



Zero Tolerance Policy on Referee Abuse

Purpose of this Policy

The purpose of this policy is to make it clear that verbal abuse or negative criticism of referees is as unacceptable as verbal abuse or negative criticism of players. This policy adopts basic standard sanctions for improper conduct.

This policy is not intended to imply that referees are always “right” and the spectator or coach is always “wrong.” Just as players make mistakes during play, referees will make mistakes in officiating, particularly in the younger divisions where they are learning how to referee. Due to a shortage of referees, a referee may be officiating at a higher level game than they are comfortable with. They must receive positive support from coaches and spectators to continue to grow as an official.

It is never acceptable to abuse or criticize referees, verbally or otherwise, in any situation. Santa Fe Soccer Club (Santa Fe) will not tolerate any verbal or other abuse, or criticism of referees by any coach or spectator. There are appropriate avenues for coaches and spectators to share concerns about the quality of officiating. The Santa Fe Board of Directors welcomes constructive comments about the referees and requests all comments be directed to the Referee Coordinator or the Club President. The Santa Fe Board of Directors contact information can be found on the Board of Directors Page at www.santafesoccer.org.

Policy on Referee Abuse

Youth Referees: Although abuse towards any referee will not be tolerated, any abuse towards a youth referee will result in more severe disciplinary actions by the Santa Fe Review Committee. A Coach or spectator may only communicate in a positive or neutral manner with a youth referee. The coach is responsible for ensuring all spectators associated with his/her team understand these guidelines relating to communication with a youth referee. A coach/spectator may not express any disagreement or dissatisfaction with the officiating to the youth referee. A coach/spectator may not, before, during, or after a game, negatively criticize a youth referee of their performance.

Any Santa Fe Board Member or USSF-certified Adult Referee present at the game shall, if necessary, intervene if any coach, spectator, or other adult is criticizing or abusing a youth referee, 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.

Any concerns about the quality of officiating of a youth referee must be addressed to the Referee Assignor or board member.

Anyone observing behavior not following these guidelines should immediately report the incident to the Santa Fe Board Member on duty so that situation can be handled appropriately.

At the discretion of the center referee or Santa Fe Board Member, a warning may be given, **but is not required**, for a first time violation of this policy. The center referee or Santa Fe Board Member who witnesses any abuse of a referee may remove the offending party from the premises. The Police should be called for anyone who refuses to leave the premises.

Santa Fe Coaches, Parents, and Spectators are hereby notified that any behavior that results in being ejected from a game being played at another club will also be subject to disciplinary measures described below. Appropriate behavior by Santa Fe Soccer members is not limited to Santa Fe Soccer fields.

Santa Fe Review Committee

The Santa Fe Review Committee will be comprised of a minimum of three Santa Fe Board Members. The committee members will typically consist of the President, 1st Vice President, and Referee Coordinator. Should one of the Board Members listed above be involved in the incident, the President will designate a replacement. If the President is involved in the incident, the 1st Vice President will designate the replacement for the President on the Review Committee.

Disciplinary Sanctions for Referee Abuse

Any Board Member, upon receipt of any reported abuse of a referee, shall report the incident to the Santa Fe Review Committee, who shall implement appropriate discipline before the next game if possible.

The following sanctions will be applied unless modified upon review of the incident by the Santa Fe Review Committee.

Type of Abuse	Recommended Sanction
Criticism, heckling, or verbal abuse of a referee (not including offensive, insulting, or foul-language) First Offense	1 week suspension from any games, home and away (unless games are postponed due to weather, in which suspension will carry over to following week).
Serious verbal abuse of a referee (e.g. using offensive, insulting, or foul language), or repeated offense of less serious abuse.	Minimum 2 week suspension from any games, home and away (unless games are postponed due to weather, in which suspension will carry over to following week). Santa Fe Review Committee hearing to consider additional sanctions and/or remedial actions (applies to serious verbal abuse or repeated offense of less serious verbal abuse).
Coming onto the field to confront an adult referee.	Minimum 4 week suspension from any games, home and away (unless games are postponed due to weather, in which suspension will carry over to following week). Santa Fe Review Committee hearing to consider additional sanctions and/or remedial actions.

Coming onto the field to confront a youth referee.	<p>Minimum 4 week suspension from any games, home and away (unless games are postponed due to weather, in which suspension will carry over to following week).</p> <p>Santa Fe Review Committee hearing to consider additional sanctions and/or remedial actions.</p> <p>A letter of apology to the youth referee.</p> <p>Any specified form of appropriate apology to the players, coaches, and parents of the teams affected by the conduct.</p>
Threatening any referee (by word or action)	<p>Santa Fe Review Committee Hearing</p> <p>Reported to CBYSA/STYSA</p>

Egregious offenses (e.g. repeated or multiple abusive situations, physical contact with a referee, or exceptionally inappropriate behavior directed toward a referee) shall result in immediate and continuing suspension of the offending person pending a thorough review. The Santa Fe Review Committee will determine if further or more serious discipline is warranted. An egregious offense violates the fundamental mission of Santa Fe and requires strong action. Discipline may include, but is not limited to, suspension for the season, suspension for multiple seasons, or lifetime coaching bans.

These sanctions apply only to the discipline of spectators and coaches. Sanctions necessary for any player will be dealt with using the Red Card Policy from the Coastal Bend Youth Soccer Association/South Texas Youth Soccer Association Rules.

A plea of ignorance to this policy is not sufficient, and violators may expect appropriate action by the Santa Fe Board of Directors.

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

Referee-Coach-Parents Evaluations/Complaints

To provide complaints about coaches, parents, or referees, please send to:

SFSoccerCCTX@outlook.com