



# Missouri Youth Soccer Prohibited Conduct Policy

## 1. Purpose and Scope

Missouri Youth Soccer ("MYSA") prohibits the forms of abuse, misconduct, harassment, bullying and hazing defined in this Policy, and any Participant who engages in them is subject to discipline.

This Policy applies to:

- All Participants: players, coaches, team managers, club and league administrators, referees, trainers, volunteers, staff, board members and officers of MYSA and its member clubs, leagues and teams.
- Parents, guardians and spectators while attending or taking part in any MYSA-sanctioned activity.
- Subcontractors, suppliers, vendors and other third parties, and their employees, in their dealings with MYSA and its member organizations.

It covers conduct at practices, games, tournaments, team travel, team events, and in any electronic or online communication between Participants, on or off the field.

This Policy is adapted from the US Club Soccer Prohibited Conduct Policy (Appendix A of the US Club Soccer Policy Manual, effective January 1, 2022), which is itself consistent with U.S. Soccer's Prohibited Conduct Policy and the U.S. Center for SafeSport Code. It supplements, and does not replace, MYSA bylaws, rules and policies, the SafeSport Code, and all applicable federal, Missouri and local laws. Every Participant is responsible for knowing and following those laws and rules.

## 2. Policy Statement

MYSA is committed to an environment free of discrimination, harassment, intimidation, sexual abuse, sexual misconduct, emotional misconduct, physical misconduct, bullying and hazing.

MYSA does not permit unlawful harassment, discrimination or intimidation by anyone, including coaches, administrators, officers, directors, staff, volunteers, players, parents, vendors or other third parties.

Protected status includes race, color, age, religion, marital status, sex, ancestry, national origin, citizenship, veteran status, pregnancy, disability, sexual orientation, protected activity, or any other characteristic protected by federal, Missouri or local law. This Policy also prohibits harassment based on the protected status of a person's relatives, friends or associates.

Any Participant who violates this Policy is subject to disciplinary action. MYSA will also take appropriate action against any subcontractor, supplier or vendor found in violation.

### **3. Harassment**

Harassment is unwelcome verbal, physical or visual conduct based on a person's protected status. MYSA will not tolerate harassing conduct that interferes with a person's participation, performance or safety, affects their position or opportunities, or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment.

Prohibited conduct includes:

- Epithets, slurs, negative stereotyping, or intimidating acts based on protected status.
- Circulating or posting written, graphic or online material that shows hostility toward a person because of protected status.
- Jokes, kidding or teasing about another person's protected status.

This Policy forbids harassing conduct even when it does not rise to the level of a violation of law.

### **4. Sexual Harassment**

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, written, electronic or physical conduct of a sexual nature are sexual harassment when:

- submission to the conduct is made, explicitly or implicitly, a condition of a person's employment, team selection, playing time, position or other participation;
- submission to or rejection of the conduct is used as the basis for a decision affecting that person; or
- the conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with a person's participation or performance, or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment.

Sexual harassment may involve people of the same or different genders and may occur between people of any role or status.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- unnecessary touching, patting, hugging, pinching or brushing against a person's body;
- staring, ogling, leering or whistling at a person;
- continued or repeated verbal abuse of a sexual nature;
- sexually explicit statements, flirtations, advances, propositions, pressure for sexual activity, comments, questions, jokes or anecdotes;
- graphic or degrading comments about a person's clothing, body or sexual activity;
- sexually suggestive objects, cartoons, posters, calendars or pictures;
- suggestive or obscene letters, notes, invitations, texts, images or social media messages;
- harassing use of email, text, messaging apps, social media or phone; or
- other physical or verbal conduct of a sexual nature.

No coach, administrator, supervisor or other person in authority may threaten or suggest, explicitly or implicitly, that submitting to or rejecting sexual advances will affect a person's pay, duties, evaluation, advancement, team selection, playing time or any other aspect of participation or employment.

## **5. Racial, Religious or National Origin Harassment**

MYSA expressly prohibits any verbal, written, electronic or physical act in which race, religion or national origin is used or implied in a way that would make a reasonable person uncomfortable in the soccer environment, or that interferes with a person's ability to participate or perform.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- jokes that refer to race, religion or national origin;
- displaying or using objects, pictures or posts that reflect negatively on a person's race, religion or national origin; and
- pejorative or demeaning language about a person's race, religion or national origin, including from the sideline or stands.

## **6. Child Sexual Abuse**

Any sexual activity with a child is prohibited. This includes:

- sexual contact with a child accomplished by deception, manipulation, force or threat of force, regardless of the ages of the people involved; and
- all sexual interaction between an adult and a child, whether or not there is deception and whether or not the child understands the sexual nature of the activity.

For this Policy, a child is anyone under 18 years of age. Suspected child sexual abuse must be reported to law enforcement or the Missouri Children's Division, and to the U.S. Center for SafeSport, as described in Section 12.

## **7. Sexual Misconduct**

Any sexual interaction between an athlete and a person with evaluative, direct or indirect authority over that athlete is prohibited. This includes coaches, trainers, team managers, club directors and referees assigned to the athlete's matches. These relationships involve an imbalance of power and are likely to impair judgment or be exploitative.

This section does not apply to a pre-existing relationship between two spouses or life partners.

## **8. Emotional Misconduct**

Emotional misconduct in all forms is prohibited. It is a pattern of deliberate, non-contact behavior that has the potential to cause emotional or psychological harm to another person.

Non-contact behaviors include verbal acts (such as repeated yelling, belittling or name-calling), physical acts that do not involve contact (such as throwing equipment at or near someone), and acts that deny attention or support (such as ignoring a player for extended periods). It also includes any act described as emotional abuse or misconduct under federal or Missouri law, such as child abuse or neglect.

Emotional misconduct does not include professionally accepted coaching methods of skill enhancement, physical conditioning, team building, appropriate discipline or improving athletic performance.

## 9. Physical Misconduct

Physical misconduct in all forms is prohibited. It is contact or non-contact conduct that causes, or reasonably threatens to cause, physical harm to another person, or any act described as physical abuse or misconduct under federal or Missouri law, such as child abuse, child neglect or assault.

Physical misconduct does not include professionally accepted coaching methods of skill enhancement, physical conditioning, team building, appropriate discipline or improving athletic performance. Hitting and punching, for example, are regulated contact in combat sports but have no place in soccer. Using exercise or conditioning as punishment in a way that risks injury is not an accepted coaching method.

## 10. Bullying

Bullying is prohibited. Bullying is an intentional, persistent and repeated pattern of committing, or willfully tolerating, physical or non-physical behavior that is intended, or has the reasonable potential, to cause fear, humiliation or physical harm in an attempt to socially exclude, diminish or isolate the targeted athlete(s), as a condition of membership. It includes bullying carried out by text, social media or other electronic means (cyberbullying).

Bullying does not include group or team behaviors that (a) are meant to establish normative team behaviors or (b) promote team cohesion.

## 11. Hazing

Hazing is prohibited. Hazing is coercing, requiring, forcing or willfully tolerating any humiliating, unwelcome or dangerous activity that serves as a condition for (a) joining a team or group or (b) being socially accepted by its members. Coaches and adults who know of hazing and fail to stop it are in violation of this Policy.

Hazing does not include group or team activities that (a) are meant to establish normative team behaviors or (b) promote team cohesion.

## 12. Reporting, Investigations and Corrective Action

Every Participant must promptly report any conduct they experience, witness or learn of that may violate this Policy. MYSA cannot address misconduct it does not know about.

### Where to report

| Situation                                                                   | Report to                                                                                                                                              |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A child is in immediate danger                                              | Call 911 first                                                                                                                                         |
| Suspected child abuse or neglect, including sexual abuse                    | Local law enforcement or the Missouri Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline, 1-800-392-3738                                                                  |
| Suspected sexual misconduct, or child abuse involving an adult in the sport | U.S. Center for SafeSport, <a href="https://www.uscenterforsafesport.org">uscenterforsafesport.org</a> or 833-587-7233, in addition to law enforcement |

| Situation                                      | Report to                                                                          |
|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Any other suspected violation of this Policy   | Club director, league or MYSA Safeguarding Officer, or the MYSA online report form |
| Workplace harassment by or of an MYSA employee | Supervisor, any member of management, or the MYSA Executive Director               |

Under federal law (the Safe Sport Authorization Act), adults authorized to interact with minor athletes must report suspected child abuse, including sexual abuse, to law enforcement within 24 hours. Missouri law (RSMo 210.115) also requires mandated reporters to report suspected abuse or neglect immediately. Reporting internally to MYSA does not satisfy these legal duties.

A Participant is never required to report to the person who is engaging in the misconduct. If a Participant is uncomfortable reporting to their coach, club or supervisor, they may report to any other designated contact above.

### **Investigations**

All Participants must cooperate fully in any investigation, including providing all information they have about the complaint. Failure to cooperate may itself violate this Policy. MYSA will defer to the U.S. Center for SafeSport and to law enforcement on matters within their jurisdiction and may impose interim measures, such as suspension, while a matter is pending.

### **Corrective action**

This Policy offers greater protection than the law. A Participant found to have violated it is subject to corrective action, including warning, suspension, removal from a team or role, termination of employment, or loss of membership, whether or not any law was broken.

An employee may also file a complaint outside MYSA with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission or the Missouri Commission on Human Rights.

## **13. Retaliation, Training and Adoption**

### **Retaliation**

Retaliation against anyone who reports in good faith, or who takes part in an investigation, is prohibited and will be treated as a separate violation of this Policy. Knowingly making a false report is also a violation.

### **Training and education**

All adult Participants with regular contact with minor athletes must complete SafeSport Trained (Core) training and a background screening before working with players, and keep both current under MYSA and governing body requirements. Member clubs must share this Policy with their coaches, staff, volunteers, players and parents each season.

**Member organizations**

MYSA expects each member club and league to adopt this Policy, or a policy at least as protective, for its own staff, volunteers and participants.