



**Policy Manual of the
National Association of Competitive Soccer Clubs
d/b/a US Club Soccer**

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SECTION 1 – GENERAL:

Policy 1.01 – Business Name. The National Association of Competitive Soccer Clubs shall conduct business under the name “US Club Soccer”.

Policy 1.02 – Governing Documents. US Club Soccer shall be governed by the NACSC Bylaws; these Policies; and the directives, forms, and procedures promulgated by US Club Soccer’s administrative offices.

Policy 1.03 – Definitions.

“Academy” means a soccer organization which does not meet the definition of a club, formed for the limited purpose of providing training to competitive players, with the permission of the player’s primary club or team, as further described in Policy 3.04.

“Adult Player” means any player who is not a youth player, as defined herein. For purposes of this definition only, adult players also include professional players.

“Affiliate Member” means a US Club Soccer Member, such as an academy or league, which has qualified for affiliate, non-voting membership status.

“Allegation of Misconduct” means the written allegation form that is available from US Club Soccer used to commence a disciplinary action against a club, team, or individual.

“Alliance Club” means a club which has been formed consisting of players from other Member Clubs.

“Club” means a competitive soccer organization which is organized for the purpose of developing and providing playing opportunities for soccer players, and complies with at least the minimum US Club Soccer Club Standards then in effect.

“Club League” means a league consisting primarily of soccer clubs.

“Club Player Roster” means the official list of players that are registered with US Club Soccer on the US Club Soccer website.

“Competition Authority” means the individual or organization sanctioned to conduct a soccer competition, including a host Club, league, tournament administrator, or others.

“Competitive” means, in the context of a player, team, or club: selecting players via a tryout or selection process based upon ability, playing games outside the club, utilizing coaches holding Federation coaching licenses, and aspiring to play at the highest competitive level in their area.

“Direct Participating Adult” means any Participating Adult that is directly affiliated with US Club Soccer or a Member Organization.

“Federation” means the United States Soccer Federation, which is recognized as the national governing body for soccer in the United States by the United States Olympic Committee and FIFA.

“Federation-affiliated Members” means organizations that have been accepted as members by and are in good standing with the Federation, pursuant to the USSF Bylaws.

“FIFA” means the Federation Internationale de Football Association.

“Foreign Team” means a team which is located outside of the 50 States and District of Columbia.

“Good Standing” means a US Club Soccer Member which has registered its players pursuant to US Club Soccer policies and rules, has paid all required dues and fees, has abided by the Bylaws, Policies, rules, and directives of US Club Soccer, and is not subject to any disciplinary penalties by US Club Soccer or the Federation, or has otherwise been determined to be in “bad standing”.

“Host Club” means the Club, which is sponsoring or conducting a soccer tournament or other event.

“Individual Member” or **“US Club Soccer Individual Member”** means any individual registered and in good standing with US Club Soccer.

“Involuntary Player Release” means the removal of a player from a Club player roster at the request of the Club.

“League” (or **“Affiliate League”**) means a group of four (4) or more teams that join together for the purpose of inter-team play under a common set of administrative, competition rules, and an established game schedule that is not a club league.

“Member” or **“US Club Soccer Member”** means any Member Organization (or US Club Soccer Member Organization) or Individual Member (or US Club Soccer Individual Member).

“Member Club” means any Member in good standing of US Club Soccer, which is a soccer Club.

“Member Organization” or **“US Club Soccer Member Organization”** means any Club, Academy, Affiliate Member, recreational program, league team, tournament team, league, or similar organization sanctioned by/affiliated with US Club Soccer and in good standing.

“Participating Adult” means any adult individual US Club Soccer or a Member Organization authorizes, approves or appoints to have regular contact with Youth Participants in activities within US Club Soccer’s jurisdiction. This includes, but is not limited to, coaches, club and team administrators, sports medicine/health care professionals, and anyone traveling as a member of a team delegation. There are two types of Participating Adults: 1) Direct Participating Adult; and 2) Third-party Participating Adult.

“Player” means any youth player (unless it specifically references Adult Player) who is registered with US Club Soccer or another Federation-affiliated member.

“Recreational” means a player, team, or club, which does not meet the definition of competitive.

“Registration” means the process of a Member Organization joining US Club Soccer, or a player joining a Member Organization, and complying with US Club Soccer Policies and rules in doing so.

“Registration Year” means that time period in which a Member Organization’s current Player Roster is valid.

“Soccer Club” means a competitive soccer organization, consisting of coaches, administrators, players, and teams formed at multiple age groups for the purpose of developing player and coaching skills, providing training and competition for its players and coaches, and entering into soccer competitive competitions outside of the Club Organization. As long as it has competitive players and programs, for US Club Soccer membership purposes, a soccer Club may also consist of recreational or “select” players and programs, or adult players. While the primary focus shall be outdoor soccer, Clubs may also participate in indoor soccer activities.

“State Association” means a youth or adult soccer organization, governing soccer in one state or a portion of a state, as defined by the Bylaws of the Federation.

“Suspension” means the temporary withdrawal of rights or a privilege afforded a US Club Soccer Member, or a player, coach, administrator, or other volunteer of a Member Organization.

“Team” means, for purposes of these Policies only, a group of soccer players playing on the same side in a soccer game, pursuant to FIFA Laws of the Game or other rules authorized for a specific competition.

“Third-party Participating Adult” means any Participating Adult that is not directly affiliated with US Club Soccer or a Member Organization. (Example 1: Athletic trainers from a hospital/healthcare system that a US Club Soccer member organization uses for a game(s). Example 2: U.S. Soccer Federation-registered referees, or referee assignors having regular contact with Youth Participants.)

“Tournament” means a soccer competition other than a league, conducted over a limited period of time with specific playing rules, which consists of more than 5 teams, and is organized by a host Member Club.

“Transfer” means the removal of a player from the player roster of one Club Member, and the contemporaneous addition of the player to the player roster of another Club Member.

“Voluntary Player Release” means the removal of a player from a Club’s player roster at the request of the player.

“Youth Player” means any player who has not reached nineteen (19) years of age prior to the applicable cutoff date during any registration year.

SECTION 2 – ADMINISTRATION:

Policy 2.01 – Offices. *Reserved.*

Policy 2.02 – Administrative Boundaries. *Reserved.*

Policy 2.03 – Gender Neutrality. Any Policies, directives or other US Club Soccer rules shall be deemed to apply in the same regard to both the male and female gender.

SECTION 3 – MEMBERSHIP:

Policy 3.01 – Club Membership. Any soccer Club, as defined by these Policies, which is organized in the United States, may apply for Club Membership if they will register players for competitive teams in at least three (3) age groups.

- (a) Upon receipt of a Club application, US Club Soccer staff shall review the Club’s background information, including to what extent the Club complies with the US Club Soccer Club Standards then in effect, how long the Club has been in existence, and the circumstances of the Club’s original formation.
- (b) Based upon the review, US Club Soccer staff shall make a recommendation to the Executive Director as to whether or not to accept the Club as a Member. Based upon the information provided, the Executive Director, or in the alternative the US Club Soccer Board, may accept or deny Club membership in their sole discretion.
- (c) US Club Soccer may require an additional minimum number of a Club’s teams be registered to participate in certain programs.
- (d) Clubs shall register with US Club Soccer on an annual basis, pursuant to Policy.
- (e) Individual teams may register only as part of a Member Club, a league affiliate Member, or as a tournament team.

Policy 3.02 – Recreational Players. US Club Soccer will consider registering recreational players if they have a connection with either a Member Club with vertically integrated teams whose primary function is developing competitive level players, or with a sanctioned affiliate league. See Section 11 for recreational player rules.

Policy 3.03 – State Boundaries. Clubs shall not be limited by local or state boundaries in registering players or conducting competitions.

- (a) No travel permissions shall be required from US Club Soccer for Club Members to attend events in other areas of the United States that are sponsored by other Federation-affiliated Members. However, see Policy 10 for the applicable insurance requirements.

Policy 3.04 – Affiliate Memberships. Soccer academies, Alliance Clubs, and leagues that are not formed as soccer Clubs may apply for non-voting affiliate status.

- (a) Academies may apply for affiliate membership if they are formed for the purpose of providing special training to players from other soccer organizations, and while not prohibited from doing so in all cases generally do not field teams to compete in outside competitions. Academies must register a minimum of fifty (50) academy players with US Club Soccer to qualify for Membership, which registration shall occur in the same manner as a Club. In some cases, US Club Soccer may permit dual registration of an academy’s and Member Club’s players, with the permission of the player’s primary club.

- (b) Alliance Clubs may apply for affiliate Membership if their purpose is to provide special training to players from a select group of other Member Clubs. Such players may form teams and enter outside competitions, with the permission of the player's regular Member Club. In such cases, players shall be dual registered to both the Member Club and Alliance Club.
- (c) Leagues may apply for affiliate status pursuant to Policy 6.
- (d) US Club Soccer may establish a non-voting, individual affiliate Membership category for interested and qualified individuals.

Policy 3.05 – Tournament Team Membership. For purposes of participating in a Club Member-hosted tournament, a team which is not affiliated with a Club Member may, if necessary to participate, register for the tournament as a Tournament Team Member pursuant to Policy 7.03.

- (a) Such membership is only valid for that particular tournament, and tournament teams shall have no voting rights. Each tournament entry is subject to a separate application and fee.

SECTION 4 – REGISTRATION AND PLAYER RULES:

Policy 4.01 – Registration Year. For purposes of Club and player registration, the US Club Soccer registration year (also known as the Governing Season) shall be from August 1st to July 31st.

- (a) Nothing herein shall preclude a Member from registering with another Federation-affiliated Member in addition to US Club Soccer, but see Policy 10 for the insurance coverage applicable to dual registration.
- (b) A player who registers for a Club during a registration year shall pay the registration fee for the entire year, and must re-register during the next registration year.
- (c) A Player who reaches 19 years of age during a registration year shall be allowed to compete for his Club during that entire registration year.

Policy 4.02 – Club Registration. Clubs shall register with US Club Soccer in each registration year on the designated online form. The Club registration fee shall be established by the Board, which amount may, at the discretion of the Board, be credited against player registration fee monies that are due.

Policy 4.03 – Player Registration. Note that all references to club players also apply to league team players unless otherwise indicated. The US Club Soccer player registration year (that time period for which Clubs register their players) shall be from August 1st to July 31st. Note however, that in the case of some recreational and adult programs and leagues, the registration year may be a different twelve-month period. Clubs must register or re-register players each year, pursuant to the rules and procedures herein. Players who are not re-registered are automatically considered released.

- (a) Consistent with the Federation's birth-year registration mandates, all US Club Soccer-sanctioned youth competitions shall be based on age group cut-offs of January 1 for each age group. Accordingly, the nomenclature used by US Club Soccer for these age group labels is, for example, "17-and-Under" or "17-U."
- (b) Player registration fees shall be established annually by the US Club Soccer Board at least thirty (30) days prior to the end of the registration year.
- (c) Clubs must register a minimum of three (3) competitive teams at different age groups, and all other competitive players who participate in the activities of US Club Soccer, as those activities are defined by US Club Soccer.
- (d) No player may be registered on two US Club Soccer Member Clubs at the same time, other than as set forth in Sections 3 and Policies 4.10 and 4.13. Club's players may be registered to another Federation member organization at the same time.
- (e) In the case of first time player registrations, a player will be deemed registered by the first Club that completes the player registration process as set forth in these Policies. Refer to Policy 4.11 for player registration renewal rules.

- (f) Teams registering as tournament teams shall comply with Policy 7.03.

Policy 4.04 – Competitive Player Registration Procedures. Clubs shall assign a registrar to be the primary person responsible for the registration process herein. The registrar may delegate the registration process to additional administrative staff. Clubs shall register their players with US Club Soccer pursuant to the following procedures:

- (a) Clubs shall register their players with US Club Soccer utilizing the online registration program. Players may be registered to an entire Club as an open player, or on a team-by-team basis as competitive teams are formed for the year.
- (b) A player shall not be officially registered with a Club, nor shall such player be insured, until:
 - (i) The player has been entered onto the Club’s online database;
 - (ii) The player’s card has been requested and the registration fee paid;
 - (iii) A copy of proof of date of birth is submitted to US Club Soccer (This need not be resubmitted by the same Club in successive years);
 - (iv) A copy combined consent for medical treatment/player registration form (#R002) has been executed (Note the Club shall retain this form, and only submit it to US Club Soccer upon request);
 - (v) A player card has been issued by US Club Soccer.

The consent for medical treatment/paper registration form (#R002) shall be signed by the player’s parent or guardian. The form need not be notarized. In the case of forms submitted for the same player by two separate Clubs, the form first signed in each registration year shall be recognized. The form shall be held by the player’s club, and submitted to US Club Soccer only upon request.

Acceptable date of birth proof shall include: a birth certificate, a birth registration issued by the appropriate government agency, a passport, an alien registration card issued by the U.S. Government, a certificate issued by the INS attesting to age, a certification of a United States citizen born abroad issued by the appropriate government agency, or a current driver’s license. Hospital, baptismal, or religious certificates shall not be accepted.

- (c) As soon as practicable after the player pass is received, the Club shall complete the pass as set forth in Policy 4.09(a)(i).
- (d) Additional players may be registered by a Club throughout the registration year by completing the online form, submitting the information in Policy 4.03(c), and paying the annual player registration fee. Fees shall not be prorated for partial year registrations.
- (e) International Player Clearances: Any foreign-born player must receive clearance from the Federation to register with an affiliated club in the United States, in accordance with then-current FIFA and Federation rules and regulations, prior to participation. The Federation’s process and applicable forms can be found on its website.
- (f) For purposes of tracking scouting information for possible U.S. National Teams participation, US Club Soccer will track citizenship information on the online Club player roster.
- (g) Clubs may utilize their online Club player roster database to print copies of team rosters. For competition purposes, such printed copies are deemed official, if accompanied by valid player cards.
- (h) All competitive and adult player releases shall be submitted online by the Club registrar.

Policy 4.05 – Recreational Player Registration Procedures. Recreational and intramural players, who do not need player cards pursuant to Policy 11.01 shall register as set forth in Policy 4.05, with the following exceptions. As with competitive players, insurance coverage for recreational players shall not apply until the registration process has been completed, as set forth below.

- (a) The players shall not be registered online unless approved to do so by US Club Soccer. Players shall otherwise be registered by utilization of US Club Soccer's official player roster in an Excel format.
- (b) Rosters shall be submitted to US Club Soccer, together with the applicable registration fees.
- (c) Proof of date of birth shall not be required by US Club Soccer, but may be by the Club or League.
- (d) The medical treatment form shall be collected and held by the Club or League, as set forth in Policy 4.04.

Additional recreational players may be registered throughout the registration year as set forth above. Players registered as recreational players can be registered as competitive players at any time pursuant to Policy 4.04. Note that leagues classified as Super Rec shall register players and staff online in the same manner as competitive players.

Policy 4.06 – League Player Registration. Procedures for registering players with a League Member may vary with regard to the collection and review of proof of birth, registration fee collection and payment, and the collection and retention of medical treatment forms. Teams registering through a League Member shall check the applicable procedures for its League.

Policy 4.07 – Staff Registration. US Club Soccer staff registration must be completed for all Direct Participating Adults. Direct Participating Adults who are not currently registered with US Club Soccer are not allowed to participate with US Club Soccer-registered youth players, nor are they covered by US Club Soccer-provided insurance. Member Organizations who are not in compliance with this requirement are subject to disciplinary action.

- (a) Staff registration fees shall be established by the US Club Soccer Board.

Policy 4.08 – Risk Management Policy. All individuals for which Policy 4.07 is applicable must comply with US Club Soccer's Athlete and Participant Safety/Risk Management Policies, included as Policy Section 13 and Appendix A.

Policy 4.09 – Player, Coach and Administrator Passes.

- (a) Member Player Pass. All non-rec players registered with US Club Soccer shall receive a player pass, which shall allow such player to play on any team in that Club at his/her age level or older, without limitations. That is, in any competition sanctioned by US Club Soccer, a Member's player may "play up" within his Club at any time. The team designation on the player pass shall not be considered. Rather, the official roster from the Club's online player roster shall be controlling. The US Club Soccer player pass shall be utilized for all competitions sanctioned pursuant to these Policies.
 - (i) When received from US Club Soccer, the Club shall affix the player's picture (1" x 1.5" maximum size) and shall have the pass laminated. The pass need not be signed by the player.
 - (ii) The player pass shall expire on July 31. The pass shall be re-issued at the time of annual registration, or if a player changes Clubs within the registration year. Once a pass has expired, it may no longer be used. The Club shall destroy the pass, or forward it to US Club Soccer if requested to do so.
- (b) If a Club is participating in an event sanctioned by an entity other than US Club Soccer, the Club should ascertain what documentation in addition to the Club player pass and roster may need to be presented at the event.

Policy 4.10 – Player Movements. The rules in this section do not apply to player movements between Clubs at the end of the US Club Soccer registration year, at which point any player is free to re-register, or register with a new Club. All mid-registration year releases shall be controlled by this section, and approved by US Club Soccer.

US Club Soccer, as a courtesy, has established a procedure by which a player's prior Club is given notice for a limited period of time (through August 15th of each year) that one of its former players is in the processes of registering with a new Club. To expedite this process, it is important that a Club release any players they do not intend to re-register at the end of the registration year.

- (a) Mutual Release. A Club and its player may agree at any time to a release, irrespective of any league roster freeze rules. It is recommended that the parties sign a document memorializing the release, but it is not necessary to send any document to US Club Soccer. The Club shall submit an online release to US Club Soccer.
- (b) Involuntary Player Release. Players may be released by their Club at any time, unless Club rules prohibit it by:

- (i) Providing written notice to the player, and only sending the notice to US Club Soccer if requested by US Club Soccer;
 - (ii) Completing the online release request;
 - (iii) Mailing the player pass to the US Club Soccer office on the next business day, if requested by US Club Soccer.
- (c) Voluntary Player Release. Unless and until US Club Soccer adopts a rule regarding the procedure for player-requested releases, each Club may establish its own rule. However, as amateur players are not under contract, as a general rule they may request and receive a release from their Club at any time. The Club shall submit an online release to US Club Soccer.
- (d) New Club Mid-Year Registration. A player may register mid-year with another Club as soon as his former Club submits an online release by completing the player registration process with his new Club and paying the US Club Soccer annual registration fee. Such registration is subject to US Club Soccer's approval of the original release. Annual registration fees shall not be pro-rated between Clubs. US Club Soccer shall determine the actual release date should any disputes arise.
- (i) The player is eligible to play for his new Club as soon as the new Club registration process has been completed and the original release is approved by US Club Soccer.
 - (ii) If the player's former Club refuses to release the player, and the new Club has obtained a written registration form (#R002) from the player and his parent, they should complete Form #R006A and contact US Club Soccer.
- (e) Player Transfers Between Club Teams. There are no restrictions in transferring players between teams within the same Club at the same or older age group. The Club may choose to modify its online Club player roster to reflect such transfers.
- (f) Player Transfers Between Clubs. No players may be transferred between Clubs. Rather, the appropriate release and new player registration forms shall be executed by the Clubs.
- (g) Dual Player Registration. Other than as set forth herein and in Policy 4.13, players may not be registered to two (2) US Club Soccer members at the same time.
- (i) Players may be registered to a Club or League team and to a Regional League team, Academy, or Adult team pursuant to Policy 4.13.
 - (ii) League Members may allow dual registrations within their League, but only with the agreement of the two registering Clubs, the player, and the League.
- (h) Player Loans. In any competition, the loaning of US Club Soccer players between Clubs shall be determined by the competition rules. All competitions are encouraged to allow such loans to occur for the purposes of providing players with a meaningful playing opportunity.
- (i) To accomplish such a loan, a player loan form must be executed by the Clubs and presented to the competition officials together with the team roster. The player shall use his regular US Club Soccer player pass. The loan need not be approved by US Club Soccer, but a copy of the loan form shall be mailed to the US Club Soccer office prior to the competition by the Club receiving the loaned player.

Policy 4.11 – Player Registration Renewals. For the purpose of renewing player registrations in subsequent registration years, US Club Soccer shall set an annual date by which a player shall be presumed to be in the process of re-registering through the same Club (note a different date will apply to players with a 12/31 card expiration).

- (a) Until such date, should another Club attempt to register such player, unless the player has already been released by his former Club, US Club Soccer will notify both Clubs of the potential dual registration.

- (b) It is expected the player and the Clubs shall agree on which Club shall register the player, and only submit one registration request. In case of a dispute, the earliest player registration form (#R002) executed by the player for that registration year shall in most cases be controlling.
- (c) Subsequent to the beginning of the registration year, up until the date referred to in subsection (a) above, a player and his new club may complete and submit form #R006A if the player intends to register with a new Club and his prior club has not responded to a release request.
- (d) After the date referred to in (a) above, US Club Soccer shall presume the player has been released by his former Club and will release the player from his former club, and process a registration request for a new Club without further notice.
- (e) To expedite the registration process at the end of each registration year, Clubs are requested to submit an online release for all players they know will not be returning to their Club.

Policy 4.12 – General.

- (a) Falsification. The falsification or attempt to falsify records, documents, Club player passes, or any other official form or knowingly withholding or misusing a player pass, or utilizing an expired pass, shall be grounds for immediate suspension from membership in US Club Soccer, participation in its competitions, or other disciplinary action.
- (b) Registration Fee Payment. Failure to pay the required registration fees in a timely manner, or failure to annually register the minimum number of teams for the appropriate member category may place a Club and all its players in bad standing, and cause suspension from participation in US Club Soccer competitions and events.
- (c) Use of Ineligible Players. A team shall forfeit any game in which an unregistered or improperly registered player was placed on the game roster, whether or not he actually played. The Club and player are also subject to further disciplinary action.
- (d) Official Rosters. The official US Club Soccer roster, printed from the online US Club Soccer-approved registration system, when accompanied by valid passcards, shall be accepted as an official roster for all Federation affiliate competitions.
- (e) Professional Players. Any player who signs a letter of intent, retains a professional agent, or receives compensation for playing soccer, or violates any other National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) amateur athlete restrictions shall be declared a professional player and may not further register or participate as a US Club Soccer Club youth player. Notwithstanding the foregoing, subject to NCAA rules a youth player may otherwise be able to play on the same team as a professional player.
 - (i) Unless this section applies, players shall not otherwise lose their youth eligibility if they play on an adult team.

Policy 4.13 – Dual Registration. This rule applies to all teams registered with US Club Soccer and members that have been either granted Academy status, or are Adult teams.

- (a) Dual Youth Registration. A player may not be registered to more than one US Club Soccer youth member at a time, other than as set forth herein. There is no limit on the number of Adult member teams (U-20+) on which a player may be carded.
- (b) Permitted Dual Registration. A player may be dual registered with a US Club Soccer youth team and an Academy, Federation Development Academy, ECNL, or Adult team if:
 - (i) The two organizations and the player agree on the player’s playing and training schedule, and any other conditions for dual carding.
 - (ii) Both organizations confirm this agreement in an email sent to US Club Soccer.
 - (iii) The dual carding is approved by US Club Soccer.

- (c) Sanctioned Leagues. Leagues may have different dual carding rules for teams within the league, if the rules are approved by US Club Soccer.
- (d) National Cup. For participation in the US Club Soccer National Cup, a player is Cup tied to the team with which he plays his first Regional game if that team advances to the Finals. If it does not advance, the player may play in a later Regional on another team in the same club, or with another team on which he is properly dual carded pursuant to this Policy.
- (e) Releases. A member may release a player, and thereafter another member may register the player, at any time. However, such a procedure should not be used so that the player may play in one, specific competition.
- (f) Player Loans. Loans are permissible between two member teams, pursuant to Policy 4.10(h), but should not be used for more than one competition (i.e. single game or tournament).

SECTION 5 – PARTICIPATION PERMISSIONS:

Policy 5.01 – Domestic Travel Permission. Permission for a Club Member in good standing to travel within the United States to participate in a soccer event hosted by a US Club Soccer Member or other Federation-affiliated Member shall not be required. Notice of intent to travel may be required for certain activities.

Policy 5.02 – Permission to Participate. To ensure that insurance coverage is available and that the event is otherwise appropriate, permission must be obtained to participate in a soccer event, which is hosted or sponsored, by an individual or entity other than a US Club Soccer Member or Federation-affiliated Member. A request to participate must be submitted to US Club Soccer on the appropriate form at least 30 days prior to the event.

Policy 5.03 – International Travel and Hosting Permission. Permission for a Club Member to travel outside the United States or to host foreign teams in the United States is processed and approved by the Federation National Office. The Federation’s international travel and hosting application forms can be obtained from the US Club Soccer office.

- (a) A copy of the international travel or hosting application shall initially be submitted to the US Club Soccer office along with the required U. S. Soccer fee. US Club Soccer will then forward the application to the Federation. A Club must be in good standing to be granted such travel permission.
- (b) Permission to undertake international travel is contingent upon the Club securing adequate participant medical insurance.
- (c) Clubs, which are approved for international travel, must contact the appropriate officials in each country in which they will be traveling to determine what documents are required for entry and playing games.

SECTION 6 – LEAGUE RULES AND SANCTIONING:

Policy 6.01 – League Sanctioning. US Club Soccer will consider applications to sanction club leagues, and recreational and competitive leagues, if the league consists of a minimum of four (4) teams per age group, and meets any other established criteria. The Executive Director, or in the alternative the US Club Soccer Board, may accept or deny league membership in their sole discretion. League sanctioning fees and other league sanctioning criteria shall be reviewed on a regular basis.

- (a) Any current Club Member’s teams are eligible to join a league if they otherwise meet the league criteria.
- (b) Teams that are not Club Members may apply to participate in the league by:
 - (1) Registering their team players with US Club Soccer, pursuant to the US Club Soccer Player Rules and paying the applicable player registration fees.
 - (2) Being accepted by US Club Soccer and the league as a team that can reasonably be expected to compete at the league’s competition level.
- (c) Leagues will not be limited by state boundaries, and pursuant to Policy 5.01, no travel permissions will be required.

- (d) U.S. Soccer Federation-registered referees are required to be used unless a request for an alternate arrangement is approved in writing by US Club Soccer.

Policy 6.02 – League Sanctioning Application. Any group of Member Clubs or other organization desiring to form a US Club Soccer-sanctioned league shall submit a fully completed league application at least 60 days prior to the proposed commencement of league play. US Club Soccer may waive deadlines in cases that, in its sole discretion, are justified. Applications may be obtained on the US Club Soccer website, or from the US Club Soccer office.

- (a) Among other information, the application shall contain the following information: name, address, and other information of the league administrator; source and assignment of referees; League Member Clubs and teams; league fees (note fees are limited to an amount reasonably necessary to administer the league); and copies of all administrative forms and reports.
- (b) Additional submittals shall include: the proposed schedule of games; bylaws and rules of the league; discipline procedures and committee; roster size, freeze, and other roster rules; and competition rules.
- (c) In all league competitions, players shall utilize their Club player pass, and may play up to an older age group without restriction.

Policy 6.03 – Application Review. US Club Soccer shall review the application, and may ask for additional information before deciding on sanctioning.

- (a) Approval is contingent upon the league administrator providing a sufficient level of administrative support including: serving as the point of contact with US Club Soccer, overseeing competition and collecting game reports, assuring that competent referees are assigned, maintaining the schedule and league standings, assuring compliance with all league and US Club Soccer rules and procedures, and administering disciplinary matters.

Policy 6.04 – Application Approval. League approval is conditioned upon the league and its member teams complying with all US Club Soccer Bylaws, Policies, Disciplinary Procedures, and other Rules.

- (a) At the end of the league season, the league administrator shall submit to US Club Soccer a league report in the designated format.

SECTION 7 – TOURNAMENT RULES AND SANCTIONING:

Policy 7.01 – Tournament Sanctioning. Club, Leagues, and League Team Members in good standing may apply to US Club Soccer to sanction tournaments of five (5) or more teams.

- (a) The tournament application and agreement must be received from the host Club at least forty-five (45) days prior to the tournament, indicating number of projected teams, tournament fees to be charged, competition format, roster and playing rules, and other information requested on the application form.
- (b) If approved, a report shall be submitted by the host Club within 30 days after the tournament, indicating teams attending and other information requested on the tournament report form.
 - (i) Any incident of alleged referee assault or abuse or other incidents of a violent or serious nature shall be reported to US Club Soccer within 48 hours of the incident. The US Club Soccer Disciplinary Rules and Procedures shall be followed as applicable.

Policy 7.02 – Non-Member Teams. A team, which is not affiliated with a Club Member, may participate in the tournament if it is a member of another organization, which is a Federation-affiliated Member.

- (a) Such team shall provide proof of travel permission, if such is required by the team's sanctioning organization, and proof of medical insurance coverage.
- (b) If a non-member team cannot comply with subsection (a) above, it may attend the tournament if it registers as a US Club Soccer tournament team, and obtains medical insurance coverage through US Club Soccer.

Policy 7.03 – Tournament Teams. To apply as a tournament team, a non-member team shall contact US Club Soccer to determine the specific procedures. The Member Club tournament host is encouraged to help facilitate this process. The team

shall register their players with US Club Soccer, and pay the required registration fees and insurance premium, and will then be qualified to participate in the tournament. The tournament team membership is only valid for the specific tournament at issue.

Policy 7.04 – General.

- (a) Teams participating in a US Club Soccer-sanctioned tournament will not be limited by state boundaries, and pursuant to Policy 5.01, no travel permissions will be required.
- (b) The US Club Soccer player pass shall be utilized for all Member Club teams, and Club players may play up to an older age group without restriction. The pass shall not be modified or marked upon in any way. Non-member teams may use their Federation Affiliate's player pass.
- (c) Hosting foreign teams as part of a tournament is governed by Policy 5.03.
- (d) U.S. Soccer Federation-registered referees are required to be used unless a request for an alternate arrangement is approved in writing by US Club Soccer. Tournament hosts shall provide information on the source and assignment of referees in the application.
- (e) Tournament hosts Clubs should review and follow to as great an extent as practical the US Club Soccer Tournament Protocols, available as part of the tournament application.
- (f) The tournament-sanctioning fee shall be determined by the US Club Soccer Board.

Policy 7.05 – Club Host Sanctioning. A Member Club in good standing may host up to three (3) other clubs (four (4) clubs in total) for the purposes of playing informal, competitive games at any time without submitting a tournament-sanctioning request or seeking other approval. Hosting more than three (3) other clubs requires US Club Soccer approval, or completion of a tournament application. A notice on the designated form shall be submitted to US Club Soccer at least 14 days prior to such hosting.

- (a) No fee shall be charged for such game hosting, and US Club Soccer insurance shall apply for Member Clubs if the notice provisions have been met.
- (b) No travel or other permissions shall be required. However, if a team that is not affiliated with a Member Club is planning to attend, proof that the team's medical insurance will be in effect for the event is required at the time of notice.

SECTION 8 – TECHNICAL PROGRAMS AND COMPETITION RULES:

Policy 8.01 – Technical Director. US Club Soccer shall hire a Technical Director who shall report to the Executive Director. He or she shall work closely with the Board and Technical Committee to assist Clubs in improving their technical and player development programs.

Policy 8.02 – Technical Committee. A Technical Committee shall be appointed by the US Club Soccer Board to assist the Board and Technical Director in program development and implementation. Representation shall include individuals from boys and girls soccer programs, collegiate soccer, professional soccer, and the national teams' programs.

Policy 8.03 – Roster Rules. Roster rules shall be established for each sanctioned competition and US Club Soccer shall be informed of such rules on the appropriate request or notice form. The online Club Player Roster shall be accepted as an official roster for all US Club Soccer competitions.

Policy 8.04 – Competition Rules. As a general rule, FIFA Laws of the Game shall be the competition rules that apply to all competitive team games. However, limited rule variations (i.e. substitutions, tie-breakers, etc.) may be established for each sanctioned competition. The US Club Soccer Technical Committee may choose to issue guidelines that all competitions are encouraged to adopt. US Club Soccer shall be informed of competition rules to be utilized on the appropriate request or notice form.

- (a) Substitutions. *Reserved.*

- (b) All players must wear shin guards in any US Club Soccer sanctioned event. The FIFA Laws of the Game shall apply to other equipment restrictions.
- (c) U.S. Soccer Federation-registered referees are required to be used unless a request for an alternate arrangement is approved in writing by US Club Soccer.

Policy 8.05 – Competition Protests and Appeals. Any protest arising out of a US Club Soccer sanctioned competition shall first be determined by the competition committee for that event, pursuant to its rules for such matters. After a determination, the party adversely affected may then file a protest appeal with the US Club Soccer Protest Appeals Committee. This Policy does not apply to disciplinary action against an individual or US Club Soccer Member, whether or not arising out of a competition. For such actions, see Section 14.

- (a) The protest appeal shall be in writing on the designated form and mailed overnight or faxed to US Club Soccer office, no later than seventy-two (72) hours after the adverse ruling, and accompanied by a fee of \$150. If not on the designated form, while not fatal to the right of appeal, the petitioner will be asked to complete the designated form. Only those Club coaches or team administrators directly involved in the matter may protest a competition matter.
- (b) The Committee may speak to the parties involved, or ask for additional information, and shall then render a written decision as expeditiously as possible. An open hearing with all parties present shall not occur for competition protests. However, the Committee may, at its option, conduct a conference call of all interested parties.
- (c) All protests regarding the field, the game, the published rules of competition or the competition administration shall be submitted to the referee and the competition committee before the game, unless the reason for the protest occurs during the game. Referee decisions related to the FIFA Laws of the game are final. The Committee shall not entertain protests of red or yellow cards or coach send-offs issued by a game referee.
- (d) Any allegation of referee assault or abuse shall be forwarded directly to US Club Soccer and processed as described in Section 14.

Policy 8.06 – Travel and Training Documents

- (a) Official rosters should be printed from the US Club Soccer-approved registration system, and such rosters shall be accepted in any US Club Soccer-sanctioned competition.
- (b) Coaches or team managers shall carry their player’s original medical release and consent form to all competitions and training sessions.

SECTION 9 – DISCIPLINE:

Policy 9.01 – Membership Termination. Termination of Club and other US Club Soccer Members is governed by Bylaw VII (1).

Policy 9.02 – Removal from Office. Removal of US Club Soccer Officers and Board Members is governed by Bylaw X.

Policy 9.03 – US Club Soccer Discipline. The US Club Soccer Board or its Discipline Committee shall have the authority to suspend or fine a Member; or may suspend, fine, or declare ineligible a player, coach, or administrator for violations of US Club Soccer Bylaws, Policies, other Rules or directives, non-payment of monies due, or conduct detrimental to soccer or US Club Soccer. The Executive Director of US Club Soccer may take the same actions, but is limited to a US Club Soccer Member fine of \$1,000 and an individual fine of \$250, and any suspension of rights or privileges to no more than 30 days. Inactive status, however, does not require a hearing or other action, and may remain in effect until the payment of monies due or compliance with registration requirements. Rules for disciplinary hearings and appeals are contained in Section 14.

Policy 9.04 – Other Discipline. US Club Soccer Members may adopt and enforce their own disciplinary rules. US Club Soccer sanctioned competitions shall adopt disciplinary rules and procedures for that competition. Appeals procedures from such discipline are set forth in Section 14.

- (a) Discipline, which does not extend beyond the end of a tournament, shall not be appealable.

Policy 9.05 – Discipline Reciprocity. Recognition of disciplinary actions imposed by other Federation-affiliated Members shall be in accordance with Federation Bylaw 241.

Policy 9.06 – Conduct Generally. Each Club or League Member, or other Member Organization and their players, coaches, administrators, or tournament personnel shall be primarily and solely accountable for the conduct of themselves, and the persons associated with them. In addition to disciplinary actions under Policies 9.03, 9.04 and 9.05, conduct subject to discipline may also include that which is adverse to the best interests of soccer or US Club Soccer, or other unlawful conduct. Such organizations and individuals shall be subject to all rules pertaining to misconduct contained herein, including, without limitation, violation of Section 13, caution, ejections, fines, and suspensions, as well as in the case of Club or League Members possible membership termination.

- (a) Any other individuals who may be reasonably construed as being associated with a Club or team, such as relatives or spectators, shall also be subject to the jurisdiction and authority of US Club Soccer. Club coaches or administrators shall be held responsible for the actions of any individual at any game who, in the opinion of the referee or competition authority, is a supporter of that Club or team.
- (b) During any game sanctioned directly or indirectly by US Club Soccer, a referee may stop the game and eject any coach, player, or spectator from the grounds (the field of play and areas surrounding the field on which the game is being played) if, in the opinion of the referee, the offender is guilty of violent conduct, serious foul play, or the use of foul or abusive language, or if the conduct is deemed to be interference by the offender as defined in FIFA Laws of the Game 5(d). At no time will foul or abusive language be permitted at any field. Alcohol or illegal drug use, or possession or transportation of a weapon without a valid permit, shall not be permitted at any time.
- (c) For any incident of individual or US Club Soccer Member misconduct, including playing an ineligible player or another roster abuse, the League, tournament host, referee, or other competition authority shall file with the competition authority disciplinary committee a Competition Incident Report within 48 hours of the incident, or if warranted a written allegation (utilizing the Allegation of Misconduct Form). Except in the case of an assault or abuse of a referee, the original jurisdiction shall rest with the competition authority disciplinary committee.

Policy 9.07 – Suspension Because of Litigation. Any person participating in any US Club Soccer sanctioned or sponsored competition or event who becomes involved as a defendant in legal action detrimental to the welfare of youth players, or in legal action based on alleged activities detrimental to the welfare of youth players, shall be disqualified by the US Club Soccer from all soccer-related activities until completion of such legal action, pursuant to US Club Soccer’s Risk Management policies in Section 13. The person’s status shall be reviewed by US Club Soccer’s Executive Director or Discipline Committee at the conclusion of the legal action. Matters detrimental to the welfare of youth players shall include crimes of moral turpitude and felonies.

Policy 9.08 – Protest and Appeals. Protests relating to the competition itself, rather than participant discipline arising from that competition, are found in Policy 8.05.

Policy 9.09 – Disciplinary Procedures. Procedures for the administration of disciplinary matters are contained in Section 14.

SECTION 10 – INSURANCE:

Policy 10.01 – Player Medical Coverage. All registered US Club Soccer players, coaches, and administrators are covered by secondary medical insurance for US Club Soccer sanctioned events, and for other events sanctioned by a Federation-affiliated Member if coverage is otherwise not available through that Federation-affiliated Member. A copy of the medical claim form may be obtained by contacting the US Club Soccer office. A player’s coach shall complete US Club Soccer’s form, certifying the injury occurred while participating in a US Club Soccer sanctioned activity, prior to any claim being forwarded to US Club Soccer’s insurance carrier.

- (a) Medical coverage applies when a player or staff has completed the registration process, as set forth in Section 4, the applicable fees for that individual have been paid, and in the case of competitive players a passcard has been issued.

Policy 10.02 – Dual Registration. In cases where a Member Club or its players or staff are registered with US Club Soccer and also with another Federation-affiliated Member, the applicable medical insurance shall be determined by which organization a player or staff is participating in or training for, as evidenced by which Members passcard is utilized for a given competition.

Policy 10.03 – US Club Soccer and Member Liability Coverage. Liability coverage for both US Club Soccer and its Members shall be available through US Club Soccer. Members shall notify US Club Soccer of any lawsuit, claim, or attorney correspondence received or filed against it, or one of its coaches or administrators functioning in their capacity as a club employee, contractor, or volunteer, or of any other communication that would indicate a lawsuit may be possible in the future. Any questions regarding liability coverage should be directed to the US Club Soccer office.

- (a) Liability coverage applies to a Member when it has fulfilled the minimum requirements of membership. In the case of a Member Club, this shall be the registration of the Club and its acceptance by US Club Soccer, and the registration and payment of fees for at least three (3) teams. League teams are provided coverage after registering a single team.
- (b) Members may request a certificate of insurance by obtaining a form from the US Club Soccer office or from the US Club Soccer website.

Policy 10.04 – Tournament Insurance. US Club Soccer may, through its insurance carrier, make tournament insurance available to its Members in cases where it is desirable to insure all non-member tournament attendees. Such insurance will be optional for the tournament host and incur an additional premium cost.

SECTION 11 – RECREATIONAL PLAYERS:

Policy 11.01 – Recreational Player Programs. Prior to Member Clubs or affiliate leagues registering any recreational players, the organization shall contact US Club Soccer and provide information on the nature of their recreational programs. For purposes of these Policies, whether an organization qualifies as a recreational program shall be reviewed on a case by case basis. Criteria among others include: age of the players, whether or not tryouts are held, whether small-sided games are played, if the group is part of a vertically integrated club program, if competition only occurs in house (i.e. only among the organization’s teams). Any competition with other organizations, such as open tournaments, qualifies the team as competitive, and its players are required to be carded.

Policy 11.02 – Super Rec Player Category. US Club Soccer shall also establish a category of players termed Super Rec. These players are similar to rec players in that they play primarily in an in-house program (i.e. they are not competitive nor play on a travel team). However, they shall receive a player pass and may play in competitive games against other rec teams in the same general geographical area. Different fees and registration requirements may apply to Super Rec players.

SECTION 12 – ADULT PLAYERS:

Policy 12.01 – Adult Player Registration. US Club Soccer Members may register adult players with US Club Soccer, pursuant to the procedures posted on the US Club Soccer website. Clubs are encouraged to develop adult player programs, and US Club Soccer will assist in that process.

SECTION 13 – ATHLETE AND PARTICIPANT SAFETY/RISK MANAGEMENT:

Policy 13.01 – Policy Statement. US Club Soccer has zero tolerance for abuse or misconduct. US Club Soccer is committed to providing a safe environment and preventing abusive conduct in any form.

For the purposes of the policies set forth in Section 13 and Appendix A (collectively, “Athlete and Participant Safety/Risk Management Policies”), as well as elsewhere in this Policy Manual, the following terms have been adopted:

- **Participating Adult:** Any adult individual US Club Soccer or a Member Organization authorizes, approves or appoints to have regular contact with Youth Participants in activities within US Club Soccer’s jurisdiction. This includes, but is not limited to, coaches, club and team administrators, sports medicine/health care professionals, and anyone traveling as a member of a team delegation. There are two types of Participating Adults: 1) Direct Participating Adult; and 2) Third-party Participating Adult.
- **Direct Participating Adult:** Any Participating Adult that is directly affiliated with US Club Soccer or a Member Organization.
- **Third-party Participating Adult:** Any Participating Adult that is not directly affiliated with US Club Soccer or a Member Organization. (Example 1: Athletic trainers from a hospital/healthcare system that a Member Organization

uses for a game(s). Example 2: U.S. Soccer Federation-registered referees, or referee assignors having regular contact with Youth Participants.)

- **Youth Participant:** Amateur athletes who are minors or referees who are minors. This includes coaches who are minors.
- **Covered Personnel:** Includes 1) Participating Adults; 2) any individual affiliated with US Club Soccer or a Member Organization involved in or with decision-making authority for activities within US Club Soccer’s jurisdiction; 3) Youth Participants; and 4) US Club Soccer employees and Board members.
- **Activities within US Club Soccer’s jurisdiction.** This includes not only activities directly operated by US Club Soccer, but also sanctioned and related activities operated by Member Organizations, including, but not limited to, practices/training, scrimmages, sanctioned league and tournament activities, team travel, and applicable off-field activities.

All Covered Personnel are responsible for knowing and complying with all US Club Soccer Bylaws, Policies and Rules (including those guidelines and directors on the US Club Soccer website) in addition to all applicable federal and state laws, rules and regulations and any applicable Member Organization policies and rules. Member Organizations are responsible for ensuring their own Covered Personnel comply with US Club Soccer’s Athlete and Participant Safety/Risk Management Policies.

Limited exceptions to the Athlete and Participant Safety/Risk Management Policies may be granted by US Club Soccer on a case-by-case basis where appropriate, provided that such exceptions do not materially impact athlete safety.

Policy 13.02 – Eligibility Determinations. US Club Soccer will, in its absolute and sole discretion, make a determination for each potential or current US Club Soccer registrant, as follows:

- **Eligible:** An individual has met the criteria necessary for registration with US Club Soccer or participation in US Club Soccer activities.
- **Closed:** A determination of eligible or disqualified has not be made because of incomplete background screening, applicant withdrawal, lack of registration request, lack of response, or other similar situation. By definition, individuals with a “closed” determination are also ineligible.
- **Ineligible:** An individual has not met the criteria necessary for registration with US Club Soccer or participation in US Club Soccer activities, and as such, is prohibited from doing so.
- **Disqualified:** An individual has been prohibited from all involvement in US Club Soccer activities, including registration with US Club Soccer or participation in US Club Soccer programming. Disqualifications are usually based upon Athlete and Participant Safety/Risk Management Policies. Unless specified otherwise by US Club Soccer, the disqualified individual may reapply for registration or participation with US Club Soccer for the subsequent registration year. Depending on the circumstances, US Club Soccer may, at its sole discretion, extend the period of disqualification. By definition, all disqualified individuals are also ineligible.

Notification of disqualified individuals shall be submitted to the Federation in accordance with its Bylaw 212 (Reporting Risk Management Disqualification) and its Policy 601-10 (Recognition of Risk Management Actions).

Policy 13.03 – Disqualification of Individuals.

- (a) US Club Soccer may deny registration to and disqualify any individual, or deny membership to or otherwise discipline any Member which i) intentionally disregards US Club Soccer’s Athlete and Participant Safety/Risk Management Policies or registration procedures, or participates with players before registration is approved and an “eligible” determination is made; ii) continues to employ or utilize any individual who either fails to comply with the registration procedures; iii) falsifies information, completes an application on behalf of another; or iv) as a result of risk management procedures is determined by US Club Soccer to be unfit to continue in his or her current position, and is thereby disqualified.
- (b) US Club Soccer may use any information and its absolute discretion in determining disqualification, but at a minimum such information may include, without limitation, the following offenses: any felony, gross misdemeanors, violation of these guidelines, or driving offenses, including loss of license, reckless driving, impaired driving, or a DUI.

- (c) Any person accused of a sexual offense, an offense against a minor, or an offense involving physical violence may be asked to resign voluntarily or may be disqualified by US Club Soccer until the matter is resolved. Regardless of criminal or civil guilt in the alleged abuse, the continued presence of the person could be detrimental to the reputation of US Club Soccer and could be harmful to the participants. A person who is accused but later cleared of charges may apply to be reinstated within US Club Soccer.
- (d) In addition, an individual's actions may give rise to a suspension instead of a disqualification under US Club Soccer's Disciplinary Procedures.
- (e) US Club Soccer and its Members shall further comply with the Federation's Risk Management Bylaws, Rules, and Policies, including Bylaw 212, and Policies 212 and 601-10.

Policy 13.04 – Reporting.

- (a) **Mandatory Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse to Law Enforcement.** Pursuant to the Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and Safe Sport Authorization Act of 2017 (the "SafeSport Act"), which amended the Victims of Child Abuse Act of 1990, **all mandatory reporters are required to report suspected child abuse, including sexual abuse, within 24 hours to the local law enforcement agency or local child protective services agency that has jurisdiction to investigate reports of child abuse or to protect child abuse victims, or to the FBI. This requirement applies to, among others, all Covered Personnel.**

Specifically, the definition of mandatory reporter now includes any "adult who is authorized, by a national governing body, a member of a national governing body, or an amateur sports organization that participates in interstate or international amateur athletic competition, to interact with a minor or amateur athlete at an amateur sports organization facility or at any event sanctioned by a national governing body, a member of a national governing body, or such an amateur sports organization."

The reporting obligation is triggered when a mandatory reporter becomes aware of "facts that give reason to suspect" a child has suffered an incident of child abuse. Child abuse includes physical or mental injury, sexual abuse or exploitation, or negligent treatment of a child. Sexual abuse is defined to include the employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of a child to engage in, or assist another person to engage in, sexually explicit conduct or the rape, molestation, prostitution, or other form of sexual exploitation of children or incest with children. Mental injury means harm to a child's psychological or intellectual functioning which may be exhibited by severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal or outward aggressive behavior, or a combination of those behaviors, which may be demonstrated by a change in behavior, emotional response or cognition.

- (b) **Athlete and Participant Safety/Risk Management Reporting Form.** Beyond the obligations described in Section 13.04(a), Covered Personnel who are adults also have an affirmative duty to report suspected abuse or other misconduct. Incidents which must be reported include, but are not limited to, arrests for a felony or other crime of violence, sexual misconduct, or any other act or pattern of behavior which may have or in the future put youth players at risk. Members are encouraged to err on the side of reporting, and allow US Club Soccer to ascertain whether a disqualification from participation or other action is warranted.

US Club Soccer encourages reports to be made via the online form at: usclubsoccer.org/reportaconcern

Reports may be made anonymously, and there is no direct fee or cost involved in making a report. US Club Soccer does not tolerate retaliation of any kind. No individual who makes a good-faith report of misconduct will be subject to retaliation or any adverse employment consequence, as a result of making a report.

Policy 13.05 – Prohibited Conduct Policy. US Club Soccer's Prohibited Conduct Policy is included within this US Club Soccer Policy Manual as Appendix A.

Policy 13.06 – Prevention Policies. All Covered Personnel are required to abide by the following policies and procedures limiting one-on-one interactions between individual Youth Participants and any Participating Adult who is not their legal guardian during activities within US Club Soccer's jurisdiction.

(a) **One-on-One Interactions/Meetings.** The majority of child sexual abuse is perpetrated in isolated, one-on-one situations. By reducing such interactions between children and adults, the risk of child sexual abuse is reduced. However, one-on-one time with trusted adults is also healthy and valuable for a child. Policies concerning one-on-one interactions protect children while allowing for these beneficial relations.

(i) **Observable and interruptible.**

- a. One-on-one interactions between minors and an adult (who is not the minor's legal guardian) at a facility under the jurisdiction of US Club Soccer are permitted, if they occur at an observable and interruptible distance by another adult.
- b. Isolated, one-on-one interactions between minors and an adult (who is not the minor's legal guardian) at a facility under the jurisdiction of US Club Soccer are prohibited, except under emergency circumstances.

(ii) **Meetings.**

- a. Meetings between adults and minors at a facility under the jurisdiction of US Club Soccer may only occur if another adult is present, except under emergency circumstances. Such meetings must occur where interactions can be easily observed and at an interruptible distance from another adult.
- b. If a one-on-one meeting takes place in an office, the door to the office must remain unlocked and open. If available, it shall occur in an office that (if available) has windows, with the windows, blinds, and/or curtains remaining open during the meeting.

(iii) **Meetings with mental health care professionals.** If a mental health care professional meets with minors at a facility under the jurisdiction of US Club Soccer, a closed-door meeting may be permitted to protect patient privacy – provided that (1) the door remains unlocked, (2) another adult is present at the facility, (3) the other adult is advised that a closed-door meeting is occurring, and (4) written legal guardian consent is obtained by the mental health care professional, with a copy provided to US Club Soccer or the applicable US Club Soccer member organization directly operating the activity.

(iv) **Individual training sessions.** Individual training sessions between adults and minors are permitted at a facility under the jurisdiction of US Club Soccer if the training session is observable and interruptible by another adult. The adult must obtain the written permission of the minor's legal guardian in advance of the individual training session. Parents, guardians, and other caretakers must be allowed to observe the training session. Permission for individual training sessions must be obtained at least every six months.

(v) **Monitoring.** When one-on-one interactions between adults and minors occur at a facility under the jurisdiction of US Club Soccer, adults shall monitor these interactions. Monitoring includes: knowing that the one-on-one interaction is occurring, the approximate planned duration of the interaction, and randomly dropping in on the one-on-one.

(vi) **Out-of-program contacts.** Adults are prohibited from interacting one-on-one with unrelated minor athletes in settings outside of the program (including, but not limited to, one's home, restaurants, and individual transportation), unless parent/legal guardian consent is provided for each out-of-program contact. Such arrangements are nonetheless strongly discouraged.

(b) **Massages and Rubdowns.**

(i) **Licensed, certified professional.**

- a. Any massage or rubdown performed by an adult on a minor athlete at a facility under the jurisdiction of US Club Soccer or a training or competition venue is prohibited unless such adult is a licensed massage therapist.
- b. Any massage or rubdown performed at a facility under the jurisdiction of US Club Soccer or a training or competition venue by a licensed professional must be conducted in open and

interruptible locations. Any massage of a minor athlete must be done with at least one other adult present and must never be done with only the minor athlete and licensed massage therapist in the room.

- c. Even if a coach is a licensed massage therapist, the coach shall not perform a rubdown or massage of an athlete under any circumstances.
- (ii) Written consent. It is recommended that written consent by a legal guardian be provided before providing each massage or rubdown on a minor athlete. Parents must be permitted to be in the room as an observer.

(c) **Locker Rooms, Rest Rooms and Changing Areas.**

- (i) Use of recording devices. Use of any device's (including a cell phone's) recording capabilities, including voice recording, still cameras, and video cameras in locker rooms, rest rooms, changing areas, or similar spaces at a facility under the jurisdiction of US Club Soccer is prohibited. Exceptions may be made for media and championship celebrations, provided that such exceptions are approved by US Club Soccer or the applicable US Club Soccer member organization and two or more adults are present.
- (ii) Undress. Under no circumstances shall an unrelated adult at a facility under US Club Soccer's jurisdiction be undressed (disrobed or partial or full nudity where private body parts are exposed) in front of minor athletes.
- (iii) Isolated one-on-one interactions.
 - a. At no time are unrelated adults permitted to be alone with a minor in a locker room, rest room, or changing area when at a facility under US Club Soccer's jurisdiction, except under emergency circumstances.
 - b. If US Club Soccer or a US Club Soccer member organization is using a facility that has access to a single set of such facilities, times for use by adults, if any, shall be designated.
- (iv) Monitoring. The use of locker rooms, rest rooms, and changing areas at facilities under the jurisdiction of US Club Soccer shall be regularly and randomly monitored to ensure compliance with these policies.
- (v) Non-exclusive facility. If US Club Soccer or its members use a facility not under its jurisdiction (for, e.g., training or competition or similar events) and the facility is used by multiple constituents, adults in categories (i)b. through (i)d. are nonetheless required to adhere to the rules set forth here.
- (vi) To minimize the risk of bullying and hazing, locker room monitors should be used to ensure that minors are not left unattended in locker rooms, rest rooms, and changing areas.
- (vii) Adults shall make every effort to recognize when an athlete goes to the locker room or changing area during practice and competition and, if they do not return in a timely fashion, check on the athlete's whereabouts.
- (viii) Parents are discouraged from entering locker rooms and changing areas unless it is truly necessary. In those instances, it should only be a same-sex parent. If this is necessary, parents should let a coach or administrator know about this in advance.

(d) **Social Media & Electronic Communications.**

- (i) Content. All electronic communication originating from adults to amateur athletes who are minors must be professional in nature.
- (ii) Open and transparent.
 - a. If an adult needs to communicate directly with an amateur athlete who is a minor via electronic communications, another adult or the minor's legal guardian shall be copied.

- b. If a minor athlete communicates to the adult privately first, the adult should respond to the minor athlete with a copy to another adult or the minor’s legal guardian.
- c. An adult communicating electronically to the entire team shall copy another adult.
- d. Amateur athletes who are minors may “friend” the applicable organization’s official page.

(iii) Prohibited electronic communications.

- a. Adults are not permitted to communicate privately via electronic communications with amateur athletes who are minors, except under emergency circumstances.
- b. Adults are not permitted to “private message,” “instant message,” “direct message”, or send photos via Snapchat or Instagram to a minor athlete privately.
- c. Adults are not permitted to maintain social media connections with minors; such adults are not permitted to accept new personal page requests on social media platforms from amateur athletes who are minors and existing social media connections with amateur athletes who are minors shall be discontinued.

(iv) Requests to discontinue. Legal guardians may request in writing that their child not be contacted through any form of electronic communication by US Club Soccer or Covered Personnel. US Club Soccer and/or the applicable US Club Soccer member organization shall abide by any such request that their child not be contacted via electronic communication, absent emergency circumstances.

(v) Hours. It is recommended that real-time electronic communications only be sent between the hours of 8 a.m. and 8 p.m., unless there is a specific safety- or soccer-related need to communicate.

(vi) Monitoring.

- a. Social media pages shall be monitored and posts that violate US Club Soccer’s policies and practices for appropriate behavior shall be removed.
- b. The legal guardian or a minor athlete and the applicable organization’s administrator shall be informed of any prohibited posts.

(e) **Local Travel.** Local travel consists of travel to training, practice and competition that occurs locally and does not include coordinated overnight stay(s).

(i) Transportation.

- a. US Club Soccer generally does not arrange for local travel.
- b. Adults who are not also acting as a legal guardian, shall not ride in a vehicle alone with an unrelated athlete who is a minor, absent emergency circumstances, and may only drive with at least two other minor athletes or another adult at all times, unless otherwise agreed to in writing by the minor athlete’s parent/legal guardian in advance of each local travel.

(ii) Shared or Carpool Travel Arrangement. US Club Soccer encourages parents/legal guardians to pick up their minor athlete first and drop off their minor athlete last in any shared or carpool travel arrangement.

(iii) It is recommended that parents/legal guardians receive education concerning child abuse prevention before providing consent for their minor to travel alone with an adult.

(f) **Team Travel.** Team travel is travel to a competition or other team activity that US Club Soccer or a Member Organization plans and supervises.

- (i) **Team/competition travel.** When only one adult and one minor athlete travel to a competition, the minor athlete must have his/her legal guardian's written permission in advance and for each competition to travel alone with the adult.
- (ii) **Hotel rooms.** Adults shall not share a hotel room or other sleeping arrangement with a minor athlete (unless the adult is the legal guardian, sibling, or is otherwise related to the minor athlete).
- (iii) **Meetings.**
 - a. Meetings shall be conducted consistent with US Club Soccer's policy for one-on-one interactions – i.e., any such meeting shall be observable and interruptible.
 - b. Meetings shall not be conducted in a hotel room.
- (iv) It is recommended that team travel policies are signed and agreed to by all minor athletes, parents, and adults traveling with the organization.
- (v) It is recommended that adults who travel with the organization must successfully pass a criminal background check and other screening requirements consistent with the organization's policies.
- (vi) During team travel, when doing room checks, attending team meetings and/or other activities, two-deep leadership and observable and interruptible environments should be maintained.
- (vii) It is recommended that parents/legal guardians receive education concerning child abuse prevention before providing consent for their minor to travel alone with an adult.

(g) **Minor Athletes Who Become Adult Athletes.** A minor athlete that reaches the age of majority may not be subject to Prevention Policies in their capacity as an athlete, and when interacting with Youth Participants who are 16 or older. Prevention Policies must be in effect when this now age of majority athlete interacts with minor athletes 15 or younger. (For example, an 18-year-old teammate is not necessarily subject to disciplinary action for emailing a 16-year-old teammate unless that email would, for example, violate the Prohibited Conduct Policy.) Should a minor athlete reach the age of majority and then obtain a position that presents a potential power imbalance, such as become a coach, the individual is subject to Prevention Policies.

Policy 13.07 – Risk Management Committee.

- (a) The primary responsibilities of the US Club Soccer Risk Management Committee are as follows:
 - (i) Conduct a review or hearing of an appeal of an individual who has been disqualified from registration with US Club Soccer or participation in US Club Soccer programming.
 - (ii) In accordance with Federation Policy 601-10 (Recognition of Risk Management Actions), conduct a review or hearing to determine eligibility for registration or participation with US Club Soccer of an individual who has been disqualified or disciplined for violation of another Federation Organization Member's Risk Management program.
 - (iii) Review violations of US Club Soccer's Athlete and Participant Safety/Risk Management Policies.

The committee may undertake additional responsibilities on an as-needed basis.

- (b) A US Club Soccer Risk Management Committee shall be appointed by the Chairperson of US Club Soccer's Board of Directors for each review or hearing, and consist of three individuals, as follows:
 - Two (2) US Club Soccer Board of Directors members
 - The US Club Soccer CEO/Executive Director or his or her designee

One individual shall be designated as the Risk Management Committee Chairperson.

Policy 13.08 – Risk Management Appeals. Individuals who have been disqualified from registration or participation with US Club Soccer may appeal the determination to the US Club Soccer Risk Management Committee within 15 calendar days of such determination by submitting a letter indicating such appeal, along with supporting material, to:

Attn Risk Management Committee
US Club Soccer
192 East Bay Street, Suite 301
Charleston, SC 29401

The information submitted, or otherwise available and relevant, will be shared with the members of the Risk Management Committee. The Risk Management Committee shall then determine next steps, and ultimately render a final decision.

Policy 13.09 – Background Screening.

(a) Background screening is required of the following individuals:

- (i) Participating Adults
- (ii) Member Organization Board of Directors, officers, and directors
- (iii) Individuals affiliated with a Member Organization who have access to personally identifiable information
- (iv) US Club Soccer staff and board members.

Direct Participating Adults must complete background screening via the US Club Soccer staff registration process. For other individuals, US Club Soccer staff registration may be used to complete background screening requirements, but it is not required. Those individuals are nevertheless required to abide by the background screening requirements outlined herein, and compliance is the responsibility of the Member Organization.

(b) Background screening of minors is not required.

(c) Timing. Background screening is required by the earlier of prior to regular contact with a Youth Participant, or within the first 45 days of the individual taking on the roles specified or that otherwise provide access to Youth Participants, and every other year thereafter.

Policy 13.10 – U.S. Center for SafeSport Training.

(a) SafeSport Core and Refresher Training. Completion of the U.S. Center for SafeSport’s Core Training is required of the following individuals, by the earlier of prior to regular contact with a Youth Participant, or within the first 45 days of the individual taking on the roles specified or that otherwise provide access to Youth Participants. Thereafter, the U.S. Center for SafeSport’s Refresher Training is required on an annual basis following completion of the Core training.

- (i) Participating Adults
- (ii) Member Organization Board of Directors, officers, and directors
- (iii) Individuals affiliated with a Member Organization who have access to personally identifiable information
- (iv) US Club Soccer staff and board members.

Direct Participating Adults must complete or document compliance with SafeSport Training via the US Club Soccer staff registration process. For other individuals, US Club Soccer staff registration may be used to complete or document compliance with SafeSport Training requirements, but it is not required. Those individuals are nevertheless required to abide by the SafeSport Training requirements outlined herein, and compliance is the responsibility of the US Club Soccer Member Organization.

US Club Soccer also recommends that all players age 18 or older be in compliance with the SafeSport Training requirements outlined herein.

The U.S. Soccer access code may be needed to access SafeSport Training if the automated US Club Soccer staff registration process is not being used. The U.S. Soccer access code and instructions may be obtained via usclubsoccer.org or by emailing SafeSport@usclubsoccer.org.

- (b) For Youth Participants. US Club Soccer strongly encourages all Youth Participants, subject to parental consent, to take the U.S. Center for SafeSport Youth Athlete Training on an annual basis. The training is free and available at athletesafety.org.
- (c) For parents of Youth Participants. US Club Soccer strongly encourages all parents of Youth Participants to take the U.S. Center for SafeSport Parent's Guide to Misconduct in Sport training on an annual basis. The training is free and available at athletesafety.org.

Policy 13.11 – Compliance.

- (a) US Club Soccer reserves the right to audit, require certifications of compliance with, or otherwise review Members' compliance with US Club Soccer's Athlete and Participant Safety/Risk Management Policies.
- (b) Violation of the Athlete and Participant Safety/Risk Management Policies may result in disqualification and/or disciplinary action with respect to the applicable Covered Personnel and/or Member Organization, in accordance with US Club Soccer and/or U.S. Soccer Bylaws, Policies and Rules.
- (c) Third-party Participating Adult Certification Forms. The following forms are available via usclubsoccer.org and may be used by Member Organizations to document compliance by Third-party Participating Adults with US Club Soccer's Athlete and Participant Safety/Risk Management Policies.
 - i. US Club Soccer Third-party Participating Adult Individual Certification Form
 - ii. US Club Soccer Third-party Participating Adult Group Certification Form

It is the responsibility of the Member Organization to collect and retain these forms. While these forms are provided to aid in documenting compliance, Member Organizations are not required to use them if compliance is documented via another method.

SECTION 14 – DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES:

Policy 14.01 – General. The authority to discipline US Club Soccer Members and its players, coaches, and administrators is contained in the US Club Soccer (NACSC) Bylaws and Section 9 of the Policies, or the rules of an individual competition, and these procedures shall be read in conjunction with those documents.

Outlined herein are the Procedures for disciplinary actions and Appeals for US Club Soccer Members, their coaches, administrators, players, fans, and other personnel, as well as for other affiliated events and organizations (i.e. tournaments and leagues) sanctioned by US Club Soccer.

For purposes of these Rules, a hearing committee may hear either a matter of original jurisdiction, or an appeal. There are two categories of hearing committees:

- **Disciplinary Committee**, which shall refer to a hearing committee other than at the US Club Soccer level (i.e. tournaments and leagues); or a
- **Discipline Committee**, which shall refer to a US Club Soccer hearing committee.

These Rules and Procedures include the following actions:

- (a) Appeals – That arise from an adverse decision from a hearing held at a lower level which was either an Appeal, an original disciplinary hearing, or denial of membership. Other than a parent or guardian who files for a minor child, only those principal parties adversely affected by the original action shall have standing to Appeal.
 - (i) Generally, an Appeal shall not have the effect of staying a previous decision, which remains in force and effect pending the results of the Appeal. A decision may only be stayed if the hearing committee determines that:
 - a. The appellant will suffer irreparable harm if the decision is not stayed;
 - and,
 - b. The Appeal has a reasonable likelihood of success.
 - (ii) An Appeal is not a retrial, and generally shall be limited to a review of the matters raised at the hearing. A hearing committee may ask for additional information from the parties in exceptional circumstances. In all Appeals, however, the parties may present written arguments in support of their positions.
 - (iii) The hearing committee must find the prior decision was clearly erroneous or the appellant’s right to due process was violated to reverse a prior decision.
 - (iv) The imposition of discipline which does not extend or have consequences beyond the tournament competition itself shall not be appealable.
 - (v) If US Club Soccer refuses to take an Appeal, the appellant is then permitted to appeal the matter to the Federation, which may or may not accept an appeal, depending upon their rules.

For information on appeals relating to risk management, see Section 13.

- (b) Discipline Hearing – Is an original US Club Soccer hearing that results from a charge brought against a Club or League Member, or an individual, from either the US Club Soccer Board of Directors or Executive Director; or from a written allegation, such as a game incident report or other Allegation of Misconduct, brought by a Member Club or other US Club Soccer Members, the Federation, or US Club Soccer sanctioned Leagues, tournaments, or other events, and includes referees’ allegations of assault or abuse.
 - (i) An Allegation of Misconduct is a written allegation which outlines in detail the facts and alleged misconduct or a referee report and supplemental referee information. All allegations must be in writing.
- (c) Member Termination Hearing – Is an original action against a Member Club or League pursuant to Section VII of the Bylaws.
- (d) Inactive Status – Need not result from a disciplinary action pursuant to these rules. It is the result of an administrative action taken by US Club Soccer for non-payment of financial obligations or not registering the requisite number of teams to maintain active status.
- (e) Ineligibility – Does not result from a disciplinary action (as opposed to suspension), but from a failure of a player or coach to comply with administrative rules and procedures, such as registration requirements or roster rules.
- (f) Disqualification – Is limited to staff, pursuant to Section 13, and arises out of information provided on the background check application, falsification of or failure to submit an application, or the background check results. Disqualification is from all US Club Soccer-affiliated activities, and potentially all Federation affiliates’ activities.
- (g) Protests – For any matters arising from a competition which do not involve the discipline of a Club, player, or other individual are considered protests, and are set forth and in US Club Soccer Policy 8.05.

Policy 14.02 – Levels of Authority. The levels of disciplinary authority are as set forth herein. Unless stated otherwise herein, or otherwise precluded based on a US Club Soccer Bylaw or Policy, the next level shall hear Appeals from decisions of the next lower level:

- (a) Level #1: Competition Disciplinary Committees and Actions by the US Club Soccer Executive Director.

- (i) Leagues, tournaments, and other competitions sanctioned by US Club Soccer shall establish their own protest and disciplinary committees and procedures, which must be approved by US Club Soccer at the time of sanctioning. Other than an allegation of referee assault or abuse, all protest and disciplinary matters arising out of these competitions may be heard by these committees. If the Disciplinary Committee fails to take any action on a written allegation, the petitioner may forward the matter to the US Club Soccer Discipline Committee.
 - (ii) Penalties levied by a tournament disciplinary committee shall not extend beyond the tournament, other than the possibility of suspension from the same tournament in the future. The committee may file an Allegation of Misconduct with the US Club Soccer Discipline Committee if they believe other action may be warranted. All passes shall be returned to the team at the end of the tournament, other than in the case of an alleged referee assault or abuse.
 - (iii) The US Club Soccer Executive Director may take disciplinary action pursuant to Policy 9.03, but shall not have authority to hear Appeals.
- (b) Level #2: US Club Soccer Discipline Committee.
- (i) The US Club Soccer Discipline Committee shall be appointed by the US Club Soccer Board Chairman, or his designee. It may hear Appeals from Policy 14.02(a) actions, hold original hearings on matters forwarded to them without action by a competition's Disciplinary Committee or the US Club Soccer Executive Director, may hold original disciplinary hearings based on an Allegation of Misconduct, and shall hear all charges of referee assault or abuse. Whether or not to assume jurisdiction or hold a hearing is a decision for the Discipline Committee.
- (c) Level #3: US Club Soccer Board.
- (ii) The US Club Soccer Board may hear any Appeals from disciplinary actions or Appeal decisions of the US Club Soccer Discipline Committee, except for appeals from a finding of referee assault or abuse, which are appealable directly to the Federation Appeals Committee. The Board Chairman may appoint a subset of the Board (consisting of a minimum of three (3) Board members) to conduct a hearing. If the Board chooses not to hear an Appeal, the appellant may then appeal directly to the Federation Appeals Committee.
 - (iii) Pursuant to Bylaw VII, other than in the case of non-payment of dues and fees where a hearing is not required, any hearing to terminate a US Club Soccer Organization Member shall be before the US Club Soccer Board.

Policy 14.03 – General Procedures. The following procedures shall apply to all levels of authority:

- (a) Any hearing under these rules shall be the result of a written allegation, with an Allegation of Misconduct being the preferred format. No hearing shall result from circumstances which are only communicated orally.
- (b) No person may sit on a hearing committee when any conflict of interest exists. Any such individual shall recuse himself from such committee. If a league or tournament authority has an institutional conflict of interest with the issue being adjudicated, then the matter shall be forwarded to the Discipline Committee.
- (c) The hearing and adjudication of any written allegation should be completed within thirty (30) days of its filing (however, a competition protest shall be heard as expeditiously as possible). If a decision is not reached within the thirty (30) day period, the matter may be submitted by the petitioner to the next discipline level and any fee previously submitted shall be applied.
- (d) The decisions and/or disciplinary sanctions imposed as the result of a hearing shall be binding on all disciplinary authorities, and shall be recognized by all US Club Soccer-affiliated organizations.
- (e) Official notifications and discipline decisions may be sent by email, but also by certified or registered first-class mail—return receipt requested, or by two-day or overnight service, to the address indicated on the Club registration or roster form, or on the petitioner's written allegation.

Policy 14.04 – Filing Requirements.

- (a) An Appeal or allegation shall be in writing (i.e. written allegation) and include:
 - The nature and specifics of the complaint;
 - A list of the Bylaws, Policies, or rules that have been violated;
 - A statement of the requested result;
 - The applicable filing fee, if any.
- (b) A written allegation, along with all supporting documents, shall be forwarded by Registered or Certified U. S. Mail-return receipt requested to the disciplinary committee set forth in the competition rules, or to the US Club Soccer Discipline Committee at:

Attn: Discipline Committee
US Club Soccer
192 East Bay Street, Suite 301
Charleston, SC 29401

- (c) In the case of an Appeal to US Club Soccer, the Appeal must be placed in the mail and postmarked within five (5) days of the receipt by the appellant of the decision being appealed (Sundays & Holidays excluded), unless the rules of the competition state otherwise, and sent to the address in (b) above.
- (d) Appeals and Allegations of Misconduct shall be submitted on the required form, although failure to do so shall not be fatal to the cause of action or rights of the petitioner. An allegation of referee assault or abuse may be submitted on an Allegation of Misconduct form, a competition incident report, or a referee report.
- (e) The schedule of filing fees and number of copies required are as follows:
 - (i) Competition Disciplinary Committee: The filing fee and number of copies shall be established by the competition authority.
 - (ii) Appeal to the US Club Soccer Discipline Committee or US Club Soccer Board: Filing fee for an Appeal: \$200, and 5 copies of all relevant documents. If the Appeal is granted, the filing fee shall be returned to the appellant.
 - (iv) Allegation of Misconduct to US Club Soccer: Filing fee of \$200, and 5 copies of all relevant documents.
 - (v) Allegation of referee assault or abuse: No fee and only the original report must be filed initially.

Policy 14.05 – Pre-hearing Procedures. Upon receipt of a written allegation, the hearing committee (Disciplinary Committee, US Club Soccer Discipline Committee, or US Club Soccer Board) shall initially determine if the parties have standing and if the matter has been properly filed. It will also determine if it has the necessary information to adjudicate the matter, including contact names and addresses for official notifications, statements of fact, and relevant documents, and in the case of an Appeal the prior official document directory. The hearing committee may ask for additional information or clarifications, or may hold an initial conference among the parties to discuss procedural matters.

- (a) In the case of an Appeal, all original copies of evidence submitted shall be retained by the hearing committee at which the evidence was first submitted. The official document directory submitted to the Discipline Committee or US Club Soccer Board in an Appeal shall be a true and exact copy of all original evidence submitted and accepted at the lower-level hearing. The directory shall be numbered, indexed, and signed as verified by the original hearing chairman and forwarded by certified mail, with a duplicate packet sent to the petitioner/appellant. In special circumstances, the hearing committee may require the original copy(s) of a specific document(s).
- (b) The defendant in a disciplinary hearing shall receive a written notice of the charges and the possible consequences if determined to be true.
- (c) The hearing committee shall establish a time schedule for the parties to provide a list of witnesses and copies of any evidence to be presented, which the committee shall then provide to the other party. The committee shall establish a time frame for the defendant or respondent to file a rebuttal to the charges, allowing a reasonable amount of time to do so, and an additional period for the appellant or petitioner to respond.

- (d) The date for the hearing shall be published in a notice of hearing, and sent to all parties and hearing committee members. A reasonable time shall be allowed from the time of notice of the charges and the hearing date to allow for preparation, and the hearing shall be held at a time and place so as to make it reasonably practical for the defendant to participate.

Policy 14.06 – Hearing Procedures.

- (a) A closed hearing will normally be held in the case of an Appeal to the Disciplinary Committee or US Club Soccer Board, although the Committee may conduct a live hearing if it so chooses.
- (b) An open hearing, in person, must be held in any matter before a competition disciplinary committee. All other original jurisdiction hearings or Appeals may be in person or by teleconference.
 - (i) If by teleconference, the Committee shall assume the cost, and the connection must allow all parties to hear each other.
- (c) At the original hearing on any issue, all documentary evidence such as player passes, team rosters, referee game reports, letters, proof of age documents, photographs and other sources of written or printed information shall be an original or official version only. No photocopies or other reproductions shall be acceptable without the prior written permission of the hearing chairman.
 - (i) A referee game report is considered the official report of the game. The referee and/or assistant referee shall be present if a live, open hearing, or available telephonically if a teleconference, to answer questions at the hearing.
- (d) Testimony shall be limited to the principle parties, eyewitnesses, and recognized authorities on the subject (such as a registrar on registration matters). Character witnesses and other third-party witnesses shall not be allowed. The parties shall have the right to question each other's witnesses.
 - (i) A party may have the hearing recorded, but the hearing committee shall determine the method of recording and may charge parties a reasonable amount for a copy of such recording.
- (e) Minors under the age of 18 must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian.
- (f) Testimony and the number of witnesses may be restricted with respect to time as stipulated in the notice of hearing sent to the principle parties.
- (g) In the event of the defendant's inability, failure, or refusal to participate after being properly notified, the hearing committee may either reschedule the hearing or proceed with the hearing using the evidence on hand to render a decision.
- (h) The order of testimony shall be:
 - Petitioner or appellant presents case;
 - Witnesses for petitioner called individually;
 - Defendant or respondent presents case;
 - Witnesses for defendant called individually;
 - Recall any witnesses as necessary;
 - Petitioner or appellant closing statement;
 - Defendant or respondent closing statement
- (i) It is not the intention of the hearing to abide by strict rules of evidence as would occur in a court of law. The hearing chairman may exercise latitude in attempting to determine the facts of the case. The basic tenant to be followed is that each party shall be afforded an equal opportunity to present their case.
- (j) Petitioners and defendants are allowed to remain in the hearing room or on the phone throughout the testimony phase of the hearing. They must be allowed to examine any and all documentary evidence presented and accepted at the hearing. Witnesses shall only be in the hearing room or on the phone when they testify.

- (k) Copies of all written evidence that a party wishes to present shall be given to the hearing committee, defendant, and petitioner.
- (l) All questions or statements from involved parties shall be addressed to the hearing chairman who will ask the appropriate individual for an answer or rebuttal if the chairman deems the question pertinent.
- (m) Witnesses may be recalled after initial testimony for further questioning and/or clarification of earlier testimony.
- (n) An attorney or other advisor may counsel either party at a hearing; however, the advisor may not participate directly in the proceedings and will restrict his comments and advice to the party he is advising. An advisor may not question the witnesses, present oral arguments, or interrupt or object to the conduct of the proceedings. A disciplinary hearing is an administrative hearing, not a court of law. The hearing chairman may order an advisor out of the hearing room or off the call if he fails to properly conduct himself according to this paragraph.
- (o) The hearing committee may also be advised by an attorney.
- (p) No ex parte communication shall be allowed between a party and any person involved in making a decision or procedural determination except to provide explanations involving procedures to be followed.
- (q) After the hearing, the parties shall be excused and the hearing committee shall commence its deliberations. The committee can choose to recess and meet during the hearing for a short period of time if it so chooses.

Policy 14.07 – Decisions.

- (a) The members of a hearing committee shall decide each issue arising from the hearing, but respond only to the specific issues and allegations contained in the written Appeal or allegation. Any other issue and/or rule violation, which may become known during the course of the hearing, shall be referred to the appropriate authority. This referral may be accompanied with a recommendation for appropriate action. Notice of the referral shall be included in the written decision.
- (b) The hearing committee shall announce its decision in written form and provide it to the parties, if possible, within seventy-two (72) hours of the conclusions of deliberations (Sundays and holidays excluded).
 - (i) Notification of the decision shall be communicated to the principle parties at the same time and by the same method, as set forth in Policy 14.03(e). It is recognized, however, that it may be prudent to also communicate the decision to the parties orally.
 - (ii) In the case of competition disciplinary committee decisions, the decision shall also be sent to the US Club Soccer office set forth in Policy 14.04(b).
- (c) Written notification of the decision shall include a statement of the procedure for Appeal.

Policy 14.08 – Misconduct Towards A Game Official (Referee or Assistant). These rules shall be read in conjunction with Policies and Bylaws of the Federation, and in particular Policy 531-9 (definition, procedures, and penalties for abuse or assault) and Bylaw 705 (appeals). Misconduct against referees may occur before, during, and after the game, including travel to and from the game. Misconduct may also occur at later times when directly related to duties of a game official as a referee.

- (a) When any affiliated player, coach, manager, assistant coach, club league official or game official allegedly assaults or abuses a referee, the original jurisdiction to adjudicate the matter shall vest immediately in US Club Soccer’s Discipline Committee.
 - (i) When an allegation of assault is verified by US Club Soccer, the accused shall be automatically suspended until the alleged assault is adjudicated.
- (b) The Discipline Committee shall hold a disciplinary hearing within 30 days of the alleged assault. If the Committee does not adjudicate the matter within that period of time, original jurisdiction shall immediately vest in the Federation Appeals Committee to adjudicate the matter.
 - (i) Failure to hold the initial hearing shall not rescind the automatic suspension.

- (c) Anyone who is found to have committed the assault or abuse may Appeal the decision directly to the Federation, pursuant to Bylaw 705, and the related Policies.

Policy 14.09 – Reporting Referee Assault and Abuse.

- (a) If procedures for the reporting of referee assault or abuse are not established by the Federation, the procedures herein shall apply.
- (b) Referees shall transmit a written report of the alleged assault and/or abuse within forty-eight (48) hours of the incident (unless there is a valid reason for later reporting) to US Club Soccer, utilizing either a referee game report and supplemental report or a competition incident report. For tournaments or special events, the referee shall transmit a written report to the tournament director on the day of the incident. In determining to which Federation affiliate organization to send the report, the referee shall note which Federation affiliates' registration passcards were utilized during the game at issue.
- (c) Upon any allegation of an assault on a referee or assistant referee, the original jurisdiction to adjudicate the matter shall immediately vest in US Club Soccer, which shall inform the competition authority and request further information, if available.

Policy 14.10 – Reporting Misconduct Towards a Non-Referee. When it shall be alleged that any US Club Soccer-affiliated player, coach, administrator, or other Club personnel or fan has committed an assault upon another at any US Club Soccer-sanctioned game or event, the league, tournament host Club, or other competition authority shall immediately notify US Club Soccer within seventy-two (72) hours of the alleged offense by completing a competition incident report. US Club Soccer will determine whether to file an Allegation of Misconduct if one is not filed by another individual and refer the matter to the competition's disciplinary committee or the US Club Soccer Discipline Committee.

- (a) Upon receipt of a competition incident report that an affiliated player, coach, administrator, or member, has committed an assault upon another, the adjudicating authority shall immediately suspend the accused individual(s). The Disciplinary Committee or Discipline Committee shall have full authority to assess penalties such as, but not limited to, suspension, revocation, or probation prior to a hearing.
- (b) The definition of "assault" for this policy shall include, but is not limited to the following act or acts committed upon an affiliated player, coach, administrator, member, or spectator at an affiliated game: the act of kicking, punching, choking, spitting on, grabbing or bodily running into, the act of kicking or throwing any object at another player, coach, administrator, or spectator that could inflict injury or damage to said person or his/her personal property, i.e., car, equipment, etc.
- (c) Disciplinary sanction or suspension, imposed as the result of an assault, shall remain in full force and effect and unless it is overturned on Appeal or review, regardless of the level at which it was imposed.

Policy 14.11 – Exhausting Remedies. No US Club Soccer-sanctioned league, US Club Soccer Member, coach, administrator, team, referee, player, member or their representative may invoke the aid of the State or Federal courts without first exhausting US Club Soccer's appeal rules, and any applicable Federation Policies, including grievance and appeal actions. Any person invoking such aid shall be subject to the penalties cited below:

- Court costs.
- Attorney fees.
- Reasonable compensation for the time spent by US Club Soccer Officers and employees in responding to and defending allegations in the action, including responses to discovery court appearance.
- Travel expenses.
- Expenses for holding special US Club Soccer Board or Committee meetings necessitated by Court action.

Policy 14.12 – Interference and Non-Participation.

- (a) Any person who directly or indirectly attempts to threaten, dissuade, interfere, influence or impede any witness, petitioner or other party in connection with any disciplinary action or investigation is subject to the sanctions of probation, suspension, and fines.

- (b) Any person who fails to appear after receiving a written notice to appear as a witness or as a defendant at a disciplinary hearing is subject to the sanctions of probation, suspension, and fines.

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APPENDIX A: US Club Soccer Prohibited Conduct Policy

This policy set forth in this Appendix A ("Policy") applies to all Covered Personnel (as that term is defined in Policy 13.01) as well as conduct by any subcontractor, supplier, customer or third party and their employees in their dealings with US Club Soccer and personnel of Member Organizations. This Policy has been adopted from and is consistent with U.S. Soccer's Prohibited Conduct Policy.

US Club Soccer is committed to maintaining a work environment that is free from all forms of discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of any legally protected status. Accordingly, US Club Soccer does not permit any form of unlawful harassment, discrimination or intimidation against its employees by anyone, including managers, supervisors, coworkers, executives, directors, officers, other employees, vendors, clients, customers or third parties. Protected status includes race, color, age, religion, marital status, sex, ancestry, national origin, citizenship, veteran's status, pregnancy, disability, sexual orientation, protected activity, or any other characteristic protected by federal, state or local law. The policy also prohibits harassment on the basis of the protected status of an individual's relatives, friends or associates.

US Club Soccer is also committed to maintaining a work environment that is free from all forms of sexual abuse, sexual misconduct, emotional misconduct, physical misconduct, bullying and hazing.

Any violation of this Policy by Covered Personnel may subject the Covered Personnel to disciplinary action. Appropriate action also will be taken against any subcontractor, supplier, or customer found in violation of this Policy.

This Policy is in addition to all other provisions of the US Club Soccer Bylaws, Policies and Rules as well as all applicable federal, state and local laws, rules and regulations. It is the obligation of all Covered Personnel to know and comply with all applicable federal, state and local laws, rules and regulations.

HARASSMENT:

Harassment consists of unwelcome conduct, whether verbal, physical or visual, that is based upon a person's protected status. US Club Soccer will not tolerate harassing conduct that affects tangible job benefits, that unreasonably interferes with an individual's work performance, or safety, or that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

Among the types of conduct prohibited by this Policy are epithets, slurs, negative stereotyping or intimidating acts based on an individual's protected status and the circulation or posting of written or graphic materials that show hostility toward an individual because of his or her protected status.

Prohibited conduct can also include jokes, kidding, or teasing about another person's protected status. While harassing conduct is unlawful only if it affects tangible job benefits and/or interferes unreasonably with work performance and creates an abusive or hostile work environment, this Policy forbids harassing conduct even when it does not rise to the level of a violation of law.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT:

Sexual harassment deserves special mention. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, written, or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

- submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of the individual's employment;
- submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for an employment decision affecting that individual; or
- such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance and creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

Sexual harassment may involve individuals of the same or different gender. It may also occur between individuals of any employment status.

Examples of conduct which may constitute sexual harassment and are prohibited by this Policy include, but are not limited to:

- unnecessary touching, patting, hugging, pinching, or brushing against a person’s body;
- staring, ogling, leering, or whistling at a person;
- continued or repeated verbal abuse of a sexual nature;
- sexually explicit statements, sexual flirtations, advances, propositions, subtle pressure for sexual activity, comments, questions, jokes, or anecdotes;
- graphic or degrading comments about a person’s clothing, body or sexual activity;
- sexually suggestive objects, cartoons, posters, calendars, or pictures in the workplace;
- suggestive or obscene letters, notes or invitations;
- harassing use of electronic mail, electronic or instant messaging, or telephone communication systems; or
- other physical or verbal conduct of a sexual nature.

US Club Soccer prohibits managers and supervisors from threatening or insinuating, either explicitly or implicitly, that an employee’s submission to or rejection of sexual advances will in any way influence any personnel decision regarding that employee’s wages, assigned duties, advancement, evaluation, shifts, career development, or any other condition of employment.

RACIAL, RELIGIOUS, OR NATIONAL ORIGIN HARASSMENT:

Racial, religious, or national origin harassment deserves special mention as well, and is expressly prohibited by US Club Soccer. Racial, religious, or national origin harassment includes any verbal, written, or physical act in which race, religion, or national origin is used or implied in a manner which would make a reasonable person uncomfortable in the work environment or which would interfere with the person’s ability to perform the job. Examples of race, religious or national origin harassment may include, but are not limited to:

- jokes, which include reference to race, religion, or national origin;
- the display or use of objects or pictures which adversely reflect on a person’s race, religion, or national origin; or
- use of pejorative or demeaning language regarding a person’s race, religion, or national origin.

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE:

Any sexual activity with a child is prohibited. This includes sexual contact with a child that is accomplished by deception, manipulation, force or threat of force, regardless of the age of the participants, and all sexual interactions between an adult and a child, regardless of whether there is deception, or the child understands the sexual nature of the activity.

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT:

Any sexual interaction between an athlete and an individual with evaluative, direct or indirect authority is prohibited. Such relationships involve an imbalance of power and are likely to impair judgment or be exploitative. This section does not apply to a pre-existing relationship between two spouses or life partners.

EMOTIONAL MISCONDUCT:

Emotional misconduct in all forms is prohibited. Emotional misconduct is a pattern of deliberate, non-contact behavior that has the potential to cause emotional or psychological harm to another person. Non-contact behaviors include verbal acts, physical acts, or acts that deny attention or support; or any act or conduct described as emotional abuse or misconduct under federal or state law (e.g. child abuse, child neglect). Emotional misconduct does not include professionally-accepted coaching methods of skill enhancement, physical conditioning, team building, appropriate discipline or improving athletic performance.

PHYSICAL MISCONDUCT:

Physical misconduct in all forms is prohibited. Physical misconduct is defined as contact or non-contact conduct that results in, or reasonably threatens to, cause physical harm to another person; or any act or conduct described as physical abuse or misconduct under federal or state law (e.g. child abuse, child neglect, assault). Physical misconduct does not include professionally-accepted coaching methods of skill enhancement, physical conditioning, team building, appropriate discipline or improving athletic performance. For example, hitting and punching are well-regulated forms of contact in combat sports, but have no place in soccer.

BULLYING:

Intentional, persistent and repeated pattern of committing or willfully tolerating physical and non-physical behaviors that are intended, or have the reasonable potential, to cause fear, humiliation or physical harm in an attempt to socially exclude, diminish or isolate the targeted athlete(s), as a condition of membership are prohibited. Bullying does not include group or team behaviors that (a) are meant to establish normative team behaviors, or (b) promote team cohesion.

Coercing, requiring, forcing or willfully tolerating any humiliating, unwelcome or dangerous activity that serves as a condition for (a) joining a group or (b) being socially accepted by a group's members are prohibited. Hazing does not include group or team activities that (a) are meant to establish normative team behaviors or (b) promote team cohesion.

All Covered Personnel are responsible to help ensure that we avoid misconduct. US Club Soccer cannot act to eliminate misconduct unless it has notice of the conduct. Covered Personnel are thus charged with reporting any concerns regarding compliance with its Athlete and Participant Safety/Risk Management Policies. For the avoidance of doubt, in some instances, Covered Personnel will be required to report to law enforcement.

Furthermore, US Club Soccer employees are responsible to help assure that the work environment, on or off-premises, is free from harassment. Additionally, US Club Soccer expects all Member Organizations to have similar policies for their respective employees. All employees have an obligation to promptly report any and all allegedly harassing conduct they are the subject of, that they learn of, or that they witness. US Club Soccer's policy provides for immediate notice of problems to the persons designated in this Policy so that we may address and resolve any problems as quickly as possible.

An employee must report the harassing conduct to either:

- The person to whom you report (supervisor or manager);
- Department Head;
- The Human Resources Department;
- The Legal Department;
- The Chief Executive Officer; or
- Athlete and Participant Safety/Risk Management Reporting Form

If the employee feels uncomfortable going to his or her supervisor with the complaint, he/she must report the matter to any other member of management as designated above.

This Policy does not require reporting the misconduct to any individual who is creating the harassment or discrimination. All Covered Personnel have an obligation to cooperate in any investigation of a complaint of misconduct, including providing any and all information concerning the complaint. Failure to do so may be a violation of this Policy.

US Club Soccer's Prohibited Conduct Policy offers its employees greater protection from harassment than does the law. Consequently, Covered Personnel who are found to have violated US Club Soccer's Prohibited Conduct Policy shall be subject to corrective action, discipline or termination, even in cases where applicable laws may not have been violated and without regard to whether the conduct constitutes a violation of the law.

An employee wishing to file a complaint outside the Federation may also contact either the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission or the fair employment agency in his or her state.

TRAINING AND EDUCATION:

See Section 13.10 of the US Club Soccer Policy Manual.

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