

SYSA Policy about Disciplinary, Complaints and Grievances

1. Match-related incidents that involve a referee's filing of a misconduct report or supplemental report will be handled by the SYSA Disciplinary Committee.
2. Incidents that require the Disciplinary Committee's adjudication under the SYSA Rules of Competition, Administrative Regulations or SYSA Bylaws will be heard by the Disciplinary Committee.
3. Other incidents that involve teams or parties from the same or different clubs involved in association-level play may be handled by the Disciplinary Committee at that committee's option, through the efforts of the Disciplinary Representatives of the clubs.
4. For all other incidents, the desired course of action is mediation that arrives at a mutually acceptable result. If the incident or complaint involves parties from the same SYSA club, the course of mediation will begin at the club level; if between parties from different SYSA clubs, through a cooperative effort between the club presidents or other representatives of the clubs with guidance from the SYSA Executive Director or President as necessary.
5. If the parties involved as mediators perceive that they have an individual conflict of interest, or if mediation fails to arrive at a mutually acceptable result, the mediation effort shall proceed to the next level; from intraclub to SYSA, or from SYSA to Washington Youth Soccer.
6. SYSA may at its option retain professional mediation services, or suggest that both parties agree to binding arbitration by a professional.
7. If the above avenues for mediation are exhausted and either party still feels aggrieved, then SYSA is duty-bound to provide equitable due process to protect individuals' right to participate as mandated by the USSF.
 - a. SYSA will follow a process substantially in conformance with the process described in the WYS Judicial and Ethics Committee Policies and Procedures Manual.
 - b. Certain allegations or incidents are required to be heard and adjudicated directly by WYS.
 - c. If heard and adjudicated by SYSA, SYSA will empanel a special judicial panel of disinterested persons, with experience appropriate to adjudicating the complaint or grievance
 - d. SYSA's role in such a hearing is to provide a mechanism for due process without preference to or assisting either party.

SYSA Three-Tiered Process for Handling Complaints

Complaints received by SYSA staff or officers, or by officers of any of its clubs, should be evaluated immediately upon being received. If the complaint is more appropriately handled by the SYSA

Disciplinary Committee (DC), the appropriate steps for DC action should be taken. See section 8, Appeals and Protests, of the SYSA Rules of Competition for more information.

If the complaint is not appropriate for the DC, or if the DC declines to take on the complaint, then the evaluator(s) should attempt to sort the complaint into one of three categories:

Tier 1: Club Intervention -- A complaint that can be handled by a club or clubs working directly with the person sending the complaint, and the person the complaint is about. Generally, most complaints will fall into this category. Experience shows that most complainants want to be heard, to vent, and to know that someone is listening and taking action.

Tier 2: Mediation – A complaint that cannot be handled by a club or clubs because of the nature of the complaint, or which the club does not believe it can resolve independently, should be moved to a mediation proceeding. Attempts to resolve complaints through a joint effort by club leaders may lead them to the conclusion that mediation is required. In general, though, few complaints will need to go to mediation.

Tier 3: Formal Grievance – A complaint that involves certain trigger actions or requests should be sent to a formal grievance process. This can be because of the nature of the complaint (physical, verbal, or other forms of abuse or harassment), because of the irreconcilable position or request of the complainant, or the outcome/remedy the complainant is requesting (e.g., barring a coach from the league). It should be made clear to the complainant what a formal grievance process involves, how it will be handled, and that it should not be made lightly.

Examples of Complaint Tiers and Actions

Tier 1 – A coach from Club A team sends an email to the SYSA director about Club B team after a game. The Club A coach says the Club B coach was loud and unsportsmanlike, yelling at the referee and other players on the field. This created a difficult environment for spectators and players. The SYSA director contacts both clubs, shows them the complaint. The SYSA director and club presidents confer about the complaint and come to an agreement that the complaint is something that can be handled between clubs.

Tier 2 – Club A receives a complaint about one of their coaches from a parent on a team in Club B. The Club A coach is accused of harassing the referee, yelling at her own players, and getting into an argument with the complainant parent after the game when their behavior was brought to their attention. Club A contacts Club B and says they will investigate. When the complaint is brought to the attention of the Club A team coach, they deny the assessment of the situation, and make a counter claim that the situation was not described as it occurred. Club A and Club B confer. They decide that the parties are too resolute in their opinions, and that the clubs do not feel they are confident or skilled enough to resolve it independently. They request that SYSA take over the process with a Mediation.

Tier 3 – SYSA receives a written document detailing abuses by one coach toward another at a game. The complaint mentions physical contact and ongoing verbal abuse, including extreme anger and obscenities. The complaint mentions SYSA Rules or Codes of Conduct, and requests that the coach being

charged be banned from the league. SYSA shows the complaint to the presidents or both clubs, and they agree that based on the seriousness of the charges and remedy requested, the complaint should be sent to the SYSA Judicial Committee for evaluation. The SYSA Committee then determines whether to hold a hearing on the complaint within SYSA, or to forward the complaint on to the Washington Youth Soccer Ethics Committee.

General Guidelines for Complaints

- Complaints should be acted on immediately upon being received.
- The complainant should be contacted as soon as possible to acknowledge that the complaint was received, and that a process is under way.
- Tell the complainant that you will be contacting the leadership of the other coach's club, and will pass on the nature of the complaint, but that the complainant's name will not be used.
- Whoever contacts the complainant should not sympathize or speak of any possible disciplinary actions but remain neutral and simply acknowledge the complaint was received and will be reviewed. Keep in mind there are always two sides to any story, and sympathizing or encouraging the complainant could set up false expectations.
- A complaint about a coach or parent sent to SYSA or an opposing club should not be shared with the person charged in the complaint if they were not an original recipient. Do NOT forward emails from someone to the person being charged. Respect the confidentiality of the original email.
- All measure should be taken to not inflame a situation between two SYSA members. Email exchanges between those charged and the complainant should be discouraged.
- SYSA club leaders should do all they can to work collaboratively and resolve the situation as quickly and equitably as possible.