

3.11.7 Misconduct Toward Referee

1. **NTSSA** has exclusive jurisdiction over assault or abuse of officials, both referee and assistant referee, in any competition by the State or Member Associations. This jurisdiction includes:
 - a. All **USSF** registered referees (adult and youth).
 - b. Any non-licensed person serving in any emergency capacity as a game official.
 - c. Any coach, parent, or junior assistant referee, serving as a game official.
2. If there is an assault/abuse of any game official by any person, including players, coaches, managers, or spectators; a report of the alleged assault/abuse will be submitted immediately to the **NTSSA** A&D Committee Chairman, the appropriate State Commissioner (Adult Men’s, Adult Women’s, Youth or Indoor), the Olympic Development Program Chairman and the Chairman of the State Referee Committee. This subcommittee, chaired by the **NTSSA** A&D Committee Chairman, shall review and investigate the report(s) as submitted, and upon proper investigation shall determine the seriousness of the alleged assault/abuse report(s) in a timely manner.
3. Should the majority of the members of the subcommittee listed above in Paragraph 3.11.7.2 determine there is sufficient evidence to consider the incident referee assault or referee abuse, a formal hearing will be held within thirty (30) days of verification of the incident. An intentional act upon or towards a game official as defined in Paragraph 3.11.7.1 above shall be deemed “referee assault” or “referee abuse” in the **NTSSA** under the terms, references, and conditions of **USSF** Policy 531-9.

If the subcommittee determines there is sufficient evidence to consider the incident referee assault, the committee, at its discretion, may suspend the individual involved until the hearing on the alleged assault.

Should the subcommittee, as noted in Paragraph 3.11.7-2 above, determine the action committed to be Gross Mistreatment Towards a Referee rather than Referee Assault or Referee Abuse; it shall impose an administrative punishment of a three (3) game suspension. A formal hearing will not be held unless it is requested by the suspended party. Should a formal hearing be requested and held, it shall be an **NTSSA** Board of Directors hearing as described in Paragraph 3.11.7.4.

4. **NTSSA** Board of Directors Hearing

Assault hearings shall be conducted by the State Board of Directors in the following manner:

 - a. The alleged offending party should be present at such hearings; however, if he is not present, the **NTSSA** Board of Directors will act upon the matter with the information before it.
 - b. The game official(s) are required to be present at the hearings. However, if they are not present, the **NTSSA** Board of Directors will act upon the matter with the information before it.
 - c. It is intended that the officials’ reports be clear and that no explanations are required at the hearing. Only the **NTSSA** Board of Directors will question the official(s). If the offending party or any other party or any other person(s) need explanation, such queries will be addressed through the Chair.
5. Terms and References

A Referee is protected by U.S. Soccer policy from the time they arrive at the venue (which shall include the parking area), until their departure from the venue. For the purposes of this policy, "Protected Party" means a member of the Referee's family or household or a guest of the Referee at the match or match venue. All U.S. Soccer policies are in addition to the local, state, and Federal laws.

- a. **Referee assault** is any deliberate physical action against a Referee. **Referee abuse** is extreme, deliberate, and non-contact behavior that causes a Referee or Protected Party significant harm. Actions in this category may be subject to an immediate suspension, meaning that the perpetrator cannot appear at the next sanctioned match. Assault and abuse include, but are not limited to, the following actions or behavior committed against a Referee or Protected Parties:
 - i. Imposing physical harm upon a Referee or a Protected Party, including by use of objects or equipment.
 - ii. Any act that endangers the Referee's physical well-being, whether deliberate or merely reckless.
 - iii. Any form of unwanted physical contact, including but not limited to pushing, hitting, striking, kicking, choking, or spitting at the Referee.
 - iv. Any behavior that constitutes a criminal offense under any applicable law.
 - v. Threatening, either directly or in insinuation, physical harm, including by use of objects or equipment, to a Referee or a Protected Party or property. Threatening is defined as any statement or action that instills reasonable fear of acts of violence to a person's safety or property.
 - vi. Threats of harm or any retaliatory action against the Referee or their Protected Parties, including threat of exclusion from assignment or future participation opportunity.
- b. Actions that do not meet the above assault or abuse definitions, but cause a Referee or Protected Party harm, may be subject to U.S. Soccer's gross mistreatment framework. **Gross mistreatment** means any deliberate, noncontact behavior that is expected to cause harm to a Referee. Gross mistreatment includes, but is not limited to, the following actions or behavior committed against a Referee or Protected Parties:
 - i. Severe or repeated harassment, including hate speech or discriminatory remarks based on race, gender, national origin, sexual orientation, disabilities, or any other legally protected characteristic.
 - ii. Extreme verbal attacks that would cause emotional harm to a reasonable person.
 - iii. Approaching a Referee when they arrive or depart the venue with aggression (e.g., intimidation).
 - iv. Any form of cyberbullying, including spreading false information about the Referee, sharing the Referee's personal information (aka <doxing), or publicly posting content that ridicules or mocks the Referee or uses hate speech.
 - v. Questioning the Referee's character, integrity, honesty, truthfulness, or impartiality.
 - vi. Yelling insults, taunting, making, or expressing derogatory/belittling remarks towards a Referee.
 - vii. Pervasive action that belittles or undermines the Referee's authority or is intended to cast doubt on the Referee.

These are only some of the examples of possible misconduct and are not all-inclusive, but apply only in the following situations:

- i. If a proceeding is brought against an individual for referee assault or abuse, or both, under Federation Policy 531-9; or
- ii. If the individual is ejected from a game and, after the ejection, engages in conduct that is misconduct under this policy.

6. Penalties and Suspensions

- a. Referee Assault and Abuse
 1. The person committing the Referee assault must be suspended as follows:
 - a. for a minor or slight touching of the Referee or the Referee's uniform

- or personal property, at least three months from the time of the assault;
- b. except as provided in clause (i) or (ii), for any other assault, at least six months from the time of the assault:
 - i. for an assault committed by an adult and the Referee is 17 years of age or younger, at least three years; or
 - ii. for an assault when serious injuries are inflicted, at least five years.
- 2. For actions categorized as abuse, the person must be suspended for the next three affiliated matches, at minimum.

¹ Any misconduct against a minor-aged referee that rises to the level of child abuse under federal law must also be reported to law enforcement and the U.S. Center for SafeSport.

- 3. A Member Organization adjudicating the matter may not provide shorter period of suspension but, if circumstances warrant, may provide a longer period of suspension.
- 7. Any party found to have committed the act of referee assault, referee abuse, or gross mistreatment towards a referee shall have the right to appeal, within fourteen (14) days of receipt of the decision, to the USSF Appeals Board, following USSF Bylaw 705.
- 8. Assault On Officials By An Adult Player

Should a player (male or female) be found guilty of referee assault, the NTSSA Board of Directors may, at its discretion, impose upon the team of which the player is a member, the requirement of posting a \$1,000 cash bond to be held in the treasury of NTSSA without interest for a period of one (1) year after posting. This cash bond will be required to be posted before the team may engage in any further games within the boundaries of NTSSA. Should any other member of said team be found guilty of a referee assault during that one (1) year period, the team shall forfeit the bond, and another similar bond will be required before the team can continue in competition. If no member of the team commits a referee assault during that one (1) year period, the bond will be returned to the person or persons designated to receive such payment. No member of such team which has failed to post such bond will be permitted to register with another team until that member has posted a \$50 bond with NTSSA; nor shall any new member be allowed to register on that team until such member has posted a \$50 bond, such bonds to be held under the same terms and conditions as the team bonds.