



**UNITED STATES SOCCER FEDERATION, INC.  
POLICY 531-9 AND POLICY 531-10  
(AS AMENDED FEBRUARY 24, 2007)**

A number of technical changes were made to both Policy 531-9 and 531-10. There were also other changes made. Following are the rationales provided for the changes made to the 2 policies:

**RATIONALE FOR POLICY 531-9 AMENDMENTS**

First, the proposed amendments conform the referee abuse and assault policy to Bylaw 705, which now uses Organization member rather than State Association. Second, the proposed amendments make clear that foul or abuse language must imply or threaten physical harm to qualify as referee abuse under the policy. Third, the proposed amendments clarify that a hearing must be held to find a party guilty of referee abuse. Fourth, the proposed amendments make clear that a minor slight touching of a referee under the age 18 requires a minimum suspension of 3 months rather than three years. The clarifications are consistent with the decisions of the Appeals Committee.

**RATIONALE FOR POLICY 531-10 AMENDMENTS**

The proposed amendments make clear the State Referee Committee can deal with the initial hearing on this issue. Several States already refer these matters to the State Referee Committee in the first instance. The proposed amendments also eliminate the ability to temporarily suspend a referee for misconduct.

## **Policy 531-9—Misconduct Toward Game Officials**

### Section 1. General

Misconduct against referees may occur before, during and after the match, including travel to and from the match. Misconduct may occur also at later times when directly related to duties of a game official as a referee.

### Section 2. Rule Application

(A) This policy shall supersede any inconsistent rules of Organization Members that pertain to assaults or abuse upon Federation referees, assistant referees, the manner and means of hearings, appeals, and rehearings in matters pertaining thereto.

(B) Nothing in this policy rule shall be construed to restrict or limit any league, event/tournament or Organization Member from applying equal or greater restrictions to anyone not listed in section 4(a)(1) of this policy (i.e., a spectator associated with a club or team).

(C) This policy shall not apply to players, coaches, managers, club officials, or league officials while participating in Professional League Member activities.

### Section 3. Terms and References

As used in this policy—

(1) “Referee” includes the following:

(a) all currently registered USSF referees, assistant referees, 4<sup>th</sup> officials or others duly appointed to assist in officiating in a match.

(b) any non-licensed, non-registered person serving in an emergency capacity as a referee (under Rule 3040).

(c) any club assistant referee.

(2) “Hearing” means a meeting of at least three neutral members, one of whom is designated or elected to serve as chairman. The hearing shall be conducted pursuant to guidelines established by the Organization Member.

(3) (a) (i) Referee assault is an intentional act of physical violence at or upon a referee.

(ii) For purposes of this policy, "intentional act" shall mean an act intended to bring about a result which will invade the interests of another in a way that is socially unacceptable. Unintended consequences of the act are irrelevant.

(b) Assault includes, but is not limited to the following acts committed upon a referee: hitting, kicking, punching, choking, spitting on, grabbing or bodily running into a referee; head butting; the act of kicking or throwing any object at a referee that

could inflict injury; damaging the referee's uniform or personal property, i.e. car, equipment, etc.

(4) (a) Referee abuse is a verbal statement or physical act not resulting in bodily contact which implies or threatens physical harm to a referee or the referee's property or equipment.

(b) Abuse includes, but is not limited to the following acts committed upon a referee: using foul or abusive language toward a referee that implies or threatens physical harm; spewing any beverage on a referee's personal property; or spitting at (but not on) the referee.

#### Section 4. Jurisdiction and Hearings

##### (A) General

(1) When any amateur or professional player, coach, manager, club official or game official assaults or abuses a referee, the original jurisdiction to adjudicate the matter shall vest immediately in the responsible Organization Member which is affiliated with the United States Soccer Federation.

(2) When an allegation of assault is verified by the Organization Member, the person is automatically suspended until the hearing on the assault.

(3) The Organization Member must hold a hearing within thirty (30) days of the verification by the Member of the abuse or assault or, if applicable, the thirty-day period provided by subsection (B)(3) of this section. If the Member does not adjudicate the matter within that period of time, original jurisdiction shall immediately vest in the Federation's Appeals Committee to adjudicate the matter, to which the same provisions as to the term of suspension shall apply.

(4) Failure to hold the initial hearing shall not rescind the automatic suspension.

##### (B) Events and Tournaments

(1) In the event an assault or abuse of a referee occurs in an event outside the alleged offender's home state, the referee shall (A) immediately notify the Event/Tournament Chairman, and (B) forward a copy of the game report and his/her comments on the incident to the Event/Tournament Chairman.

(2) The Event/Tournament Chairman shall have the right to immediately convene a hearing at the site of the Event/Tournament, at which the alleged offender, the coach of the alleged offender when the offender is a player, and the game official should be present. Information presented at this hearing shall promptly be relayed to the alleged offender's Organization Member President by the Event/Tournament Chairman, both orally and in writing; however, failure to provide written information shall not restrict the offender's Organization Member from taking action with regard to any referee abuse or assault.

(3) Final jurisdiction shall vest with the alleged offender's Organization Member. A hearing shall be held by that Organization Member within thirty (30) days of the receipt of the initial report of the abuse or assault on a referee.

## Section 5. Penalties and Suspensions

### (A) Assault

(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 3 months from the time of the assault;

(b) except as provided in clause (i) or (ii), for any other assault, at least 6 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 3 years; or

(ii) for an assault when serious injuries are inflicted, at least 5 years.

(2) An Organization Member adjudicating the matter may not provide a shorter period of suspension but, if circumstances warrant, may provide a longer period of suspension.

### (B) Abuse

The minimum suspension period for referee abuse shall be at least three (3) scheduled matches within the rules of that competition. The Organization Member adjudicating the matter may provide a longer period of suspension when circumstances warrant (e.g., habitual offenders).

## Section 6. Appeals

A person who is found to have committed the abuse and/or assault may appeal to the Appeals Committee by following the procedures of Federation Bylaw 705 within ten (10) days from receipt of the decision of the Organization Member.

## Section 7. Procedure for Reporting Assault and Abuse

(A) Procedures for reporting of referee assault and/or abuse shall be developed and disseminated by the National Referee Committee to all Federation registered referees.

(B) Referees shall transmit a written report of the alleged assault or abuse, or both, within 48 hours of the incident (unless there is a valid reason for later reporting) to the designee of the Organization Member and the State Referee Administrator. For tournaments or special events, the referee shall transmit a written report to the tournament director on the day of the incident and to his home state SRA within 10 days of the incident.

## **Policy 531-10—Misconduct of Game Officials**

### **Section 1. Terms and References**

(A) “Game Officials” includes the following:

- (1) all currently registered USSF referees, assistant referees, 4<sup>th</sup> officials or others appointed to assist in officiating in a match.
- (2) any non-licensed, non-registered person serving in an emergency capacity as a referee. [See section 2 of Policy 531-8.]
- (3) any club assistant referee.
- (4) any referee development program person performing any official function at a match.

(B) “Referee Development Program Person” includes any referee, referee administrator, referee assessor, referee instructor, referee assignor, or other person serving in such capacity in a line or supervisory position, including members of any referee committee appointed by the Federation, its Divisions, Affiliates or Associates, a State Association, or a competition, tournament or other appropriate authority.

(C) “Hearing” means a meeting of at least five members, one of which is designated or elected to serve as Chairman. The Chairman of a hearing shall not vote except to break a tie vote. Such members, including the Chairman, shall not be the State Referee Administrator, the State Director of Referee Instruction, the State Director of Referee Assessment, a Federation National or FIFA Referee, or any other member of the State Referee Administration.

(D) “State Association” shall be that State Association through which the game official is registered or referee development is appointed. Where a state has both Amateur and Youth National State Associations, the reference shall mean that State Association which has legal authority within its state to administer the registration of the referee or the appointment of the referee development program person charged.

### **Section 2. Procedures**

(A) **Misconduct at a Match**

When any game official is accused of having committed misconduct toward another game official, participant, or spectator at a match, or of having a conflict of interest, the original jurisdiction to adjudicate the matter shall vest immediately in the State Association or Organization Member through which the accused game official is registered. In the situation where Amateur and Youth State Associations exist in a state, and the incident of alleged misconduct occurred at a match sanctioned by one State Association, jurisdiction shall vest with the State Association sanctioning the match in question.

(B) Misconduct Away From a Match

When any game official, referee, referee assistant or referee development program person is accused of unethical conduct, misuse or abuse of authority or conflict of interest in any matter in the pursuit of or may affect the individual's official dealings within and as authorized by the Federation, its Divisions, Affiliates or Associates, a State Association or Organization Member, or a competition, tournament or other appropriate authority, the matter shall vest immediately in the State Association through which the accused game official is registered or through which the referee development program person is appointed.

(C) Any allegation of misconduct or of conflict of interest by a game official as described by subsection (A) of this section, or of unethical conduct, misuse or abuse of authority or conflict of interest as described by subsection (B) of this section, shall be made in writing to the State Referee Administrator or to the State Association(s) or Organization Member that shall report all such allegations including any allegations against the State Referee Administrator, to the State Association(s) or Organization Members through which the accused game official is registered or through which the accused referee development program person is appointed.

(D) Upon receipt by the appropriate Organization Member of a verified written complaint, a hearing shall be conducted within 30 days from verification pursuant to guidelines established by the Organization Member having jurisdiction as provided by subsection (A) or (B) of this section. The guidelines may include referring the complaint to the State Referee Committee for the hearing. The hearings and appeal process shall provide for adequate due process for the accused person including proper notice of charges, the right to bring witnesses in defense, and the right to confront and to cross-examine the accusers.

(E) The Chairman of the hearing committee shall transmit the findings of the committee in writing to all parties concerned including the accused and the accusers and to the State Association(s) or Organization Member within seven days of the hearing.

(F) Any party subject to penalties shall receive, at the time of notification of the decision, a notice of the rights of appeal and a copy of the procedures and deadline dates required for such an appeal to be properly considered. Time for filing an appeal shall start with the date official receipt of the decision by the party making the appeal.

Section 3. Penalties

(A) The severity of the penalty imposed upon an individual shall be determined by the decision-making body having jurisdiction.

(B) Penalties may be among the following:

- (1) letter of reprimand;
- (2) a fine;
- (3) suspension from all active participation in the Federation for a fixed period of time;

- (4) any combination of clauses (1), (2), or (3) of this subsection; and
- (5) dismissal from the Federation.

(C) Any individual while under suspension may not take part in any activity sponsored by the Federation or its members.

#### Section 4. Appeals

(A) Any game official who is found guilty of misconduct as defined in this rule may appeal the decision of the hearing committee as follows:

- (1) to a Referee Disciplinary Committee jointly appointed by the Amateur and Youth State Associations.
- (2) to the Federation Appeals Committee as provided under Federation Bylaw 705.

(B) The party appealing the decision of a committee shall have ten (10) days to file the notice of appeal of a decision. Time for filing an appeal shall start with the date of official receipt of the decision by the party making the appeal.