



Updated NCYSA Discipline and Appeals Manual and Updated US Soccer Referee Abuse Policy

August 13, 2026

Hello NCYSA!

I'm excited for the 2026-2027 season to begin this week and look forward to continuing the connections we built last season.

I'm reaching out with several updates from NCYSA Discipline & Appeals, including changes to the **NCYSA Discipline & Appeals Manual**, the **US Soccer Referee Abuse Policy**, and several of our objectives for the upcoming season.

As always, please feel free to reach out throughout the season if I can help answer questions, provide an educational session, or support your club in any way.

Laws of the Game – Education Sessions

We will be offering two opportunities to review the **new Laws of the Game**, which took effect July 1 and will be used across all fall leagues. While implementation may vary slightly by league, I'll cover:

- What US Soccer expects referees to do
- What clubs, coaches, and players can expect from local referees
- My perspective as a PRO2 Assistant Referee working USL, NWSL, and Super League matches

These are significant changes, and I strongly encourage you to share these sessions with your coaches. One session will be recorded.

- **August 19 | 1:00-2:30 PM** – [Register here!](#)
- **August 23 | 8:00-9:30 PM** – [Register here!](#)

I'm also happy to connect by Zoom or phone with individual clubs, groups of coaches, or parents to discuss these or other topics.

Discriminatory Incidents

During the Spring 2026 season, NCYSA issued **15 suspensions for discriminatory incidents**, with another four incidents reported to us. This was an increase of 12 incidents compared with the Spring 2025 season.

This past spring, we also implemented the [Discriminatory Incident Protocol](#) with NCSRA referees. The protocol was well received and used several times. Referees will receive it again this week as part of their preseason information.

Please remember:

- Referees cannot issue a red card for an incident they did not personally see or hear, but they **can and should submit a report**.
- If your team needs the protocol enacted and the referee is unfamiliar with it, please politely ask for the protocol to be used and allow time for the referee to connect with your team.
- Coaches and clubs should also report discriminatory incidents directly to NCYSA rather than relying solely on the referee's report.
- Under NCYSA policy, the **use of derogatory language is sufficient for a violation; intent does not have to be established**.

Many of the incidents from Spring 2026 involved players using words they considered casual or harmless but that had a significant impact on others. Please have conversations with your coaches and players about the impact of language before the season gets fully underway. [[Discriminatory Conduct information from the D&A Manual](#)]

Updates to the NCYSA Discipline & Appeals Manual

The updated manual includes several changes:

Minor updates

- Language updated to reflect current NCYSA staff and Board positions
- Language updated to reflect virtual hearings

Suspension updates

- **Coach and Player Misconduct:** Suspensions are now separated to better align with the Laws of the Game and clarify coach-specific versus player-specific red cards.
- **Serious Foul Play:** Minimum suspension reduced from 2 games to **1 game**, better reflecting the range of actions covered by the Laws of the Game.
- **Serious Foul Play – Malicious:** New category with a **2-game minimum suspension** for malicious tackles that present a significant player-safety concern.
- **Violent Conduct:** Minimum suspension reduced from 3 games to **1 game**, recognizing the broad range of actions that can fall under the Laws of the Game's definition.
- **Violent Conduct – Excessive Actions:** New category with a **3-game minimum suspension** for excessive or dangerous violent conduct.

Please review these changes, as some categories are new or have been worded differently from the previous manual.

US Soccer Referee Abuse Policy – Updated May 2026 by US Soccer

- Please review the updated [Referee Abuse Suspension Chart](#).
- [US Soccer Referee Abuse Policy](#)

- NCYSA will issue suspensions of **5 games or fewer without a hearing panel**. These suspensions may be appealed under NCYSA and USSF policy.
- Incidents resulting in suspensions of **6 or more games** will go before a hearing panel for confirmation. Panel decisions may also be appealed under NCYSA/USSF policy.

NCYSA Discipline & Appeals Objectives for 2026–2027

This season, we will continue focusing on:

- Connecting with clubs to better understand and support the game-day experience
- Providing education on the Laws of the Game for coaches, players, team managers, and club stakeholders
- Providing referees with education on the Laws of the Game, expectations around the game, and their role in player development
- Building stronger connections between referees, clubs, coaches, and players so we can work and learn together

Thank you for everything you do to support soccer across North Carolina. I'm looking forward to a great season and to continuing to work together. Please don't hesitate to reach out if I can be a resource for you or your club.

In service to soccer,

Colin

