



# REPORTING DEROGATORY LANGUAGE OR DISCRIMINATORY ACTION INCIDENTS

**GUIDANCE FOR**  
**REFEREES,**  
**COACHES,**  
**PLAYERS, &**  
**SPECTATORS**

*October 13, 2025*



# REPORTING DEROGATORY LANGUAGE OR DISCRIMINATORY ACTION INCIDENTS



## GUIDANCE FOR REFEREES

There is zero-tolerance for discrimination or harassment against anyone based on race, color, religion, veteran status, disability, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or national origin.

### WHAT DO YOU DO IF...

#### 1. YOU HEARD DEROGATORY LANGUAGE OR OBSERVED DISCRIMINATORY ACTIONS.

- a. Stop the game.
- b. If you know who used the language or displayed the discriminatory action, isolate the player and assess the appropriate misconduct.
  - i. If a send-off is required, ensure the player follows the league's protocol for leaving the field.
- c. If you don't know who used the language, separate players, listening as they speak, consult your ARs.
- d. Address the incident with both coaches (see below in "[Addressing the Allegation](#)") with what was said and/or action performed and take that opportunity to write it down yourself so you have it for when you write up your official report.
- e. If safe to continue, the game may be resumed at the referee's discretion,

#### 2. A PLAYER REPORTS BEING SUBJECT TO OR WITNESSING DEROGATORY LANGUAGE OR DISCRIMINATORY ACTIONS, WHICH YOU DID NOT WITNESS DIRECTLY.

- a. Stop the game.
- b. Demonstrate support for the player and advise that you will address it immediately.
- c. 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 words stated as well as actions/language used).
  - i. If it doesn't meet the criteria for the zero-tolerance policy described language, show compassion to the player that you will listen for anything worse said, and if the allegation is against a player who you have not already spoken to, speak to them at the next stoppage that they're earning negative attention and to be careful.
  - ii. If it does meet the criteria for the zero-tolerance policy described language, stop the game, separate players, take notes, check with ARs, address the allegations with both coaches (see below in "[Addressing the Allegation](#)"), and issue any appropriate misconduct.
- d. Be sure to include in your report (see "[Post-Game Actions](#)"). If safe to do so, the game may be resumed at the referee's discretion.



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### 3. A COACH OR SPECTATOR REPORTS BEING SUBJECT TO OR WITNESSING DEROGATORY LANGUAGE OR DISCRIMINATORY ACTIONS, WHICH YOU DID NOT WITNESS DIRECTLY.

- a. Spectators should engage the coach for the team they are supporting regarding any allegations of derogatory language or discriminatory actions. If the coach has not already been engaged, stop the game and engage the appropriate coach with the spectator.
- b. Learn from the coach 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 words stated as well as actions/language used).
  - i. If it doesn't meet the criteria for the zero-tolerance policy described language or action, show compassion to the player that you will listen for anything worse said, and if the allegation is against a player who you have not already spoken to, speak to them at next stoppage that they're earning negative attention and to be careful.
  - ii. If it does meet the criteria for the zero-tolerance policy described language or action [as stated above in #1](#), stop the game, separate players, take notes, check with ARs, address the allegations with both coaches (see below in "Addressing the Allegation"), and issue any appropriate misconduct.
- c. Be sure to include in your report (see "[Post-Game Actions](#)"). If safe to do so, the game may be resumed at the referee's discretion.

### ADDRESSING THE ALLEGATION...

1. The referee will gather the head coaches from both teams and at least one of the assistant referees as a witness to discuss the allegation.
2. The referee communicating the allegation explains the situation fully to both head coaches.
3. Describe the allegation by:
  - a. Utilizing exact words,
  - b. Describing actions and language used,
  - c. Conveying objective details as opposed to subjective interpretations.

### OUTCOMES

1. If the allegation is heard by the referee, the referee issues a send-off per the Laws of the Game. Referees cannot issue any sanctions (send-off or cautions) unless they witness the act themselves or have been told so by a member of the officiating crew on the game.
2. If the allegation is confirmed by the coaches, the coaches should immediately remove the individual(s) responsible.
3. If the allegation is not confirmed, consideration towards resuming the competition and documenting the incident for potential future action. (If it was heard, but not by a member



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of the referee crew, it should still be mentioned on the match report and in a supplemental report sent to the assignor, league, and state).

4. Regardless of whether the allegation is confirmed or not, there should be consideration towards abandoning the match and documenting the incident. This is ultimately the decision of the referee, based upon the safety of the environment.

### POST GAME ACTIONS...

1. As stated above, a supplemental report must be filled out if the referee hears or is told that zero-tolerance language or actions were used at all, to be sent to the assignor, league, and state
2. The coach(es) should be given time to communicate with the parents of their respective teams. That message should be coordinated with the club representative (e.g. President).
3. The referee should report the incident to the league/competition authority.
4. Consideration should be given to reporting the incident to [SafeSport](#).
5. The Referee should submit an incident (supplemental) report detailing the allegation and detailing the actions taken.

### DETERMINING WHETHER AN ALLEGATION REQUIRES INTERVENTION...

Intervention is required if the derogatory language or discriminatory action falls under one of the following categories:

- racial, religious, or national origin harassment
- sexual harassment
- emotional harassment
- gender, gender identity or sexual orientation harassment

### 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, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or national origin,
- the display or use of objects or pictures which adversely reflect on a person's race, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or national origin,
- use of pejorative or demeaning language or acts regarding a person's race, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or national origin.



# REPORTING DEROGATORY LANGUAGE OR DISCRIMINATORY ACTION INCIDENTS



## GUIDANCE FOR COACHES

There is zero-tolerance for discrimination or harassment against anyone based on race, color, religion, veteran status, disability, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or national origin.

### WHAT TO DO IF ...

#### 1. YOU HEARD DEROGATORY LANGUAGE OR OBSERVED DISCRIMINATORY ACTIONS

- a. Notify the center referee.
- b. If unable to notify the center referee right away, notify an assistant referee.
- c. Report the incident to the referee so that they can suspend the match. The game may be resumed at the referee's discretion.

#### 2. A PLAYER REPORTS BEING SUBJECT TO OR WITNESSING DEROGATORY LANGUAGE OR DISCRIMINATORY ACTIONS, WHICH YOU DID NOT WITNESS DIRECTLY.

- a. Demonstrate support for the player and advise that you will address it immediately.
- b. 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 words stated as well as actions/language used).
  - i. If it doesn't warrant immediate attention, take notes of the allegation so it can be reported post-game (see "Post-Game Actions")
  - ii. If it does warrant immediate attention, notify the center referee. If unable to notify the center referee right away, notify an assistant referee.
- c. Report the incident to the referee so that he/she can suspend the match. The game may be resumed at the referee's discretion.

#### 3. A SPECTATOR REPORTS BEING SUBJECT TO OR WITNESSING DEROGATORY LANGUAGE OR DISCRIMINATORY ACTIONS, WHICH YOU DID NOT WITNESS DIRECTLY.

- a. Demonstrate support for the individual and advise that you will address it immediately.
- a. Learn from the spectator exactly what is alleged and determine if it is a situation that warrants immediate attention (see "[Determining Whether an Allegation Requires Intervention](#)"). Be sure to get a description using specific language (e.g. exact words stated as well as actions/language used).
  - I. If it does not warrant immediate attention, take notes of the allegation so it can be reported post-game (see "[Post-Game Actions](#)")
  - II. If it does warrant immediate attention, notify the center referee. If unable to notify the center referee right away, notify an assistant referee.
- b. Report the incident to the referee so that he/she can suspend the match. The game may be resumed at the referee's discretion.



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### ADDRESSING THE ALLEGATION ...

1. The referee will gather the coaches from both teams and at least one of the assistant referees 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.
3. **DESCRIBE USING SPECIFIC LANGUAGE.** When conveying what you heard or witnessed, be sure to provide a description using complete details:
  - a. Exact words
  - b. Describe actions/language used
  - c. Convey objective details as opposed to subjective interpretations

### OUTCOMES...

1. If the allegation is heard by the referee, the referee issues a send-off per the Laws of the Game. Referees cannot issue any sanctions (send-off or cautions) unless they hear it themselves or have been told so by a member of the officiating crew on the game.
2. If the allegation is confirmed by the coaches, the coaches should immediately remove the individual(s) responsible.
3. If the allegation is not confirmed, consideration towards resuming the competition and documenting the incident for potential future action.
4. Regardless of whether the allegation is confirmed or not, there should be consideration towards abandoning the match and documenting the incident. This is ultimately the decision of the referee, based upon the safety of the environment.

### POST GAME ACTIONS...

1. The coach(es) should immediately inform and report the incident to his/her club representative (e.g. President).
2. The coach(es) should communicate with the parents of their respective teams. That message should be coordinated with the club representative (e.g. President).
3. The club representative should report the incident to the league/competition authority.
4. Consideration should be given to reporting the incident to [SafeSport](#).
5. The Referee should submit an incident report detailing the allegation and the actions taken.

### DETERMINING WHETHER AN ALLEGATION REQUIRES INTERVENTION...

Intervention is required if the derogatory language that was heard falls under one of the following categories:

- racial, religious, or national origin harassment
- sexual harassment
- emotional harassment
- gender, gender identity or sexual orientation harassment



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### **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, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or national origin,
- the display or use of objects or pictures which adversely reflect on a person's race, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or national origin,
- use of pejorative or demeaning language or acts regarding a person's race, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or national origin.



# REPORTING DEROGATORY LANGUAGE OR DISCRIMINATORY ACTION INCIDENTS



## GUIDANCE FOR PLAYERS

There is zero-tolerance for discrimination or harassment against anyone based on race, color, religion, veteran status, disability, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or national origin.

### WHAT DO YOU DO IF ...

#### 1. YOU HEARD DEROGATORY LANGUAGE OR OBSERVED DISCRIMINATORY ACTIONS

- a. Notify the referee or assistant referee immediately.
- b. If unable to notify your referee right away, notify your coach.

#### 2. ANOTHER PLAYER REPORTS BEING SUBJECT TO DEROGATORY LANGUAGE OR DISCRIMINATORY ACTIONS, WHICH YOU DID NOT WITNESS DIRECTLY

- a. Notify the referee or assistant referee immediately.
- b. If unable to notify the referee right away, notify your coach.

### 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:

- a. Use exact words
- b. Describe actions/language
- c. Convey objective details (i.e. identify the individual) as opposed to subjective interpretations

From this point, the referee(s) will take the necessary actions to determine next steps and potential outcomes.

### 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, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or national origin,
- the display or use of objects or pictures which adversely reflect on a person's race, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or national origin,
- use of pejorative or demeaning language or acts regarding a person's race, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or national origin.



# REPORTING DEROGATORY LANGUAGE OR DISCRIMINATORY ACTION INCIDENTS



## GUIDANCE FOR SPECTATORS

There is zero-tolerance for discrimination or harassment against anyone based on race, color, religion, veteran status, disability, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or national origin.

### WHAT DO YOU DO IF...

1. **YOU HAVE HEARD DEROGATORY LANGUAGE OR OBSERVED DISCRIMINATORY ACTIONS**
  - a. Notify your team's Coach or Team Manager.
2. **ANOTHER PERSON REPORTS BEING SUBJECT TO DEROGATORY LANGUAGE OR DISCRIMINATORY ACTIONS, WHICH YOU DID NOT WITNESS DIRECTLY**
  - a. Encourage them to notify their team's Coach or Team Manager.
  - b. If they do not, notify your team's Coach or Team Manager.

### 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:

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

From this point, the coach will notify the officials. The officials will then suspend the game immediately and follow their established process.

### 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, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or national origin,
- the display or use of objects or pictures which adversely reflect on a person's race, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or national origin,
- use of pejorative or demeaning language or acts regarding a person's race, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or national origin.