sleeping arrangement with a minor athlete (unless the participating adult is the legal guardian, sibling, or is otherwise related to the minor athlete).
- (d) Meetings
1. Meetings shall be conducted consistent with US Youth Soccer's policy for one-on-one interactions – i.e., any such meeting shall be observable and interruptible.
  2. Meetings shall not be conducted in a hotel room.

### **Section 112. Bullying**

- (a) US Youth Soccer prohibits representatives, members and participants from engaging in any unwanted physical, verbal, social, sexual or criminal behaviors that are:
1. aggressive
  2. directed at another person, and
  3. intended to or causing to intimidate, hurt, control, or diminish the other person emotionally, physically or sexually.

### **Section 113. Harassment**

- (a) US Youth Soccer prohibits representatives, members and participants from engaging in any repeated and/or severe conduct that:

1. Causes fear, humiliation or annoyance.
  2. Offends or degrades.
  3. Creates a Hostile Environment (as defined herein)
  4. Reflects discriminatory bias in an attempt to establish dominance, superiority or power over an individual or group based on gender, age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, religion, national origin, or mental or physical disability; any act or conduct described as harassment under federal or state law.
- (b) Conduct may not rise to the level of Harassment if it is:
1. Inadvertently saying or doing something hurtful.
  2. Purposefully saying or doing something hurtful, but not as part of a pattern of behavior.
  3. Arising from conflict or struggle between persons who perceive they have incompatible views and/or positions.
- (c) A “Hostile Environment” exists when the conduct is sufficiently severe, persistent, and/or pervasive such that it interferes with, limits, or deprives any individual of the opportunity to participate in any Covered Program or activity. Conduct must be deemed severe, persistent, or pervasive from both a subjective and objective perspective. A Hostile Environment can be created by persistent or pervasive conduct or by a single or isolated incident that is sufficiently severe. The more severe the conduct, the less need there is to show a repetitive series of incidents to prove a Hostile Environment, particularly if the conduct is physical. A single incident of sexual contact, for example, may be sufficiently severe to constitute a Hostile Environment. In contrast, the perceived offensiveness of a single verbal or written expression, standing alone, is typically not sufficient to constitute a Hostile Environment. Whether a Hostile Environment exists depends on the totality of known circumstances, including, but not limited to:
1. Severity of the conduct.
  2. Whether the conduct was physically threatening.
  3. The effect of the conduct on the victim’s mental or emotional state.
  4. Whether the conduct was directed at more than one person.
  5. Whether the conduct arose in the context of other discriminatory conduct.
  6. Whether the conduct unreasonably interfered with any person’s participation in sports, education or work programs or activities.
  7. Whether the conduct implicates concerns related to protected speech.

#### **Section 114. Hazing**

- (a) US Youth Soccer US Youth Soccer prohibits representatives, members and participants from engaging in any activity that could be defined as hazing at any sanctioned program, event, activity or competition.

#### **Section 115. Mandatory Reporting**

- (a) US Youth Soccer requires all representatives, members and participants to immediately report any violations or suspected violations of the US Youth Soccer Code of Conduct Policy during any sanctioned programs, events, activities and competitions to a team

official, sanctioned program, event, activity or competition official or US Youth Soccer representative.

- (b) US Youth Soccer takes any and all reports of inappropriate behavior or suspicions of abuse seriously.
- (c) US Youth Soccer complies with all laws requiring a person to make a report to appropriate law enforcement agencies and requires all representatives, members and participants to either notify an official as indicated in Section 115. a. or report directly to law enforcement authorities.
- (d) Retaliation against individuals making good faith reports of misconduct is expressly prohibited.