



U.S. Soccer - Severity of Verbal, Physical, or Sexual Misconduct Matrices

Updated August 2024

Overview

- Misconduct matrices are to be used as a guide and framework for categorizing misconduct and determining next steps and appropriate discipline
- Matrices act as a sliding scale, rather than definitive categories of misconduct; when in doubt, err on the side of caution and escalate to the higher tier
- Misconduct matrices are not explicit penal codes
- Matrices provide a non-exhaustive list of examples of misconduct; instances of abuse may exist that are not detailed in these matrices
- For any discipline resulting in a temporary suspension or a permanent expulsion of an individual’s ability to participate in soccer, a formal appeals process must be offered
- Context and details surrounding instances of misconduct are important and may aggravate or mitigate severity of incident; therefore, the disciplining body should review aggravating and mitigating factors for proper assessment and response
- When possible, all organizations should strive to document reports of misconduct and their resulting response
- For the purposes of these matrices, any reference to the Member Organization extends to its associated clubs and leagues

Aggravating or compounding factors that may result in a higher tier of misconduct or more significant discipline

- The victim is a minor
- The victim is in a vulnerable group
- The perpetrator has a history of prior misconduct
- The misconduct was repeated, or there were multiple instances of misconduct
- There were multiple victims of the offending perpetrator
- The harm caused by the misconduct was exceptionally severe (e.g., needing medical attention)
- The perpetrator used excessive force, violence, or aggression
- The misconduct included persistent harassment or grooming
- The likelihood or potential for repeated misconduct is high
- The perpetrator was in a position of power
- The perpetrator used manipulation or coercion to exploit the victim
- The act of abuse was filmed or documented by the perpetrator
- Details regarding the abuse were disseminated to a broader audience

Mitigating factors that may result in a lower tier of misconduct or less significant discipline

- The misconduct was an accident, unintentional, or committed in error
- The perpetrator has self-reported the misconduct and willingly accepted discipline and rehabilitation
- The perpetrator was responding to an emergency situation

Verbal Misconduct Matrix

VERBAL	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
Misconduct Examples <i>Non-exhaustive</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minor and brief incident of targeted yelling that is not providing constructive criticism or encouragement • Instance of targeted blaming • Instance of targeted humiliating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent berating • Multiple instances of targeted yelling / singling out an individual • Verbal manipulation to control individual’s actions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent verbal harassment as detailed in Tier-2, spanning the duration of a season, multiple seasons, or years • Frequent threats of severe physical or sexual abuse that

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instance of condescension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal threats of physical abuse resulting in consistent fear • Abusive, derogatory language • Threats of retaliation for reporting misconduct • Discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, disability, sex, and sexual orientation 	<p>put the player in immediate danger or harm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overt and frequent discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, disability, sex, and sexual orientation
Reporting	<p><u>Victim is an adult:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to member organization <p><u>Victim is a minor:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to member organization 	<p><u>Victim is an adult:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to member organization • Report to the Center <p><u>Victim is a minor:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to member organization • Evaluate whether allegations require a report to law enforcement or Center for SafeSport (child abuse) • Report retaliation to the Center for SafeSport 	<p><u>Victim is an adult:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to member organization <p><u>Victim is a minor:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to Center for SafeSport • Report to U.S. Soccer's Safeguarding Team • Report to law enforcement and any other state agency as required by state law
Jurisdiction & Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member organization is responsible for investigating the report and determining adequate discipline in a timely fashion • Member organization communicates status of investigation to victim • When discipline affects a Safe Soccer Clearance, U.S. Soccer is notified of resulting decision via member submission to U.S. Soccer's Safeguarding Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member organization is responsible for investigating the report and determining adequate discipline in a timely fashion • Member organization communicates status of investigation to victim • When discipline affects a Safe Soccer Clearance, U.S. Soccer is notified of resulting decision via member submission to U.S. Soccer's Safeguarding Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For minors, Center for SafeSport <u>may</u> exercise jurisdiction, but it is likely to be pushed back to member organization for investigation • For adults, member organization is responsible for investigating the report and determining adequate discipline in a timely fashion • In parallel, U.S. Soccer will take the steps deemed necessary to ensure player safety is upheld • Member organization communicates status of investigation to victim • When discipline affects a Safe Soccer Clearance, U.S. Soccer is notified of resulting decision via member submission to U.S. Soccer's Safeguarding Team
Suggested Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reprimand, review, and educate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Probation / Temporary suspension • Temporary removal of Safe Soccer Clearance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expulsion • Permanent removal of Safe Soccer Clearance

Physical Misconduct Matrix

PHYSICAL	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
<p>Misconduct Examples <i>Non-exhaustive</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Singular incident of unwarranted physical touch not explicitly sexual in nature (e.g., grabbing an arm) Single instance of physical intimidation using actions or gestures to elicit fear Single instance of destruction of property not directed at a person (e.g., throwing or kicking equipment) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequent instances of destruction of property not directed at a person (e.g., throwing or kicking equipment) Instance of destruction of property directed at a person (e.g., throwing equipment at a player) Preventing victim from calling for help Prescribed dieting or other weight-control methods Encouraging a player to return to play prematurely from injury Isolating a player Forcing an athlete to assume a painful stance or position for no athletic purpose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Battery Any physical assault of a minor Physical assault resulting in hospital visit Any display or threat of use of a weapon for physical harm Overt child neglect Consistent and intentional withholding of adequate hydration, nutrition, medical attention, or sleep Encouraging of forcing doping
<p>Reporting</p>	<p><u>Victim is an adult:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report to member organization <p><u>Victim is a minor:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report to member organization 	<p><u>Victim is an adult:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report to member organization <p><u>Victim is a minor:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report to Center for SafeSport Report to U.S. Soccer’s Safeguarding Team Report to law enforcement/other agencies as required by state law 	<p><u>Victim is an adult:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report to member organization <p><u>Victim is a minor:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report to Center for SafeSport Report to U.S. Soccer’s Safeguarding Team Report to law enforcement/other agencies as required by state law
<p>Jurisdiction & Response</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member organization is responsible for investigating the report and determining adequate discipline in a timely fashion Member organization communicates status of investigation to victim When discipline affects a Safe Soccer Clearance, U.S. Soccer is notified of resulting decision via member submission to U.S. Soccer’s Safeguarding Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For minors, Center for SafeSport <u>may</u> exercise jurisdiction, but it is likely to be pushed back to member organization for investigation For adults, member organization is responsible for investigating the report and determining adequate discipline in a timely fashion In parallel, U.S. Soccer will take the steps deemed necessary to ensure player safety is upheld Member organization communicates status of investigation to victim When discipline affects a Safe Soccer Clearance, U.S. Soccer is notified of resulting decision via member submission to U.S. Soccer’s Safeguarding Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For minors, Center for SafeSport <u>may</u> exercise jurisdiction, but it is likely to be pushed back to member organization for investigation For adults, member organization is responsible for investigating the report and determining adequate discipline in a timely fashion In parallel, U.S. Soccer will take the steps deemed necessary to ensure player safety is upheld Member organization communicates status of investigation to victim When discipline affects a Safe Soccer Clearance, U.S. Soccer is notified of resulting decision via member submission to U.S. Soccer’s Safeguarding Team
<p>Suggested Discipline</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reprimand, review, and educate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Probation / Temporary suspension Temporary removal of Safe Soccer Clearance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expulsion Permanent removal of Safe Soccer Clearance

Sexual Misconduct Matrix

SEXUAL	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
Misconduct Examples <i>Non-exhaustive</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Singular sexual innuendo, remark, joke, question Viewing or engaging in a sexual behavior without attempts to shield others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repeated sexual innuendos, remarks, jokes, questions Any type of communication that is sexual in nature, but not including indecent exposure Repeated unsolicited contact Unsolicited visits to player's home, business, class, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forcible sexual offense Rape (including statutory rape) Indecent exposure Fondling of private areas such as breasts, groin, genitals or buttocks Masturbating in front of the victim, or asking to watch while victim masturbates Non-consensual sharing of sexual activity or nudity Collecting, viewing, or distributing child pornography Any instance of offering to trade a benefit for a sexual behavior Knowingly exposing another individual to a STD Prostituting another person
Reporting	<u>Victim is an adult:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report to member organization <u>Victim is a minor:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report to Center for SafeSport Report to U.S. Soccer's Safeguarding Team 	<u>Victim is an adult:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report to Center for SafeSport Report to U.S. Soccer's Safeguarding Team <u>Victim is a minor:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report to Center for SafeSport Report to U.S. Soccer's Safeguarding Team Report to local law enforcement/other agencies as required by state law 	<u>Victim is an adult:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report to Center for SafeSport Report to U.S. Soccer's Safeguarding Team <u>Victim is a minor:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report to Center for SafeSport Report to U.S. Soccer's Safeguarding Team Report to law enforcement/other agencies as required by state law
Jurisdiction & Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For minors, Center for SafeSport exercises jurisdiction and investigates For adults, member organization is responsible for investigating the report and determining adequate discipline Center to communicate status of investigation to minor victims Member organization communicates status of investigation to adult victims When discipline affects a Safe Soccer Clearance, U.S. Soccer is notified of resulting decision via member submission to U.S. Soccer's Safeguarding Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Center for SafeSport exercises jurisdiction and investigates In parallel, U.S. Soccer will take the steps deemed necessary to ensure player safety is upheld during and after Center investigation Center to communicate status of investigation to victim 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Center for SafeSport exercises jurisdiction and investigates In parallel, U.S. Soccer will take the steps deemed necessary to ensure player safety is upheld during and after Center investigation Center to communicate status of investigation to victim
Suggested Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reprimand, review, and educate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Probation / Temporary suspension Temporary removal of Safe Soccer Clearance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expulsion Permanent removal of Safe Soccer Clearance

Other Misconduct Matrix

OTHER	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
<p>Misconduct Examples <i>Non-exhaustive</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent pattern of unexpected tardiness or absence to practice, matches, or team-sanctioned events • Singular instance of a legal adult being under the influence during a team event and in the presence of minors • Instance of unwarranted retaliation whereas the punishment is not abusive in nature (e.g., cutting playing time) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Misdemeanor criminal offenses not resulting in jail time • Possession of legal drugs not prescribed by a physician • Failure to complete proper Safe Soccer education • Refusal to complete appropriate background screening • Multiple instances of alcohol abuse • Withholding or impeding in the medical care and safety of a player • Making intentionally false or inaccurate statements in a misconduct investigation or inquiry in an attempt to cover-up an incident • Providing alcohol to a player under the legal drinking age (if player is under 21, this should be reported to the Center) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Felony criminal offenses • Exposing players to dangerous materials such as illegal weapons, hard drugs, or chemicals • Exposing players to gang activity • Providing or forcing use of illegal or non-prescribed drugs • Forcing alcohol consumption
<p>Reporting</p>	<p><u>Victim is an adult:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to member organization <p><u>Victim is a minor:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to member organization 	<p><u>Victim is an adult:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to member organization <p><u>Victim is a minor:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to member organization 	<p><u>Victim is an adult:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to member organization <p><u>Victim is a minor:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to Center for SafeSport • Report to U.S. Soccer’s Safeguarding Team • Report to law enforcement/other agencies as required by state law
<p>Jurisdiction & Response</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member organization is responsible for investigating the report and determining adequate discipline in a timely fashion • Member organization communicates status of investigation to victim • When discipline affects a Safe Soccer Clearance, U.S. Soccer is notified of resulting decision via member submission to U.S. Soccer’s Safeguarding Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member organization is responsible for investigating the report and determining adequate discipline in a timely fashion • Member organization communicates status of investigation to victim • When discipline affects a Safe Soccer Clearance, U.S. Soccer is notified of resulting decision via member submission to U.S. Soccer’s Safeguarding Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For minors, Center for SafeSport exercises jurisdiction and investigates • In parallel, U.S. Soccer will take the steps deemed necessary to ensure player safety is upheld • For adults, member organization is responsible for investigating the report and determining adequate discipline • Center to communicate status of investigation to minor victims • Member organization communicates status of investigation to adult victims • When discipline affects a Safe Soccer Clearance, U.S. Soccer is notified of resulting decision via member submission to U.S. Soccer’s Safeguarding Team

Suggested Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reprimand, review, and educate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Probation / Temporary suspension• Temporary removal of Safe Soccer Clearance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expulsion• Permanent removal of Safe Soccer Clearance
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