

# WHISTLE STOP



A RESOURCE FOR AYSO VOLUNTEER REFEREES

## Respecting Referees



Soccer plays a critical social role in our communities, as it provides youth players with opportunities to develop as athletes, learn core values, and grow into good human beings. In every game, referees are focused on keeping the game safe and fair for players so they can have a fun AYSO experience.

However, signing up to be a referee is not very common. In fact, it is almost unnatural to want to be a referee because most people associate refereeing with yelling and other sources of abuse. Therefore, it is important that we support those who choose to become referees and help us enjoy the game.

Keep in mind that although the game moves fast and in such unpredictable ways that leads to many exciting and enjoyable moments, it also challenges the human's ability to see and evaluate incidents with perfection. The result is that referees and players (yes, even the professionals) will make mistakes during every match, and we must accept this as part of the game. Don't let this part of the game – or a disagreement with a referee's decision – be a reason to disrespect them, or, worse, physically abuse them.

In AYSO, we have been successful at maintaining a safe environment for referees to develop, and as we approach the end of the season, we can say that we had another good year. There are many things we can all do to provide this support for referees, especially in youth games, and below are some practical steps that allow all of us to take responsibility in keeping the game safe for referees and others.

## Quick tips

- Everyone must respect the referees at all times (even when they make calls with which you disagree).
- The sooner an adult takes action, the easier it is to manage possible negative behavior.

### When a player starts to act negatively

- The coach should mentor him/her, and if needed, substitute the player.
- When present, a parent or family member should connect with the player and take action.
- If needed, teammates should immediately restrain the player.
- Any player who threatens or is guilty of aggravated assault on a referee should be reported so that the competition authorities can take the proper action.
- Without revealing personal information, communicate to the membership all actions taken to ensure player-and-referee safety.

### When a spectator starts to act negatively

- Other spectators supporting that team should ask him/her to stop the negative behavior.
- Remind the negative spectator about the concept of Kids Zone®.
- If needed, other spectators should immediately take action by restraining the person and calling the authorities when warranted.

## Training and awareness

- AYSO integrates the teaching of core values, including respect, within our programs
- We implement AYSO's Six Philosophies as part of our mission.
- We have the PIE principle - Positive/Instructional/Encouraging approach that we use to coach players. We have Kids Zone®, a program that reinforces positive behavior through a list of 10 directives that include "Set a proper example of sportsmanship".

### AYSO provides constant visibility of positive messages that support good behavior

- T-shirts, banners, posters, etc. – all displaying positive messages.
- Reminders are provided periodically in meetings, at the fields, ongoing training, etc.
- Teams, players and fans are recognized for projecting respect.

### AYSO encourages players, coaches and parents to take an "annual reminder" via a course that includes proper behavior direction and guidelines.

- Safe Haven provides training and awareness of proper conduct, which generates great results.
- Safe Haven also shares and encourages teamwork to generate a positive, respectful environment for players, parents, coaches, referees, volunteers, and all others that participate in AYSO.