

**Language Incidents or Discriminatory Acts Response Guidelines
Mass Youth Soccer 2024**

Contents

Protected Status	2
Derogatory Language and Discriminatory Actions	2
How to Respond	2
Reporting Language Incidents and Discriminatory Actions	3
How to Report	3
Determining Whether an Allegation Requires Further Reporting	3
Anti-Retaliation.....	4
Contact Information	4
Matchday Guidance for Coaches.....	5
Matchday Guidance for Players	7
Matchday Guidance for Spectators.....	8
Matchday Guidance for Referees	9

Protected Status

Mass Youth Soccer Association is committed to fostering an environment, both on and off the field, free from discrimination and harassment. These guidelines provide a clear and accessible framework for reporting language incidents and discriminatory actions based on an individual's protected status.

Mass Youth Soccer has zero-tolerance for discrimination of any kind. The guidelines protect individuals from discrimination and harassment based on the following protected statuses: race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding), sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, age, disability, veteran status.

Derogatory Language and Discriminatory Actions

Examples of derogatory language include, but are not limited to:

- Sexually explicit statements, sexual flirtations, advances, propositions, subtle pressure for sexual activity, comments, questions, jokes, or anecdotes.
- Jokes, which include reference to race, religion, national origin, or gender identity.
- The displays or uses of objects or pictures which adversely reflect on a person's race, religion, national origin, or gender identity.
- Use of pejorative or demeaning language regarding a person's race, religion, national origin, or gender identity.

How to Respond

- 1) If a Minor Athlete or Adult Participant tells you that they have experienced misconduct, respond with care and compassion. Listen with empathy and be supportive.
- 2) If required, the person receiving the report should take immediate steps to deescalate the situation.
- 3) If it is determined that the incident requires reporting, it should be brought to the attention of a coach who will then notify the referee if the incident occurred during a game.
- 4) Whether the allegation is confirmed or not confirmed, the incident should be reported to the Member Organization's President and/or Risk Manager within 24 hours.
- 5) If the allegation is confirmed, consider immediately removing the individual(s) responsible for the remainder of the event. Probation, temporary suspension, or additional sanctions may be applied according to the severity of the matter in accordance with the organization and Mass Youth Soccer / US Soccer Policy.
- 6) If the allegation is not confirmed, the applicable Massachusetts Youth Soccer Association Code of Conduct should be reviewed with the individuals reported to be involved. During which time, appropriate behavior should be reiterated, and the incident should be documented for potential future action.



Reporting Language Incidents and Discriminatory Actions

We encourage all participants and spectators to report any language incidents or discriminatory actions they experience or witness. This includes:

- Offensive or derogatory jokes, slurs, or language.
- Unwelcome physical or verbal conduct.
- Unfair treatment based on a protected status.
- Retaliation for reporting a language incident or discriminatory action.

How to Report

To report a language incident or discriminatory action:

- **Non-Match or Off-Field Incidents:** Reports of non-match and off-field incidents involving language and discriminatory actions should be reported directly to a Coach, President and/or the Risk Manager of the Member Organization.
If the incident is connected to a League or Competition, (e.g. Social Media Taunting / Offensive Slurs towards an opposition team) the incident should also be reported to and addressed by the League or Competition.

Incidents occurring on Match Day: Reports should be submitted using the steps provided in the Addressing Derogatory Language or Discriminatory Actions on Matchday Guidelines for Coaches, Players, Spectators or Referees. (Pages 5-9)

Determining Whether an Allegation Requires Further Reporting

Massachusetts Youth Soccer Association Affiliated Adult Participants are required to further report if the derogatory or discriminatory language or actions are considered a pattern of behavior by the participant, that is:

1. Repeated or severe
2. Aggressive
3. Directed at a minor (a person under the age of 18), and;
4. Intended or likely to hurt, control, or diminish the minor emotionally, physically and falls under one of the following categories:
 - Protected Statuses
 - Sexual bullying or harassment
 - Emotional bullying or harassment

Please click [HERE](#) to submit a report.

Additional Information

U.S. Center for SafeSport's Reporting Obligations for Adult Participants (click [HERE](#)) and Massachusetts Youth Soccer Association's Athlete and Participant Safety Policy (Click [HERE](#)).



Anti-Retaliation

Massachusetts Youth Soccer Association prohibits retaliation against any member who reports a language incident or discriminatory action in good faith.

Contact Information

For any questions about these guidelines or to report a language incident or discriminatory action, please contact:

[Manager of Safeguarding- mrelic@mayouthsoccer.org](mailto:mrelic@mayouthsoccer.org)

[The Massachusetts Youth Soccer Association DEIB Committee](#)

- tpetricca@mayouthsoccer.org



Guidance for Coaches

I. Addressing Derogatory Language or Discriminatory Actions on Matchday

If you heard derogatory language or witnessed discriminatory actions:

- Notify the center referee.
- If unable to notify the center referee right away, notify an assistant referee.
- Request that the center referee temporarily suspend the game at the next appropriate stoppage so that the incident can be addressed.

If a player reports being subjected to derogatory language or discriminatory actions, which you did not hear or witness directly:

- Demonstrate support for the player and advise that you will address it immediately.
- Learn from the player exactly what is alleged and determine if it is a situation that warrants immediate attention. Be sure to get a description using specific language (e.g. exact word states as well as actions/language used).
- If it does not warrant immediate attention, take notes of the allegation so it can be reported post-game (see Reporting).
- If it does warrant immediate attention, notify the center referee. If unable to notify the center referee right away, notify an assistant referee.
- Ask the center referee temporarily suspend the game at the next appropriate stoppage so that the incident can be addressed.

II. Addressing the Allegation

1. The referee will gather the coaches from both teams and at least one of the other referee or club official as a witness to discuss the allegation.
2. The coach communicating the allegation explains the situation fully to the center referee and the opposing coach. Describe the allegation utilizing the following:
 - Use exact words.
 - Describe actions/language.
 - Convey objective details as opposed to subjective interpretations.

III. Subsequent Steps

1. If the allegation is confirmed, the coach should consider immediately removing the individual(s) responsible in accordance with the Member Organization, league, or event guidelines.
2. If the allegation is not confirmed, document the incident for potential future action.
3. Whether the allegation is confirmed or not, the center referee will decide to resume or abandon the match based on the safety of the environment.



IV. Reporting

1. The coach should inform and report the incident to their organization's President and/or Risk Manager within 24 hours.
2. The member organization President or designated administrator should report the incident to the league/competition authority.
3. The Referee should submit an incident report (supplemental report) detailing the allegation and, if applicable, actions taken. If applicable, Assistant Referees should also submit statements.
4. The President or designated administrator will determine the process to communicate to the participants involved.



Guidance for Players

I. Addressing Derogatory Language or Discriminatory Actions on Matchday

If you heard derogatory language or witnessed discriminatory actions notify the center referee and your coach immediately.

If another player reports being subject to derogatory language or discriminatory actions which you did not hear or witness directly, notify the center referee and your coach immediately.

II. Addressing the Allegation

Describe using specific language or action when asked about what you heard or witnessed, be sure to provide a description using complete details that you recall:

- Use exact words.
- Describe actions/language.
- Convey objective details as opposed to subjective interpretations.

From this point, the referee and coaches will determine next steps.



Guidance for Spectators

I. Addressing Derogatory Language or Discriminatory Actions on Matchday

If you heard derogatory language or witnessed discriminatory actions directed to a player, coach, or referee on the field, notify a coach or designated organization official immediately. Do not attempt to notify the referee or assistant referee.

If another spectator reports hearing derogatory language or witnessing discriminatory actions directed toward a player, coach, or referee, which you did not hear or witness directly, notify a coach or designated organization official immediately.

II. Addressing the Allegation

Describe using specific language when asked about what you heard or witnessed, be sure to provide a description using complete details that you recall:

- Use exact words.
- Describe actions/language.
- Convey objective details as opposed to subjective interpretations.

From this point, the coaches and referees will determine the next steps.

III. Reporting

In addition to notification of the coach. Language incidents or discriminatory acts should be reported to the Member Organization's President and/or Risk Manager.



Guidance for Referees

I. Addressing Derogatory Language or Discriminatory Actions on Matchday

If you heard derogatory language or witnessed discriminatory actions:

- Address the incident in accordance with IFAB Laws of the Game and event rules of competition. If necessary, pause the game to address the incident.

If a player or coach reports being subject to derogatory language or discriminatory actions, which you did not hear or witness directly:

- Pause the game at the next appropriate stoppage to address the alleged incident.
- Learn from the participant exactly what is alleged and determine if it is a situation that warrants immediate attention. Be sure to get a description using specific language (e.g. exact word states as well as actions/language used).
- If it does not warrant immediate attention, take notes of the allegation so it can be reported post-game (see Reporting).
- If it does warrant immediate attention, temporarily suspend the game so that the incident can be addressed immediately.

II. Addressing the Allegation

The referee will gather coaches from both teams and at least one of the other referee or club official as a witness to discuss the allegation.

The coach communicating the allegation explains the situation fully to the center referee and the opposing coach. Describe the allegation utilizing the following:

- Use exact words.
- Describe actions/language.
- Convey objective details as opposed to subjective interpretations.

III. Subsequent Steps

If the allegation is confirmed, the coach should consider immediately removing the individual(s) responsible in accordance with the Member Organization, league, or event guidelines.

If the allegation is not confirmed, document the incident for potential future action.

Whether the allegation is confirmed or not, the center referee will decide to resume or abandon the match based on the safety of the environment.

IV. Reporting

The referee should notify the Referee assignor of the incident and submit an incident report (Supplemental Report) within 24 hours detailing the allegation and, if applicable, actions taken.

If applicable, Assistant Referees should provide statements for the incident.

