**U.S. Soccer - Severity of Verbal, Physical, or Sexual Misconduct Matrices**

*Updated July 2023 – Safe Soccer Clearance Program in Active Development*

**Overview**
- Misconduct matrices are to be used as a guide and framework for categorizing misconduct and determining next steps and appropriate discipline
- Matrices act as a sliding scale, rather than definitive categories of misconduct; when in doubt, err on the side of caution and escalate to the higher tier
- Misconduct matrices are not explicit penal codes
- Matrices provide a non-exhaustive list of examples of misconduct; instances of abuse may exist that are not detailed in these matrices
- For any discipline resulting in a temporary suspension or a permanent expulsion of an individual’s ability to participate in soccer, a formal appeals process must be offered
- Context and details surrounding instances of misconduct are important and may aggravate or mitigate severity of incident; therefore, the disciplining body should review aggravating and mitigating factors for proper assessment and response
- When possible, all organizations should strive to document reports of misconduct and their resulting response

**Aggravating or compounding factors that may result in a higher tier of misconduct or more significant discipline**
- The victim is a minor
- The victim is in a vulnerable group
- The perpetrator has a history of prior misconduct
- The misconduct was repeated, or there were multiple instances of misconduct
- There were multiple victims of the offending perpetrator
- The harm caused by the misconduct was exceptionally severe (e.g., needing medical attention)
- The perpetrator used excessive force, violence, or aggression
- The misconduct included persistent harassment or grooming
- The likelihood or potential for repeated misconduct is high
- The perpetrator was in a position of power
- The perpetrator used manipulation or coercion to exploit the victim
- The act of abuse was filmed or documented by the perpetrator
- Details regarding the abuse were disseminated to a broader audience

**Mitigating factors that may result in a lower tier of misconduct or less significant discipline**
- The misconduct was an accident, unintentional, or committed in error
- The perpetrator has self-reported the misconduct and willingly accepted discipline and rehabilitation
- The perpetrator was responding to an emergency situation
### Verbal Misconduct Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Misconduct Examples</strong></th>
<th><strong>Tier 1</strong></th>
<th><strong>Tier 2</strong></th>
<th><strong>Tier 3</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-exhaustive</strong></td>
<td>- Minor and brief incident of targeted yelling that is not providing constructive criticism or encouragement &lt;br&gt; - Instance of targeted blaming &lt;br&gt; - Instance of targeted humiliating &lt;br&gt; - Instance of condescension</td>
<td>- Consistent berating &lt;br&gt; - Multiple instances of targeted yelling / singling out an individual &lt;br&gt; - Verbal manipulation to control individual’s actions &lt;br&gt; - Verbal threats of physical abuse resulting in consistent fear &lt;br&gt; - Abusive, derogatory language &lt;br&gt; - Threats of retaliation for reporting misconduct &lt;br&gt; - Discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, disability, sex, and sexual orientation</td>
<td>- Consistent verbal harassment as detailed in Tier-2, spanning the duration of a season, multiple seasons, or years &lt;br&gt; - Frequent threats of severe physical or sexual abuse that put the player in immediate danger or harm &lt;br&gt; - Overt and frequent discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, disability, sex, and sexual orientation</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Reporting</strong></th>
<th><strong>Victim is an adult:</strong></th>
<th><strong>Victim is a minor:</strong></th>
<th><strong>Victim is an adult:</strong>&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;<strong>Victim is a minor:</strong></th>
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<td>- Report to member organization</td>
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<td>- Report to member organization &lt;br&gt; - Report to Center for SafeSport &lt;br&gt; - Report to U.S. Soccer’s Office of Participant Safety &lt;br&gt; - Report to law enforcement</td>
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<th><strong>Jurisdiction &amp; Response</strong></th>
<th><strong>Victim is an adult:</strong></th>
<th><strong>Victim is a minor:</strong>&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;<strong>Victim is an adult:</strong>&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;<strong>Victim is a minor:</strong></th>
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<td>- Member organization is responsible for investigating the report and determining adequate discipline in a timely fashion &lt;br&gt; - Member organization communicates status of investigation to victim &lt;br&gt; - When discipline affects a Safe Soccer Clearance, U.S. Soccer is notified of resulting decision via member submission in Safe Soccer status dashboard</td>
<td>- Member organization is responsible for investigating the report and determining adequate discipline in a timely fashion &lt;br&gt; - Member organization communicates status of investigation to victim &lt;br&gt; - When discipline affects a Safe Soccer Clearance, U.S. Soccer is notified of resulting decision via member submission in Safe Soccer status dashboard</td>
<td>- For minors, Center for SafeSport may exercise jurisdiction, but it is likely to be pushed back to member organization for investigation &lt;br&gt; - For adults, member organization is responsible for investigating the report and determining adequate discipline in a timely fashion &lt;br&gt; - In parallel, U.S. Soccer will take the steps deemed necessary to ensure player safety is upheld &lt;br&gt; - Member organization communicates status of investigation to victim &lt;br&gt; - When discipline affects a Safe Soccer Clearance, U.S. Soccer is notified of resulting decision via member submission in Safe Soccer status dashboard</td>
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<th><strong>Suggested Discipline</strong></th>
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<td>- Reprimand, review, and educate</td>
<td>- Probation / Temporary suspension &lt;br&gt; - Temporary removal of Safe Soccer Clearance</td>
<td>- Expulsion &lt;br&gt; - Permanent removal of Safe Soccer Clearance</td>
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## Physical Misconduct Matrix

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<th>PHYSICAL</th>
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| **Misconduct Examples**  
*Non-exhaustive* | • Singular incident of unwarranted physical touch not explicitly sexual in nature (e.g., grabbing an arm)  
• Single instance of physical intimidation using actions or gestures to elicit fear  
• Single instance of destruction of property not directed at a person (e.g., throwing or kicking equipment) | • Frequent instances of destruction of property not directed at a person (e.g., throwing or kicking equipment)  
• Instance of destruction of property directed at a person (e.g., throwing equipment at a player)  
• Preventing victim from calling for help  
• Prescribed dieting or other weight-control methods  
• Encouraging a player to return to play prematurely from injury  
• Isolating a player  
• Forcing an athlete to assume a painful stance or position for no athletic purpose | • Battery  
• Any physical assault of a minor  
• Physical assault resulting in hospital visit  
• Any display or threat of use of a weapon for physical harm  
• Overt child neglect  
• Consistent and intentional withholding of adequate hydration, nutrition, medical attention, or sleep  
• Encouraging of forcing doping |
| **Reporting** |  
**Victim is an adult:**  
• Report to member organization  
**Victim is a minor:**  
• Report to member organization |  
**Victim is an adult:**  
• Report to member organization  
**Victim is a minor:**  
• Report to Center for SafeSport  
• Report to U.S. Soccer’s Office of Participant Safety  
• Report to law enforcement |  
**Victim is an adult:**  
• Report to member organization  
**Victim is a minor:**  
• Report to Center for SafeSport  
• Report to U.S. Soccer’s Office of Participant Safety  
• Report to law enforcement |
| **Jurisdiction & Response** |  
• Member organization is responsible for investigating the report and determining adequate discipline in a timely fashion  
• Member organization communicates status of investigation to victim  
• When discipline affects a Safe Soccer Clearance, U.S. Soccer is notified of resulting decision via member submission in Safe Soccer status dashboard |  
• For minors, Center for SafeSport may exercise jurisdiction, but it is likely to be pushed back to member organization for investigation  
• For adults, member organization is responsible for investigating the report and determining adequate discipline in a timely fashion  
• In parallel, U.S. Soccer will take the steps deemed necessary to ensure player safety is upheld  
• Member organization communicates status of investigation to victim  
• When discipline affects a Safe Soccer Clearance, U.S. Soccer is notified of resulting decision via member submission in Safe Soccer status dashboard |  
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• In parallel, U.S. Soccer will take the steps deemed necessary to ensure player safety is upheld  
• Member organization communicates status of investigation to victim  
• When discipline affects a Safe Soccer Clearance, U.S. Soccer is notified of resulting decision via member submission in Safe Soccer status dashboard |
| **Suggested Discipline** |  
• Reprimand, review, and educate |  
• Probation / Temporary suspension  
• Temporary removal of Safe Soccer Clearance |  
• Expulsion  
• Permanent removal of Safe Soccer Clearance |
# Sexual Misconduct Matrix

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<th>SEXUAL Examples</th>
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</table>
| **Non-exhaustive** | • Singular sexual innuendo, remark, joke, question  
                      • Viewing or engaging in a sexual behavior without attempts to shield others | • Repeated sexual innuendos, remarks, jokes, questions  
                      • Any type of communication that is sexual in nature, but not including indecent exposure  
                      • Repeated unsolicited contact  
                      • Unsolicited visits to player’s home, business, class, etc. | • Forcible sexual offense  
                      • Rape (including statutory rape)  
                      • Indecent exposure  
                      • Fondling of private areas such as breasts, groin, genitals or buttocks  
                      • Masturbating in front of the victim, or asking to watch while victim masturbates  
                      • Non-consensual sharing of sexual activity or nudity  
                      • Collecting, viewing, or distributing child pornography  
                      • Any instance of offering to trade a benefit for a sexual behavior  
                      • Knowingly exposing another individual to a STD  
                      • Prostituting another person |

| Reporting | Victim is an adult:  
Report to member organization  
Report to U.S. Soccer’s Office of Participant Safety | Victim is an adult:  
Report to Center for SafeSport  
Report to U.S. Soccer’s Office of Participant Safety  
Report to local law enforcement | Victim is an adult:  
Report to Center for SafeSport  
Report to U.S. Soccer’s Office of Participant Safety  
Report to local law enforcement |

| Jurisdiction & Response | • For minors, Center for SafeSport exercises jurisdiction and investigates  
For adults, member organization is responsible for investigating the report and determining adequate discipline  
Center to communicate status of investigation to minor victims  
Member organization communicates status of investigation to adult victims  
When discipline affects a Safe Soccer Clearance, U.S. Soccer is notified of resulting decision via member submission in Safe Soccer status dashboard | • Center for SafeSport exercises jurisdiction and investigates  
In parallel, U.S. Soccer will take the steps deemed necessary to ensure player safety is upheld during and after Center investigation  
Center to communicate status of investigation to victim | • Center for SafeSport exercises jurisdiction and investigates  
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Center to communicate status of investigation to victim |

| Suggested Discipline | • Reprimand, review, and educate | • Probation / Temporary suspension  
Temporary removal of Safe Soccer Clearance | • Expulsion  
Permanent removal of Safe Soccer Clearance |
## Other Misconduct Matrix

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<td>• Consistent pattern of unexpected tardiness or absence to practice, matches, or team-sanctioned events</td>
<td>• Misdemeanor criminal offenses not resulting in jail time</td>
<td>• Felony criminal offenses</td>
<td>• Exposing players to dangerous materials such as illegal weapons, hard drugs, or chemicals</td>
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<td>• Singular instance of a legal adult being under the influence during a team event and in the presence of minors</td>
<td>• Possession of legal drugs not prescribed by a physician</td>
<td>• Exposing players to gang activity</td>
<td>• Providing or forcing use of illegal or non-prescribed drugs</td>
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<td>• Instance of unwarranted retaliation whereas the punishment is not abusive in nature (e.g., cutting playing time)</td>
<td>• Failure to complete proper Safe Soccer education</td>
<td>• Forcing alcohol consumption</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Refusal to complete appropriate background screening</td>
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<td>• Multiple instances of alcohol abuse</td>
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<td>• Withholding or impeding in the medical care and safety of a player</td>
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<td>• Making intentionally false or inaccurate statements in a misconduct investigation or inquiry in an attempt to cover-up an incident</td>
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<td>• Providing alcohol to a player under the legal drinking age (if player is under 21, this should be reported to the Center)</td>
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### Reporting

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### Jurisdiction & Response

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<td>Temporary removal of Safe Soccer Clearance</td>
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