



# **WATERTOWN FAMILY YMCA**

## **2025 PENALTY SUMMARY ADULT & YOUTH SOCCER REFEREE ABUSE PREVENTION**

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# **RESPECT THE CALL**



Content includes guidelines sourced from USA Soccer's "Respect the Call" initiative, promoting sportsmanship, fair play, and respect for referees at every level of the game.

# **RESPECT THE CALL**

## **PROTECTING OUR REFEREES**

At Watertown Family YMCA we build character through caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility.

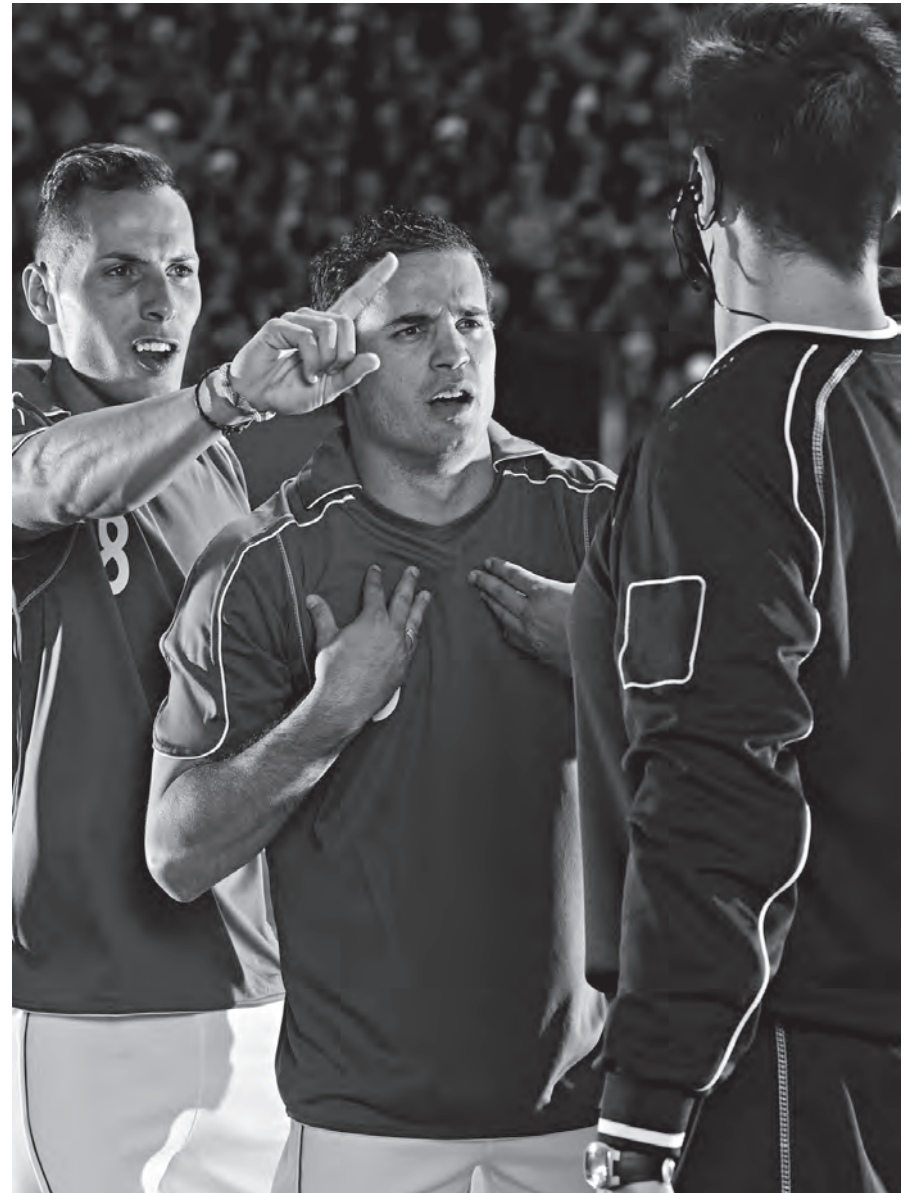
Referees make Y sports possible—and they deserve a safe, positive environment, whether in our facilities, outside the buildings, online, or anywhere our community connects. Let's show respect, support, and gratitude for the people who make the game happen before, during, and after the game.

We're on the same team. Win, lose, or draw, model the behavior we all deserve.

The call stands. Yelling at officials doesn't change the play—and it hurts everyone.

Keep it positive. Referee abuse risks emotional and physical harm and threatens the future of the sport.

Thank you for doing your part to keep soccer at Watertown Family YMCA safe, welcoming, and fun for all.





## **RESPECT THE CALL PROTECTING OUR REFEREES**

### **CAREFULLY READ THIS PENALTY OVERVIEW**

By the end of this guide, you will fully understand the updated policy and the consequences for abuse.

### **SHARE POLICY INFORMATION WITH YOUR SOCCER COMMUNITY**

Support our referees by sharing policy information with your players, coaches, teams, and leagues. We need your help to raise awareness!

### **ONCE THE POLICY TAKES EFFECT, DO YOUR PART BY REPORTING REFEREE ABUSE**

The penalty framework in the new policy only takes effect after abuse is reported. Do your part to protect referees by reporting abuse and encouraging your community to do the same. Please follow your current reporting structure.

**Thank you for your support!**



# PENALTY REVIEW GUIDELINES

Applies to players, coaches, and spectators

NON-PHYSICAL	Youth Minimum Suspension	Adult Minimum Suspension	Card
Insulting, Belittling, Insinuating or Taunting Behavior. Undermining	0-1 Game *	0-2 Games*	Yellow or Red
Harassment Intimidation, Retaliation, Abusive, or Threatening (Non-Physical) Language	1 Game *	2 Games*	Red
Aggression Attacking Derogatory, Cyberbullying, Doxing or Threatening/Physical/Violence/Language	1 Month*	1 Month*	Red
Offensive or Discriminatory Act	1 Month*	1 Month*	Red
PHYSICAL	Youth Minimum Suspension	Adult Minimum Suspension	Card
Minor or Slight Deliberate Touching	1 Game *	2 Games*	Red
Pushing Grabbing, Pulling, Squeezing, Pinching, Lightly Slapping, Use of Object in Non Striking Manner, or Physical Property Damage	1 Month*	1 Month*	Red
Hitting, Punching, Elbowing, Kicking, Biting, Spiting, Choking, Tackling, Throwing use of Object or Any part of Body (forearm, Knee, Head) in a Striking Manner.	1 Month*	1 Month*	Red

\* An administrated review will be conducted for all red cards to determine the length of suspension.

# NON-PHYSICAL ABUSE

Contact doesn't have to be made for damage to occur. Non-physical abuse – hurtful language and aggressive behavior – has no place in our game. It disrupts matches, interferes with the referee's ability to do their job, and it hurts the game for everyone. Left unchecked, non-physical abuse takes an emotional toll and has the potential to escalate into physically dangerous situations. The updated policy is designed to eliminate this behavior.

## LEVEL 1: VERBAL TAUNTING

### PENALTY:

**DEFINITION:** Insulting, belittling, insinuating or taunting behavior undermining referee authority.

### EXAMPLES

- Questioning Competence: "Do you even know the rules?"
- Mocking Appearance or Abilities: "Did you forget your glasses?"
- Accusations of Bias: "What's the other team paying you?"
- Dismissive Language: "You suck."
- Aggressive Tone: "You're the worst ref we've ever had."

### RECOMMENDED APPROACH

If you have concerns about a call, respectfully ask the referee for clarification. Share your perspective calmly, avoiding yelling, insults, or offensive gestures.



**LEVEL 2: HARASSMENT/INTIMIDATION:** Occurs when language or body language is intended to make a referee feel unsafe but where the threat of violence remains unspoken.

**PENALTY:**

**DEFINITION:** Harassment, intimidation, retaliation, abusive or threatening (non-physical) language.

**EXAMPLES**

- Using Expletives: "That call was complete \$#&@!"
- Personal Attacks: "You're a ^\$%@ joke!"
- Escalating Intensity: "You can't make a single good ^\$#@% call!"
- Getting In The Referee's Face.



**RECOMMENDED APPROACH**

Take a moment to gather yourself before you speak to the referee. Ask for clarification calmly, aiming for constructive communication rather than causing conflict.



**LEVEL 3: THREATS/DEROGATORY LANGUAGE:** When aggressive language or threats of violence enter the mix – or when abuse spills online.

**PENALTY:**

**DEFINITION:** Aggression, Attacking, Derogatory, Cyberbullying, Doxing, or Threatening (Physical / Violence) Language.

**EXAMPLES**

- Threatening to inflict harm on a referee:
  - “You’re gonna pay for that!”
  - “I’ll see you in the parking lot”
  - “I’m going to shove that card down your throat!”
  - “You better watch your back!”
- Public attacks online such as uploading a post to social media attacking the referee.



**RECOMMENDED APPROACH**

When you feel frustrated by a referee’s call, take a moment to pause and breathe. Reflect on how your reaction impacts your experience and the overall atmosphere of the game for everyone involved.

## LEVEL 4: OFFENSIVE OR DISCRIMINATORY ACT

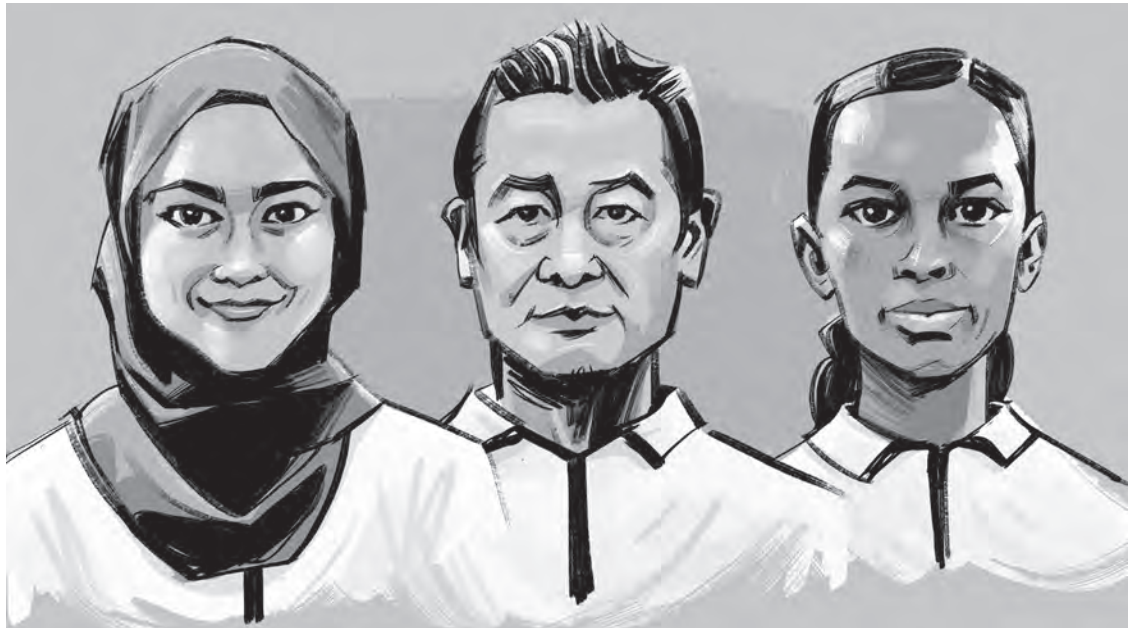
Discrimination – attacking referees for who they are, or offending their dignity – will not be tolerated.

### PENALTY:

**DEFINITION:** Discriminatory or derogatory words or actions on account of race, skin color, ethnicity, nationality, social origin, gender, disability, sexual orientation, language, or religion.

### EXAMPLES

- Racial or ethnic slurs.
- Offensive gestures.
- Homophobic language.
- Using harmful or sexist stereotypes.



### RECOMMENDED APPROACH

Remember that soccer is for everyone. We're all human, and everybody deserves the opportunity to enjoy the game without being made to feel bad about who they are.



# PHYSICAL ABUSE

Any unwanted physical contact is considered physical abuse and makes the game unsafe for everyone. It's easy to avoid. Outside of friendly handshakes, there's never a reason to touch the referee. Physical violence can also result in criminal charges, lawsuits, or medical liability.

## LEVEL 1: MINOR OR SLIGHT TOUCHING

Even minor deliberate touches can be unwanted and make referees feel unsafe and are considered physical abuse.

### PENALTY:

**DEFINITION:** Minor or Slight Deliberate Touching.

### EXAMPLES

- Tapping the referee's shoulder to get their attention.
- Touching the referee's chest with your finger.
- Grabbing the referee's jersey to get their attention.
- Intentionally bumping lightly into the referee.



### RECOMMENDED APPROACH

Respectfully get the referee's attention without touching them – and, even in the heat of the moment, make a conscious effort to keep your hands to yourself.

## **LEVEL 2: INTENTIONAL CONFRONTATION**

Escalation of using contact to intimidate or provoke a physical confrontation – or causing damage to property – without the intent to cause bodily harm.

### **PENALTY:**

**DEFINITION:** Pushing, Grabbing, Pulling, Squeezing, Pinching, Lightly Slapping, Use of Object in Non-Striking Manner, or Physical Property Damage

### **EXAMPLES**

- Shoving the referee.
- Forcefully grabbing the referee's arm.
- Throwing a water bottle at the ground in front of the referee.
- Dumping the referee's bag into a trashcan.
- Aggressively grabbing the referee's jersey.
- Following the referee to the parking lot or to their car.



### **RECOMMENDED APPROACH**

Understand that this behavior not only won't change the outcome on the field, it will keep you out of the game for a long time. Channel that energy to drive better on-field performance. Remove yourself from the situation if you need to calm down.

### **LEVEL 3: VIOLENT CONTACT**

Malicious, violent contact intended to cause bodily harm — this is considered assault and can result in criminal punishment, legal suits, and medical liability.

#### **PENALTY:**

**DEFINITION:** Hitting, Punching, Elbowing, Kicking, Biting, Spitting, Choking, Tackling, Throwing or Use of Object or Any Part of Body (Forearm, Knee, Head) in a Striking Manner

#### **EXAMPLES**

- Kicking the referee's shin.
- Throwing a punch at the referee.
- Placing hands on the neck to choke the referee.
- Throwing a water bottle with intent to hit the referee.
- Intentionally kicking the ball at the referee.



#### **RECOMMENDED APPROACH**

Before physical abuse ever escalates to this level, there are plenty of opportunities to choose another course of action. Remove yourself from the situation and give yourself time for your anger to defuse before doing something with serious long-term consequences.

# ABUSE REPORTING PROCESS

- Determine what does and doesn't constitute abuse – as well as the definitions for the different categories of abuse.
- Submit written reports of the abuse within 48 hours of the incident if possible.  
Include the following:
  - Match details, including team information, age group, score, and date.
  - Detailed description of the incident and the behavior that constitutes abuse.
  - Unedited audio or video clips if available.
- The Watertown Family YMCA incident review will include:
  - Review of all documents, exhibits, and other evidence in the case.
  - Copies of all rules, procedures, and bylaws used to support the charges.
  - Notice of charges provided to the individual for review.