



Referee Abuse Prevention (RAP) Program for Area 1D



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

Staff and Responsibilities

- a. RAP Administrator: Manages implementation/enforcement of RAP program throughout Area 1D.
- b. 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).
- c. Regional Referee Administrators (RRAs) and Area Referee Administrator (ARA): Support referee education and compliance with RAP program protocols.
- d. 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: Scott Jarus (Assistant Area Referee Administrator) will serve as RAP Administrator; and RAP Disciplinary Panel will consist of the ACA, Shad McFadden; 16U/19U Program Director, Phil Ockelmann; and ARA, Chris Wong.

Implementation of RAP Program in Area 1D

Main Principles to be Applied

- a. 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.
- b. Having the RAP program applied in a manner that is *reasonable, fair, and consistent* across the six Area 1D 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](#)).
- c. These RAP protocols are intended to encourage reporting by the referees and to ensure reasonable, fair and consistent treatment of referee abuse across the six Area 1D 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

- a. The RAP Administrator will provide support and coordinate with each RC for messaging to coaches about how the program will work.
- b. 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

- a. The RAP Administrator will provide support and coordinate with each RC for messaging to players and parents about how the RAP program works.
- b. 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

- a. 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.
- b. 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.
- c. 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).
- d. The protocols for reporting referee abuse consist of the following:
 - i. 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).
 - ii. 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.)

- iii. 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.
- iv. 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

- a. 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 1D that this hearing be conducted as quickly as possible following the incident.
- b. 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.
- c. 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 1D Executive Board (AD and RCs).
- d. The Panel will promptly notify the Area 1D Executive Board, the RAP Administrator, the ARA and the ACA of the Panel’s decision.
- e. 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

- a. The applicable Area 1D 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.
- b. 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 1D.
- c. All proceedings, communications and materials in connection with this process will comply with applicable AYSO policies (e.g., due process and privacy requirements).