

GEORGIA SOCCER POLICY ON HARASSMENT AND ABUSE AND MOLESTATION OF PARTICIPANTS AND NON-PARTICIPANTS

I. GENERAL POLICY STATEMENT

It shall be the policy of Georgia State Soccer Association (Georgia Soccer), in accordance with “The Kidsafe Program”, that no participant or non-participant in any Georgia Soccer event or activity shall harass, abuse or molest any other participant or non-participant in any Georgia Soccer event or activity. This policy prohibits not only actions that are severe enough to be potentially unlawful but also conduct and comments that are not severe enough to violate state or federal law but that are still inappropriate conduct by participants or non-participants in any Georgia Soccer event or activity. Additionally, no participant shall, in any Georgia Soccer event or activity, harass, discriminate, or otherwise abuse, any other participant or non-participant based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age or disability.

Furthermore, no participant should imply or threaten that advances or request for sexual favors (or refusal thereof) will have any effect on an individual’s selection, advancement, or any other condition of participation in any Georgia Soccer program. All such conduct is strictly prohibited and will bring prompt and certain disciplinary action. No one has the authority to engage in this kind of unacceptable behavior, and Georgia Soccer will not tolerate it.

If a participant believes that he or she has been subjected to harassment or intimidation in violation of this policy, or a participant knows about it happening to others, the participant should, without fear of reprisal or retaliation, promptly report the incident following the reporting procedures described below.

Any form of child abuse, as defined by Georgia State law, including, but not limited to, child molestation, is prohibited by this policy. Reporting of child abuse and molestation is required by Georgia Law. Any instance must be reported as soon as practicable to Georgia Soccer.

Retaliation or reprisal is expressly prohibited in any form against anyone for filing a complaint in good faith under this policy or for assisting in the inquiry into a complaint.

Definitions for terms used in this policy can be found in Addendum A.

II. REPORTING PROCEDURES

1. A complaint by a victim or their representative, or a report by another person who is aware of a possible offense, is to be made to any onsite Georgia Soccer staff member who shall immediately contact the event manager. A person with knowledge of an incident having reasonable cause to believe that an illegal act has been committed by a participant or non-participant, or that the health, safety and welfare of participants is at risk is encouraged to report their concerns to law enforcement or child welfare services. Reports of criminal behavior or misconduct by a non-participant against a non-participant shall be reported to Georgia Soccer staff immediately and law enforcement if warranted.

a. If emergency action is required then the event manager shall have the authority to remove the accused from the event, or notify law enforcement if needed. Non-participant violating this policy shall be ejected from the event and if necessary, law enforcement notified.

b. The Georgia Soccer event manager will request a written statement of the incident from the victim as can be expected to disclose in a sensitive and private environment as soon as practicable. The Georgia

Soccer event manager shall maintain the original statement in strict security and confidentiality, and then deliver it directly to the Executive Director as soon as possible.

2. A verbal report of an alleged violation of this policy shall immediately be made by the Georgia Soccer event manager by phone to the Executive Director of Georgia Soccer relating all details of the incident.

a. The Executive Director will decide the next course of actions based on the report made to him from; no action is warranted, temporary suspension from the event or program to suspension until the matter is adjudicated. The Executive Director shall immediately advise the Georgia Soccer event manager of the action for them to take. The Executive Director shall be the point of contact with the appropriate law enforcement personnel as they investigate the report made to them.

b. Where a Georgia Soccer youth is involved in the incident, the Executive Director shall immediately notify their parents or guardians of the incident and any action taken. Confidentiality is critical and knowledge of an incident shall be limited to those involved in the incident, the parents or guardians and the authorities. All reasonable efforts should be made to maintain the anonymity of all participants in the incident. The accused and victim(s) shall not communicate or have contact with each other once the report is made to the Georgia Soccer Executive Director.

3. A stand still agreement may be offered to the accused by the Executive Director.

4. In the absence of a stand still agreement, the Executive Director shall collect all information and documents relative to the incident and prepare a case and forward it to the Special Panel Hearing Officer for disposition.

5. The Executive Director shall advise the President of Georgia Soccer of the necessary actions and the ongoing process concerning a pending allegation on a regular basis until the situation is fully resolved.

6. In any case where there appears to be possible involvement, or unavailability, of the Executive Director, the President of Georgia Soccer shall act in the capacity of the Executive Director. Should it appear that the President might also be involved, or unavailable, another member of the Board, who is designated by the Board as needed, will fill the position.

III. SPECIAL PANEL

A special panel shall be constituted by the Board of Directors of Georgia Soccer to hear each case of an alleged violation of this policy, using the following procedure:

1. The Executive Director shall make a nomination of a Presiding Hearing Officer of the Special Panel to the Board.

2. The Presiding Hearing Officer shall be appropriately trained as designated by the Risk Management Committee before or after appointment.

3. The Presiding Hearing Officer will determine and fill the special panel as dictated by the needs of each particular case and no hearing shall be conducted without a minimum of three panelists.

4. Sanctions applied to the accused Participant, if found guilty, may include, but are not limited to the following: warning, additional suspension not to exceed 12 months from original suspension date, or dismissal from the program.

IV. APPEAL PROCEDURES

The accused for whom a sanction has been rendered by the Special Panel may appeal the decision to the Board of Directors in accordance with current Georgia Soccer policy and practice. Otherwise the Special Panel decision is final. Once the decision is rendered, Georgia Soccer's appropriate staff will report the findings to the pertinent national bodies per the requirement of those national bodies.

ADDENDUM A: DEFINITIONS

1. "Georgia Soccer Staff member": a person employed or a volunteer of Georgia Soccer. This person can be a program or team staff member in authority of an event or group able to make decisions relative to this policy.
2. "Participant": any person(s) who are in any manner involved in the organization, operation, direction or support of a Georgia Soccer event, including but not limited to coaches, trainers, instructors, evaluators, administrators, chaperones, parents/guardians, field marshals, referees, volunteer support and players. Participant extends to visiting United States Soccer Federation (USSF) members (or guests of the USSF) in the event or activity, and event vendors where specified under contract as under control or jurisdiction of Georgia Soccer.
3. "Non-participant" is anyone who is not otherwise defined immediately above as a Participant.
4. Harassment, is defined as per Georgia State law, including, but not limited to, sexual harassment, more specifically includes definitions as follows:

 - a. Verbal harassment such as making graphic or degrading comments about an individual's body or personal characteristics, or using epithets, derogatory comments or slurs. Sexual advances, propositions of a sexual nature and vulgar talk or jokes are prohibited.
 - b. Physical harassment is an assault, unwanted touching, physical interference with normal work.
 - c. Visual harassment is the display of sexually oriented, sexually suggestive, or sexually explicit objects. Also, the display of sexually degrading or pornographic posters, pictures, cartoons, drawings, screen savers, other graphic materials of a sexual nature, or inappropriate gestures.
 - d. Written communications such as sending inappropriate jokes or comments in print or electronic form.
5. "Child" is defined under Georgia Law as a person less than eighteen (18) years of age
6. "Child molestation" is defined under Georgia Law and can include without limitation the following:
 - a. Any immoral or indecent act by a person to, or in the presence of, any child with the intent to arouse or satisfy the sexual desire of either the child or the person.
 - b. By means of an electronic device, transmission of images of a person engaging in, inducing, or otherwise participating in any immoral or indecent act to a child with the intent to arouse or satisfy the sexual desire of either the child or the person.