



GNWSA Zero-Tolerance Policy

This policy applies to all participants and attendees of GNWSA events and will be enforced at all facilities where GNWSA operations are being conducted. This policy is in addition to existing governing documents, such as FIFA Laws of the Game, USSF policies, USYS policies, NTSSA bylaws and codes of conduct, NMCSL bylaws, GNWSA bylaws, and local laws, ordinances, and regulations.

The GNWSA Board of Directors is dedicated to ensuring a positive soccer experience for all attendees. Any concerns related to violations of the Zero Tolerance Policy should be reported to a GNWSA Board Member

CALL 9-1-1 IMMEDIATELY TO REPORT SERIOUS MEDICAL EMERGENCIES, CRIMES, VIOLENCE, OR DANGEROUS CONDITIONS.

The following actions are strictly prohibited at all GNWSA activities, and within the vicinity of playing fields and practice areas, by all participants and attendees:

1. Use of abusive, threatening, or obscene language
2. Violent actions, violent play, violent conduct, or fighting
3. Other disruptive behavior, including, but not limited to sarcasm, taunting, and harassment
4. Consuming or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal substances
5. Smoking or vaping

GNWSA Board members, field marshals, referees, and city employees are empowered to enforce this Zero-Tolerance Policy at all GNWSA activities and within the vicinity of playing fields and practice areas. Enforcing the policy may include ejecting participants and attendees, engaging local law enforcement, suspending GNWSA activities, or canceling GNWSA activities.

Feedback regarding referees may be sent to the GNWSA Director of Referees and GNWSA Referee Assignor. Feedback should ideally come from the coach and be constructive in nature. Reports of misconduct by an official should be sent directly to North Texas State Soccer Association.

Coaches are responsible to monitor, report, and address concerns arising from spectator behavior at matches and practices. Referees will report inappropriate spectator behavior at matches to coaches. Coaches are responsible to support the referees by taking action to control spectator behavior and may face sanctions for spectator behavior or for failing to support the referee crew. Coaches should inform GNWSA Board members of concerns with spectator behavior at practices.



NON-PARTICIPANT ATTENDEES (PARENTS, SPECTATORS, and GUESTS)

The following applies to all non-participant attendees before, during, and after matches, or during practices:

MUST

1. Observe from designated areas only, and at least 5 feet from playing fields
2. Demonstrate sportsmanship to all participants and attendees
3. Cheer positively or remain silent
4. Ensure guests understand and follow expectations

MUST NOT

1. Enter the field for any reason, even during an injury stoppage
2. Coach participants or give audible instructions, including to players from either team, coaches from either team, or referee crews
3. Make negative, critical, or derogatory comments to referees, players from either team, coaches from either team, or spectators from either team
4. Participate in conflict escalation
5. Return to the premises of an event (within sight or sound range) after being sent off or ejected
6. Use noisemakers of any kind, including, but not limited to devices that generate or amplify noise, bells, whistles, vuvuzelas, air horns, clappers, musical instruments, drums, megaphones, bullhorns, speakers, stereos, boomboxes, public address systems, microphones, or in any way create an auditory distraction or nuisance
7. Engage the referee verbally before, during, or after the match in the following manners:
 - a. Persistently addressing the referee crew
 - b. Disputing calls during or after matches
 - c. Advising referee crew to watch certain players or attend to rough play
 - d. Yelling at the referee crew EVER, including criticism, sarcasm, harassment, intimidation, discriminatory comments, or negative feedback of any kind

EXCEPTIONS

1. Spectators may respond if a referee initiates a conversation or asks a question
2. Spectators may point out emergency or safety issues, such as an injured player on the field or observed lightning
3. Spectators are always welcome to thank the referee after the game
4. Parents / guardians may enter the field to initiate aid in the unlikely event of a severe or life-threatening injury requiring emergency medical response for immediate care and transport



TEAM OFFICIALS (COACHES, ASSISTANT COACHES, and TEAM MANAGERS)

The following applies to all team officials before, during, and after matches and practices:

MUST

1. Maintain high standards of conduct for self, other team officials, players, and spectators
2. Be a positive role model, especially for spectators, youth players, and youth referees
3. Show respect to referees and opponents
4. Support great effort, great skill, and great play from both teams
5. Demonstrate sportsmanship to all participants and attendees
6. Remain in technical area during game, even if it is not visibly marked
7. Present required documents and credentials during pregame check-in
8. Manage spectator behavior, including:
 - a. Communicate expected behaviors in advance
 - b. Proactively address negative spectator behavior
 - c. Cooperate with referees and other officials to address negative spectator behavior, including ejections
 - d. Identify spectators to referees and other officials as requested
 - e. Enforce spectator suspensions in support of league sanctions
9. Ensure youth participants are protected from Safe Sport violations, including players from both teams and youth referees

MUST NOT

1. Enter the field for any reason, even during an injury stoppage, unless invited by the referee
2. Enter the opposing team's technical area
3. Make negative, critical, or derogatory comments or gestures to referees, players from either team, coaches from either team, or spectators from either team
4. Interact with players or coaches from either team in a way that is perceived as negative, hostile, or unsporting
5. Participate in conflict escalation
6. Dissent to calls made by referees
7. Return to the premises of an event (within sight or sound range) after being sent off or ejected
8. Address the referee during the game, except to:
 - a. Make substitutions
 - b. Respond to a referee who has asked a question or initiated a conversation
 - c. Point out emergency or safety concerns
 - d. Ask the referee to repeat a call
 - e. Ask the referee for the remaining time in the half

EXCEPTIONS

A head coach may, without entering the field, politely ask if the referee is willing to answer a question at halftime or after a game. The referee has the right to decline or disengage at any time. The ensuing exchange must be courteous, brief, and limited to seeking understanding of a law or decision made. There is no forum for debate, discourse, antagonism, sarcasm, harassment, intimidation, or other violations of this Zero-Tolerance Policy. The Laws of the Game require sending off (red card) of any team official who enters the field of play to confront a referee, including at halftime and after a game.



PLAYERS

Player behavior, including interactions with referee crews, other players, coaches, and spectators, are primarily governed by FIFA Laws of the Game and are enforced by the referee crew. FIFA Laws of the Game include prescribed sanctions during the match. Referees should record incidents on the game report or by submitting a supplemental referee report. Additional sanctions may be imposed through the Appeals & Discipline processes outlined by NTSSA, NMCSL, and GNWSA.

Violations of this policy that are not directly observed by the referee crew may be addressed by GNWSA Board members, field marshals, or city officials. Depending on severity, the issue may be addressed after the game, at a natural pause in play, or immediately. When possible, deference to referee crew should be given and disruptions to games should be minimized. Response to violations may include ejection of the player from the facility, engagement of law enforcement, suspending GNWSA activities, or canceling GNWSA activities. Referees should document violations and enforcements of the zero-tolerance policy that effect the game or participants.



SANCTIONS

Violations of the Zero-Tolerance Policy may result in immediate sanctions, follow-up sanctions, or both. GNWSA may independently impose sanctions for violations which are separately addressed by other governing bodies. GNWSA reserves the right to determine the eligibility of all participants, including coaches and players, for any reason not restricted by law. GNWSA reserves the right to determine attendees are unwelcome at GNWSA activities and may seek assistance from team officials, city officials, and law enforcement as necessary to enforce such bans.

DURING A GAME

Officials responding to Zero-Tolerance violations during a game may utilize any of the following actions, depending on severity:

1. Warning of individual or directing coach to warn individual
2. Ejection of individual or directing coach to eject individual
3. Sanctioning of coach (warning, caution, or send off) for
 - a. Coach behavior
 - b. Behavior of spectators
 - c. Coach failing to effectively cooperate with referees and other officials to address spectator behavior when directed
4. Calling law enforcement
5. Ejection of all spectators from one team
6. Ejection of all spectators from both teams
7. Suspending game temporarily to
 - a. Address concerns or direct coach to address concerns
 - b. Allow mood of participants or attendees to settle
 - c. Summon field marshal
 - d. Wait for ejected persons to leave premises
 - e. Wait for law enforcement
8. Abandon game
 - a. Referee should document all factors relating to decision to abandon game for follow up with competition committee to determine possible outcomes (example: reschedule, accept score as-is, determine forfeit by one side)
 - b. Game will be automatically abandoned if
 - i. Last remaining rostered coach / team official in attendance is sent off or ejected
 - ii. Player send-off / ejection leaves team below minimum roster
9. Cancel all GNWSA activities at the facility



AT ANY TIME

Sanctions for Zero-Tolerance Policy violations may be imposed at any time, including (i) violations observed but not addressed during a game and (ii) additional sanctions for violations previously addressed during a game.

The following entities may impose sanctions for Zero-Tolerance Policy violations:

1. **Coach** may implement player discipline through reduced playing time. Decisions must be in coordination with GNWSA Commissioner and player's parents, and must follow all other guidelines
2. **Appeals & Discipline** Process as overseen by
 - a. GNWSA
 - b. Northern Mid-Cities Soccer League
 - c. North Texas State Soccer Association
3. **Executive Board** from
 - a. GNWSA
 - b. Northern Mid-cities Soccer League
 - c. North Texas State Soccer Association
4. **Competition Committee** from
 - a. GNWSA
 - b. Northern Mid-Cities Soccer League
5. **Law enforcement**

Sanctions may include, but are not limited to:

Sanctions Against Coach

- Forfeiture of games, especially when actions led to abandonment of match
- Probation for a number of games or duration of time
- Suspension for a number of games or duration of time
- Required training
- Requirement to sign behavioral agreement
- Ineligibility to return as coach
- Ineligibility of child to participate in GNWSA program
- Referral to law enforcement

Sanctions Against Player

- Forfeiture of games, especially when actions led to abandonment of match
- Probation for a number of games or duration of time
- Suspension for a number of games or duration of time
- Ineligibility to participate in GNWSA program
- Referral to law enforcement



Sanctions Against Team

- Forfeiture of games, especially when actions led to abandonment of match
- Probation for a number of games or duration of time
- Suspension for a number of games or duration of time
- Dissolution of team
- Ineligibility of players and/or coaches to participate in GNWSA program

Sanctions Against Non-Participant Attendee

- Requirement to sign behavioral agreement
- Suspension from attending GNWSA activities for a number of games or duration of time
- Ban from attending GNWSA activities
- Ineligibility for child / player to participate in GNWSA program
- Referral to law enforcement



Glossary

Appeals & Discipline Committee: impartial panel organized to review complaints or reports of misbehavior by any participant or non-participant attendee of an official event

Appeals & Discipline Process: outlined in NTSSA and GNWSA bylaws

Board member: elected members of the Board of Directors as well as volunteer or paid contractors acting at the behest of the Board of Directors

City official: elected persons or staff from the city that owns or operates a facility

Competition Committee: impartial ad hoc committee comprised of the Appeals & Discipline Director, members of the Board, or members of the Association or League organized to review and decide disputed game outcomes, especially when a game is abandoned

Executive Board: subset of Board members defined by bylaws

Field marshal: Board member, volunteer, or paid contractor tasked by the Association or League to oversee a facility during event

GNWSA: Greater Northwest Soccer Association

NMCSL: Northern Mid-Cities Soccer League

Non-Participant Attendee: all persons present at an Association event that do not meet the definition of “participant,” including parents, guardians, spectators, and guests

NTSSA: North Texas State Soccer Association

Participant: players, team officials, and referees

Team official: actively rostered coaches and team managers