



AYSO Area 1C

Referee Abuse Prevention Program (RAPP)

(Approved 7/06/2026)



Effective March 1, 2025, the AYSO National Board approved the addition of the Referee Abuse Prevention (RAP) standards in the AYSO National Policies (Section 2.E.e)¹. It is based upon direction and guidance from U.S. Soccer's Policy 531-9. Commencing this upcoming Fall Season 2026, the RAP Program (RAPP) will be implemented and enforced throughout Area 1C as described below.

Staff and Responsibilities

- a. RAPP Administrator: Manages implementation/enforcement of the RAP Program throughout Area 1C. The RAPP Administrator is appointed each year by the Area Director (AD) with input from the Regional Commissioners (RCs).
- b. RAPP 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., the Area Director and Regional Commissioners). The RAPP Disciplinary Panel consists of the Area Referee Administrator (ARA), the Area Coach Administrator (ACA) and one Regional Commissioner (RC) not associated with the suspected RAPP violator. The RC member will be appointed for each incident by the AD.
- c. Regional Referee Administrators (RRAs) and Area Referee Administrator (ARA): Support referee education and compliance with RAP Program protocols
- d. Regional Coach Administrators (RCAs) and Area Coach Administrator (ACA): Support coach education and compliance with the RAP Program.

Implementation of RAP Program in Area 1C

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 RAPP applied in a manner that is reasonable, fair, and consistent across the nine Area 1C 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 with appropriate follow-up). For purposes of RAPP, “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 RAPP protocols are intended to encourage reporting by the referees and to ensure reasonable, fair, and consistent treatment of referee abuse across the nine Area 1C Regions and the Area at large. The RAPP Administrator, Area personnel (AD, ARA, ADRI), and Region personnel (RC, RRA, RDRI) will all be involved in the process.

¹ <https://www.ayso1ref.com/referee-abuse-prevention-guidance/>

Coaches

- a. The RAPP Administrator will provide support and coordinate with each RC and the ACA for messaging to coaches about how the program will work.
- b. Each Region is responsible for making sure that RAPP 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 and Parents

- a. The RAPP Administrator will provide support and coordinate with each RC for messaging to players and parents about how RAPP works.
- b. Each Region is responsible for making sure that RAPP 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 RAPP Administrator will provide support and coordinate with the ARA and each RRA for instruction of current referees about the RAPP 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 RAPP violations.
- b. Additionally, the RAPP Administrator, the ARA, and each RRA will educate the referee community on the distinction between RAPP 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 ejections of spectators.
- c. The Area Director of Referee Instruction (ADRI) (Mike Ball) will work with each Regional Director of Referee Instruction (RDRI) to include instruction about RAPP 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 RAPP guidelines, has occurred. The Referee is primarily 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 or other individual (Assistant Referee, coach, player, or spectator) 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. Upon receiving an incident report, the RRA shall immediately notify the ARA that a report has been made.
 - iii. The RRA (for intra-region competitions) or ARA (for inter-region competitions) will make a preliminary determination, based on the Referee’s first report, whether the language/action qualifies as “referee abuse” under the RAPP standards. If so, the RRA or ARA, as above, 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 provides context and understanding of the situation. The Report will be sent via email to the RAPP Administrator, RRA, and ARA.
 - iv. The RAPP Administrator will review the Referee Report, conduct any additional investigation needed, and make a secondary determination, based on the additional information, whether the incident qualifies as “referee abuse” and therefore requires a determination of potential sanctions by the RAPP Disciplinary Panel. If so, the RAPP Administrator will advise the Disciplinary Panel, AD, ARA, and applicable RC.

Penalty Determination Process

- a. The AD will appoint the RC member of the RAPP Disciplinary Panel, and the RAPP Disciplinary Panel will schedule and conduct a hearing (in-person or online) to confirm that “referee abuse” has occurred, and 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 1C that this hearing be conducted as quickly as possible following the incident.
- b. Prior to the hearing, the RAPP Administrator will present the details of the incident to the Disciplinary Panel and provide any materials obtained or prepared (including any witness statements). The RAPP Administrator may also provide recommendations regarding sanctions to be imposed and the justification for such action. The RAPP Administrator does not typically attend the RAPP Disciplinary Panel meetings, unless requested by the Disciplinary Panel.
- c. In making its determination about the appropriateness of the recommended sanctions, the Disciplinary Panel will apply the USSF/AYSO guidelines, and any additional standards or instructions provided by the Area Executive Board (AD and RCs).
- d. The Disciplinary Panel will promptly notify the AD, the applicable RC, the RAPP Administrator, the ARA, and the ACA of the Disciplinary Panel’s decision. The RAPP Administrator and the ARA will be responsible for communicating (without naming the parties involved) with the RRAs about the Disciplinary Panel’s decision for the purpose of promoting consistency in the enforcement of RAPP across the nine Regions of Area 1C.
- e. As per AYSO guidance, the RAPP Administrator will notify the AYSO National Referee Program Administrator of RAPP 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 1C 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 their right to AYSO Due Process (or, in the case of an offender that is not a registered AYSO volunteer or a player’s direct parent/guardian, their right to be heard by the RAPP Disciplinary Panel). The AD or applicable RC will also be responsible for ensuring enforcement of any sanctions.
- b. The RAPP 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 RAPP across the Regions in Area 1C.
- c. The RRA shall orally notify the person(s) making the report – and, in the case of a youth referee, their parent(s) or legal guardian(s) – of the RAPP Disciplinary Panel’s conclusion. This will “close the loop” to ensure that the reporting person knows that action was taken by Area 1C in accordance with its policies. Notwithstanding this oral notification, the RAPP Disciplinary Panel’s conclusion, including any documentation, on any specific RAPP incident will only be shared with those who need to know (i.e., the offender/suspected offender and those responsible for enforcing discipline).
- d. All proceedings, communications, and materials in connection with this process will comply with applicable AYSO policies (e.g., Due Process and privacy requirements). Anonymized information about RAPP incidents and imposed RAPP sanctions may be shared with the broader AYSO community, as directed by the AD.
- e. In the case of Physical Referee Abuse, should a criminal complaint be filed by the victim of any referee abuse, the documentation created through the RAPP reporting and investigatory process will be provided to police, a court of competent jurisdiction, or a litigant after a valid subpoena or warrant has been received and responded to by the appropriate AYSO representative with the written approval and instruction to the RAPP Administrator by the AD.