

AYSO Safe Haven Policies for Child and Volunteer Protection

Child and Volunteer Protection

Administration

The Region is committed to the protection of all its children from abuse and neglect while participating in the program and it promotes the awareness and prevention of child abuse in the community at large.

The Region shall have at least one Child and Volunteer Protection Advocate (CVPA), who shall be responsible for overseeing the AYSO Safe Haven child and volunteer protection program in accordance with AYSO guidelines. He or she shall be a member of the Regional Board and will act as the main resource on child protection issues and shall be the Region's liaison with the National Safe Haven Administrator at the AYSO National Support & Training Center.

A volunteer application form must be submitted each year. It is easiest and most secure if the volunteer supplies or updates his/her information online through eAYSO. The online form can be printed out, signed and dated and submitted to the Region. Alternatively, an applicant may submit a paper AYSO volunteer application form. The Region should provide pre-printed volunteer applications for returning volunteers, available from the NSTC as part of the registration package. In either case, the form is extremely important because it authorizes AYSO to perform applicant screening. Volunteers should know that they are subject to screening. Criminal background checks are performed at the NSTC on a targeted basis focusing on certain higher-risk positions for immediate checking.

The Region shall have the right to deny the participation of any individual who refuses to fill out the volunteer application form completely, lies or knowingly misrepresents information on the application form, or who violates the principles of these child protection policies. AYSO shall have the right to revoke both the registration and certification of any volunteer who falsifies information, is found guilty of child abuse, neglect, or other crimes.

The requirements for good faith reporting to law enforcement agencies and child welfare agencies in the state of _____ are as follows: (fill in your state requirements).

Any volunteer under criminal investigation for a crime that might be detrimental to AYSO or its members may be suspended until the matter is resolved. The names and identities of the parties involved shall be protected at all times during the proceedings. A suspended volunteer who is subsequently cleared of all charges may apply to the Regional Commissioner (RC) and Board for reinstatement in the Region. However, reinstatement is not a right, and reinstated volunteers are not guaranteed to return to their former positions.

Training

In AYSO, all referees and coaches are required to be currently registered, trained and certified. AYSO practices and games are not permitted without an AYSO certified and trained coach. AYSO scheduled games are not permitted without a certified and trained AYSO referee, except: In U-5 divisions in which referees/officials are not used; in U-6 divisions in which referees/officials are optional and, if not used, certified and trained AYSO coaches will manage the game; and during certain events involving non-AYSO teams in which competition rules will apply. Practice scrimmages do not require a certified and trained AYSO referee.

Only official AYSO materials and courses (or those approved by AYSO) may be used to train and certify these volunteers. Only official AYSO programs, procedures, and policies will be taught.

To validate each attendee's training and certification, and to ensure that the coaches and referees are registered with AYSO, records of training or certification course attendance will be maintained in eAYSO or through the submission of properly signed rosters of attendees sent to AYSO Programs Department. Instructors should always keep copies of their rosters.

Only AYSO certified and registered instructors are authorized to lead courses and clinics.

All other regional volunteers will be trained in child and volunteer protection as appropriate.

Volunteers shall be subject to ongoing evaluation, and additional training may be required to maintain good standing within the Region and the organization.

Supervision

The Regional Board shall cooperate with the CVPA to ensure the safety of the Region's players.

The coach administrator and the CVPA, prior to each season, shall meet with the head coach of each team, either individually or in groups, to review child protection and supervision responsibilities.

The coach administrator shall observe and review the performance of coaches to see that it conforms to the standards set by this child and volunteer protection policy.

Once the head coach has assumed charge of the children on his or her team, he or she remains responsible until a duly designated adult has taken charge of each child after practice or a game or the child leaves the immediate vicinity of the practice or game as prearranged by the parent to walk home or to a friend's or relative's house. No child shall be left unsupervised after a game or practice. Parents who are unreasonably late or consistently tardy should be reported to the child protection advocate for action. Each coach may establish a standing policy of where children may be picked up by late parents.

The referee administrator and the CVPA, prior to each season, shall meet with the referees, either individually or in groups, to review child protection and supervision responsibilities.

The referee administrator shall observe and review the performance of the referees to see that it conforms to the standards set by this child protection policy.

The game referee is responsible for providing a "child safe" atmosphere for the match, and has both the duty and authority to take any reasonable action to make it so. The referee is to report to the referee administrator and CVPA any cases of questionable conduct toward children by any coach, player, parent, sibling, or spectator before, during, or after the match.

For the protection of both the children and the volunteer, no volunteer should permit himself or herself to be alone with any child or group of children (except his or her own) during AYSO-sponsored activities. The recommended supervision ratio should be 1:8 or less; that is, one adult for every eight or fewer children and two adults present at all times (one of whom may be the coach and one of whom should be the same gender as the players).

Volunteers shall notify the RC, CVPA, and parents concerning AYSO activities away from the regular practice areas, playing fields, or other designated areas. Such notification should be documented, stating the nature of the activity, the names of the children involved, and the names of the adult supervisors.

Conduct

The Region advocates and expects exemplary behavior by all its participants, and it will hold a strict line on conduct as laid out in these policies.

Abusive statements such as those that deal with race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, gender, age, sex, or sexual orientation are not permitted.

In addition, physical, emotional, sexual, and ethical abuses are prohibited, as is neglect or endangerment of a child.

Some forms of touching are acceptable as long as they are respectful and appropriate:

- Touching should be in response to the need of the child, not the need of the adult

- Touching should be with the child's permission
- Resistance to touching must be respected
- Touching must never include the breast, buttocks, or groin
- Touching should be done in the open, not in private
- Touching should have a brief, limited duration

A child's comfort level with touching is influenced by factors such as age, developmental stages, social and emotional well-being, life experiences, gender, etc. all of which change over time.

These policies will be updated regularly as needed. To stay current or for further information, check the AYSO Web site at www.ayso.org OR contact the National Safe Haven Administrator at the AYSO National Support & Training Center.