



United Soccer League

2025
USL Safeguarding Manual
Professional Leagues



Club Player Care Officer

RE: Welcome and Overview

The USL is committed to ensuring that soccer is a safe, positive, and inclusive experience for the thousands of individuals who regularly engage in soccer activity and attend events throughout the USL Ecosystem. The USL firmly believes that Safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone within the Ecosystem.

It's our goal to be your go to knowledge base and procedural resource. Within this "PCO Safeguarding Packet" you will find Safeguarding policies, procedural flow charts, plus connections to resources. The policies included in this packet are implemented in accordance with U.S. Soccer Federation (the "Federation") Bylaw 212 and Policy 212-3, which requires the USL to, among other things, establish a risk management program to promote the safety and protect the welfare of participants, and adopt policies prohibiting sexual abuse. Therefore, all Clubs must comply with the substance of this Policy, regardless of whether a Club is a member of the Federation, or subject to the jurisdiction of the U.S. Center for SafeSport (the "Center") which was established pursuant to the SafeSport Act to assist in the regulation and enforcement of the SafeSport Act. In addition to this manual, you are mandated to participate in the PCO On-boarding webinar. These are held quarterly.

The Safeguarding Department is looking forward to working collaboratively with you and your team ecosystem to ensure coach and player safety.

As explained in further detail in the following pages, there are certain scenarios that require reporting to the Center and law enforcement. However, even in scenarios that do not trigger that obligation, we encourage you to use the USL Safeguarding **Hotline: (888) 896-4835** or via a web-based reporting form that can be found at <https://www.uslsoccer.com/safespace> to report any concerns involving suspected abuse or any other misconduct/violation of this Policy. The USL Safeguarding Team can be contacted by emailing safeguarding@uslsoccer.com.

The Safeguarding Team consists of Mycah Blevins, Safeguarding Manager. Mycah handles the day-to-day operations of the department (mycah.blevins@uslsoccer.com). She is your point person when you are filing a report or have questions about background checks. Betsy Cutler, VP, Corporate Wellness and Safeguarding, oversees the department (betsy.cutler@uslsoccer.com). We both are happy to help you in any way possible.



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Section 1

Safeguarding Policies & Procedures

Safeguarding Policy

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Capitalized terms, not otherwise defined in this Safeguarding Policy, as it may be amended, revised, supplemented, or otherwise modified from time to time (this “**Policy**”) have the meanings given to them in Appendix 1. Also, in the case of any discrepancy in the interpretation of the English, French, or Spanish texts of this Policy, the English text shall control.

I. INTRODUCTION

The USL is committed to ensuring that soccer is a safe, positive, and inclusive experience for the thousands of individuals who regularly engage in soccer activity and attend events throughout the USL Ecosystem. The USL firmly believes that Safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone within the Ecosystem.

This Policy was created in accordance with the *‘Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and Safe Sport Authorization Act of 2017’* otherwise known as the ‘SafeSport Act’, as incorporated into the Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act (the “**Ted Stevens Act**”). Furthermore, this Policy is implemented in accordance with U.S. Soccer Federation (the “**Federation**”) Bylaw 212 and Policy 212-3, which requires the USL to, among other things, establish a risk management program to promote the safety and protect the welfare of participants, and adopt policies prohibiting sexual abuse. Therefore, all Clubs are required to comply with the substance of this Policy, regardless of whether a Club is a member of the Federation, or subject to the jurisdiction of the U.S. Center for SafeSport (the “**Center**”) which was established pursuant to the SafeSport Act to assist in the regulation and enforcement of the SafeSport Act.

The USL reserves the right, in its sole and absolute discretion at any time, to modify, amend, restate, or supplement this Policy. The USL will use its best efforts to provide Clubs with reasonable advance notice of any such change.

A. Reporting Concerns

All professional Clubs are mandated to have a “Player Care Officer” (a “**PCO**”). The PCO is responsible for (i) ensuring the Club’s compliance with USL’s education, prevention, and intervention policies and (ii) reporting safeguarding claims to the appropriate channel. All pre-professional Clubs are recommended, but are not mandated, to have a “PCO.”

For an individual to take on the PCO role within his or her Club, the individual must be a Club staff member who: (i) is not a Club owner or coach; (ii) is not in a position of authority or power over players; and (iii) is committed to ensuring safety to taking an active role in embedding a culture of safety.

The USL champions a culture of compliance, safety, and respect. As a part of this Policy, the USL encourages open communication in which all athletes, participants, and employees feel comfortable reporting concerns, whether the concerns involve suspected abuse, other misconduct, or violations of the Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policy (“**MAAPP**”) see Section III. Everyone is encouraged to raise concerns in the manner that is suitable to them, whether it be to coaches, game officials, team administrators and USL Safeguarding, or to the Center.

As explained in further detail below in Sections II.B.2 and II.C, there are certain scenarios that *require* reporting to the Center and law enforcement. However, even in scenarios that do not trigger

that obligation, we encourage you to use the USL Safeguarding **Hotline:** (888) 896-4835 or via a web-based reporting form that can be found at <https://www.uslsoccer.com/safespace> to report any concerns involving suspected abuse or any other misconduct/violation of this Policy. The USL Safeguarding Team can be contacted by emailing safeguarding@uslsoccer.com

Additionally, the Federation Integrity Hotline is available at (312) 528-7004, as well as via its website at <https://ussoccer.i-sight.com/portal>. For more information, see www.ussoccer.com/report-a-concern.

In addition, the Center has exclusive jurisdiction over certain claims of suspected Child Abuse and other misconduct involving Players who are Minors. **All reports of such Sexual Misconduct or abuse must be reported to the Center**, which can be done on an anonymous basis, by visiting the US Center for SafeSport homepage (<https://uscenterforsafesport.org/>) and selecting the “Report a Concern” link, or by calling the Center at (720) 531-0340.

The identity of any individual submitting a report in good faith will be fully handled discreetly and confidentially as possible, unless doing so does not comply with applicable law or prevents a full and effective investigation of the report. To the greatest extent possible, all personnel responsible for responding to such reports will maintain the confidentiality of the individual and the matters relating to the report.

Anonymous reporting can be made; however, the USL would encourage you to include your contact details, so that we may have the best opportunity to follow-up with you and ensure we have addressed the concern you have raised.

In the event the USL receives a report that implicates a reporting obligation (see Section II.B.2 – “Reporting Suspected Child Abuse to Law Enforcement”), we will make the report directly and/or work with you to make the report.

The USL does not tolerate retaliation of any kind. No individual who makes a good faith report will be subject to retaliation, including harassment, or any adverse employment consequence, for making a report. Any retaliation is in violation of this Policy and subject to discipline.

It is the duty of all USL participants to attempt to make all USL leagues, venues, events, and teams a Safe Space for all other participants; therefore, every participant is responsible for reporting any concerns or suspected violations of any aspect of the policy as outlined below.

B. How to use this Policy

This Policy sets forth the safeguarding provisions applicable to all Clubs and participants within the USL Ecosystem.

This Policy is not an exclusive statement of all policies or provisions applicable to Clubs. In addition, Clubs shall implement additional policies and procedures specific to their operations (provided they do not conflict with and are no less protective of Minors than this Policy), to the extent required to effectively implement the terms of this Policy or as required by the jurisdiction in which the Club operates.

C. Who is covered by this Policy?

1. Covered Persons

This Policy applies to any individual age eighteen or older (“**Adult**”) who engages in the USL Ecosystem and has regular contact (defined below) with any athlete or referee (see note regarding youth referees below), who is under the age of eighteen (“**Minor**”), in connection with Covered Programs.

Regular contact is defined as recurring, repeated or periodic contact between an Adult and Minor, or a person with supervisory or decision-making authority over an Adult who has recurring, repeated or periodic contact with Minors, including but not limited to overseeing, supervising, chaperoning, or otherwise interacting with (“Regular Contact”).

Even if a Club or individual is deemed by an applicable legal authority to not be subject to the jurisdiction of the Center or the Federation (such as Canadian based Clubs), the content of this Policy and all references to obligations and prohibitions of the Center’s code shall be fully applicable to such persons (who are deemed Covered Persons under this Policy) and entities, through their incorporation into this document, including, but not limited to: (i) Section II.A – “Prohibited Conduct Policies,” (ii) Section II.B.2 – “Reporting Suspected Child Abuse” (with the exception of the requirement to report to the Center), (iii) Section III – “Prevention Policies: Limiting One-On-One Interactions Between Adults and Minors,” and (iv) any law or ordinance concerning child abuse or reporting applicable to a Club.

2. Covered Programs/Events

For the purposes of this Policy, a “**Covered Program**” is any sporting event, program, or academy program operated or organized in whole or in significant part by USL or any Club (if the event is sanctioned by the USL). This definition includes, but is not limited to, tournaments, leagues, showcases, and camps run by Clubs, including local affiliate organizations, or any Club (if the event is sanctioned by the USL). While the USL may not have authority or control over non-sanctioned events operated or organized by Clubs, any act or omission prohibited by this Policy may serve as an independent basis for disciplinary action if it calls into question a Covered Person’s behavior and appropriateness for involvement in the activity.

3. Youth Referees

The abuse and assault of referees is expressly prohibited by The Federation’s policy 531-9, but a particular note is required regarding referees who are also Minors. Youth referees are trained game officials, and many are experienced players, but they are Minor participants nonetheless and are, therefore, entitled to all the protections extended to Minor Athletes by this Policy. Without limiting the foregoing, wherever this Policy includes protections for Minor Athletes or other participants, it should also be read as protecting any Minor referee.

4. Canadian Clubs

The national governing body for amateur sports in Canada is Athletics Canada. That organization has its own rules and regulations concerning the prevention of child abuse, and its own reporting

requirements and background screening requirements, applicable to Canadian entities. Information on these rules and regulations can be found at <https://abuse-free-sport.ca/>. Clubs in Canada should follow the reporting requirements and background screening requirements imposed by Athletics Canada and Canadian law and are urged to consult Canadian counsel to determine the scope of those requirements. Canadian Clubs must comply with the Policies set out in Sections II and III including the “Prohibited Conduct Policy,” “Reporting Suspected Child Abuse” (with the exception of the requirement to report to the Center), “Prevention Policies: Limiting One-On-One Interactions Between Adults and Minors,” all regulations comparable to the Center adopted by Athletics Canada or any other applicable body, such as the Canadian Soccer Association, and any Canadian law concerning child abuse or reporting applicable to a Club. Failure to do so will be considered a violation of this Policy and will subject the Club to discipline in accordance with the league’s operations manual in which the Club participates.

5. Minor Players Who Become Adult Players

All athletes turning 18 who still meet the threshold for regular contact or authority must complete the SafeSport Core training and must comply with the prevention policies herein.

D. Obligation to Report, Cooperate, and Investigate

If any Club or Covered Person suspects a violation of this Policy, they are required to report it to the Safeguarding Department. Following such report, any Covered Persons involved or named in such report is compelled to participate in any investigative efforts of USL, including participating in interviews and producing relevant documents (in each instance, absent a trauma-informed reason).

E. The U.S Center for SafeSport (the “Center”)

The Center is an independent 501(c)(3) organization that receives funding from the U.S. Federal Government, the USOPC, the 55 National Governing Bodies (“NGB”), including the Federation) as well as several third-party individuals and organizations. Pursuant to USOPC Policy, the Center maintains exclusive authority over: (a) actual or suspected sexual misconduct by Federation Adult Participants (and those covered personnel of other NGBs); and (b) misconduct that is reasonably related to an underlying allegation of sexual misconduct by adult participants. Exclusive authority means: (y) only the Center will investigate and manage any related hearing involving sexual misconduct and (z) neither the Federation, the USOPC nor any adult participants will conduct its own investigation or arbitration with respect to possible sexual misconduct. In 2018, the SafeSport Act amended the Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act to codify this jurisdiction, authorizing the Center to “serve as the independent national safe sport organization and...exercise jurisdiction over the corporation, each NGB, and each Paralympic sports organization with regard to safeguarding amateur athletes against abuse, including emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, in sports.” The SafeSport Act further authorizes the Center to:

“(A) serve as the independent national safe sport organization and be recognized worldwide as the independent national safe sport organization for the United States.

(B) exercise jurisdiction over the corporation and each national governing body with regard to safeguarding amateur athletes against abuse, including emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, in sports.

(C) maintain an office for education and outreach that shall develop training, oversight practices, policies, and procedures to prevent the abuse, including emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, of amateur athletes participating in amateur athletic activities through national governing bodies.

(D) maintain an office for response and resolution that shall establish mechanisms that allow for the reporting, investigation, and resolution, pursuant to subsection (c), of alleged sexual abuse in violation of the Center's policies and procedures.

(E) ensure that the mechanisms under subparagraph (D) provide fair notice and an opportunity to be heard and protect the privacy and safety of complainants.

(F) maintain an office for compliance and audit.

(G) publish and maintain a publicly accessible internet website that contains a comprehensive list of adults who are barred by the Center; and

(H) ensure that any action taken by the Center against an individual under the jurisdiction of the Center, including an investigation, the imposition of sanctions, and any other disciplinary action, is carried out in a manner that provides procedural due process to the individual...”

In addition to the Federation Integrity Hotline, reports may also be made to the Center for SafeSport, including on an anonymous basis, by visiting <https://uscenterforsafesport.org/> and selecting the “Report a Concern” link, or by calling (833) 587-7233.

II. FRAMEWORK POLICIES

A. Prohibited Conduct Policies

The USL is committed to maintaining a work, training and competition environment that is free from all forms of abuse, misconduct, bullying and hazing. It is a violation of this Policy for any Covered Person to engage in any of the following forms of misconduct prohibited by this Policy.

Disciplinary action will be taken against any individual in the USL Ecosystem found to have violated the Prohibited Conduct Policy herein. Appropriate action will also be taken against any subcontractor, supplier, or customer found in violation of this Policy.

It is significant to note that most of the behaviors listed in the Prohibited Conduct Policy involving Minors are considered criminal offenses in all jurisdictions within the USL Ecosystem. With respect to such behaviors, violations of the policies outlined below **must** be reported to law enforcement in addition to the Center.

1. Child Sexual Abuse

Covered Persons shall not engage in any activity involving a sexual act (“**Sexual Interaction**”) with a Minor. Sexual Interaction includes, but is not limited to: rape; sexual battery; physical sexual contact; molestation; sexually explicit or offensive verbal communication; sexually oriented conversations; verbal sexual harassment; voyeurism; sexual intercourse or sexual touching; sexual exploitation (including creating or disseminating pornographic images); exposing of genitalia; viewing of sexual activity; viewing or disseminating content or imagery of a sexual nature; or permitting, allowing, or encouraging a Minor to engage in prostitution, or other forms of sexual exploitation of children (collectively, “**Sexual Child Abuse**”).

2. Sexual Exploitation

It is a violation of this Policy for Covered Persons to engage in any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes (“**Sexual Exploitation**”). Sexual Exploitation occurs when an individual purposely or knowingly:

- a. Allows third parties to observe private sexual activity from a hidden location (e.g., closet) or through electronic means (e.g., live streaming of images) without the consent of all parties involved in the sexual activity.
- b. Records or photographs private sexual activity and/or a person’s intimate parts (including genitalia, groin, breasts, or buttocks) without the consent of all parties in the recording or photo.
- c. Engages in voyeurism (e.g., watching private sexual activity or viewing another person’s intimate parts when that person would have a reasonable expectation of privacy), without the consent of all parties being viewed.
- d. Disseminates, shows, or posts images of private sexual activity and/or a person’s intimate parts (including genitalia, groin, breasts, or buttocks) without prior consent of

the person depicted in the images.

- e. Intentionally exposes another person to a sexually transmitted infection or virus without that person's knowledge; and/or
- f. Engages in prostituting or trafficking another person.

3. 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.

4. Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment refers to unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, written, or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- a. submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of the individual's employment, standing in sport, or participation in events, programs and/or activities; or when submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as the basis for sporting decision affecting the individual.
- b. submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for an employment decision affecting that individual; or
- c. 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.
- d. 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:

- a. unnecessary touching, patting, hugging, pinching, or brushing against a person's body.
- b. staring, ogling, leering, or whistling at a person.
- c. continued or repeated verbal abuse of a sexual nature.
- d. sexually explicit statements, sexual flirtations, advances, propositions, subtle pressure for sexual activity, comments, questions, jokes, or anecdotes.
- e. graphic or degrading comments about a person's clothing, body, or sexual activity.
- f. sexually suggestive objects, cartoons, posters, calendars, or pictures in the workplace.

- g. suggestive or obscene letters, notes or invitations.
- h. harassing use of electronic mail, electronic or instant messaging, or telephone communication systems; or
- i. other physical or verbal conduct of a sexual nature.

The USL 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.

5. Emotional Misconduct (also referred to as Emotional Abuse)

Covered Personnel may not engage in Emotional Misconduct. Emotional misconduct is a pattern of deliberate, non-contact behavior that has the ability or potential to cause emotional or psychological harm to another person. Emotional Misconduct includes but is not limited to, (1) verbal acts, (2) physical acts, (3) acts that deny attention or support, (4) criminal conduct, and/or (5) stalking, as further described below. Whether an act or verbal communication is Emotional Misconduct is determined by the objective nature of the behavior, not whether the harm that resulted was intended or the objective of the Covered Person's behavior.

- **Verbal acts** – e.g., repeatedly, and excessively verbally assaulting or attacking someone personally in a manner that serves no productive training or motivational purpose.
- **Physical acts** – e.g., repeated and/or severe physically aggressive behaviors, including but not limited to, throwing sport equipment, water bottles, or chairs at or in the presence of others or punching walls, windows, or other objects.
- **Acts that deny attention or support** – e.g., ignoring or isolating a person for extended periods of time, including routinely or arbitrarily excluding a Player from practice.
- **Criminal conduct** means any act or conduct described as emotional abuse or misconduct under federal or state law as defined by the State or Country in which the Club is headquartered.
- **Stalking**, which occurs when a person purposefully engages in a Course of Conduct directed at a specific person, and the Covered Person knows or should know, that their course of conduct would cause a reasonable person to (i) fear for their safety, (ii) the safety of a third person, or (iii) experience significant mental suffering or anguish. Stalking includes “cyber-stalking,” wherein a person stalks another using electronic media, such as the internet, social networks, blogs, cell phones, texts, or other similar devices or forms of contact.

6. Physical Misconduct

Covered Personnel may not engage in Physical Misconduct. “Physical Misconduct” means any intentional contact or non-contact behavior that causes, or reasonably threatens to cause, physical harm to another person. Examples of Physical Misconduct may include, without limitation:

- **Contact Violations** – *e.g.*, punching, beating, biting, striking, choking, or slapping another; intentionally hitting another with objects, such as sporting equipment; or encouraging or knowingly permitting a Player to return to play prematurely following a serious injury (*e.g.*, a concussion) and without the clearance of a medical professional.
- **Non-Contact Violations** – *e.g.*, isolating a person in a confined space, such as locking them in a small space; forcing another to assume a painful stance or position for no athletic purpose (*e.g.*, requiring them to kneel on a harmful surface); withholding, recommending against, or denying adequate hydration, nutrition, medical attention, or sleep; providing alcohol to a person under the legal drinking age; or providing illegal drugs or non-prescribed medications to another.
- **Criminal Conduct** – *e.g.*, any act or conduct described as physical abuse or misconduct under applicable federal or state laws (*e.g.*, assault, battery, kidnapping and false imprisonment).

7. Harassment

Covered Personnel may not engage in Harassment. “Harassment” means repeated and/or severe conduct that (a) causes fear, humiliation, or annoyance, (b) offends or degrades, (c) creates a Hostile Environment, or (d) reflects discriminatory bias in an attempt to establish dominance, superiority, or power over an individual or group based on age, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, national origin, mental or physical disability and/or any other protected characteristic under federal or state anti-discrimination laws; or (e) any act or conduct described as harassment under federal or state law. Whether a Covered Person’s conduct is harassing depends on the totality of the circumstances, including nature, frequency, intensity, location, context, and duration of the behavior.

Conduct may not rise to the level of Harassment if it is merely rude (inadvertently saying or doing something hurtful), mean (purposefully saying or doing something hurtful, but not as part of a pattern of behavior), or arising from conflict or struggle between persons who perceive they have incompatible views and/or positions.

In addition to the prohibited conduct above, Harassment also consists of unwelcome conduct, whether verbal, physical or visual, that is based upon a person’s protected status.

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.

8. Racial, Religious or National Origin Harassment

Racial, religious, or national origin harassment deserves special mention as well, and is expressly prohibited by the USL. 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:

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

9. Bullying

Covered Personnel may not engage in Bullying. "**Bullying**" means repeated and/or severe behavior(s) that are (a) aggressive; (b) directed at another Covered Person; and (c) intended or likely to hurt, control, or diminish the individual emotionally, physically, sexually, socially or professionally.

Examples of bullying behavior may include, without limitation, repeated and/or severe:

- a. **Physical Bullying** – e.g., pushing, punching, beating, biting, striking, kicking, choking, spitting, or slapping, or throwing objects (such as sporting equipment) at another person.
- b. **Verbal Bullying** – e.g., ridiculing, taunting, name-calling, or intimidating or threatening to cause someone harm.
- c. **Social Bullying** – e.g., cyberbullying, use of rumors or false statements about someone to diminish that person's reputation or professional standing; using electronic communications, social media, or other technology to harass, frighten, intimidate, or humiliate someone; or socially excluding someone and asking others to do the same.
- d. **Sexual Bullying** – e.g., ridiculing or taunting based on gender or sexual orientation (real or perceived), gender traits or behavior, or teasing someone about their looks or behavior as it relates to sexual attractiveness.
- e. **Criminal Conduct** – Bullying includes any conduct described as bullying under applicable law.

Conduct may not rise to the level of Bullying if it is merely rude (inadvertently saying or doing something hurtful), mean (purposefully saying or doing something hurtful, but not as part of a pattern of behavior), or arising from conflict or struggle between persons who perceive they have incompatible views and/or positions.

10. Hazing

Covered Personnel may not engage in Hazing. “Hazing” is any conduct that subjects another Covered Person, whether physically, mentally, emotionally, or psychologically, to any act or communication that may endanger, abuse, humiliate, degrade, or intimidate the person as a condition of joining or being socially and/or professionally accepted by a group, team, or organization. Purported Consent by the Covered Person subjected to Hazing is not a defense, regardless of the person’s perceived willingness to cooperate or participate. Examples of Hazing include:

- a. Contact acts** – *e.g.*, tying, taping, or otherwise physically restraining another person; or beating, paddling, or other forms of physical assault.
- b. Non-contact acts** – *e.g.*, requiring or forcing the consumption of alcohol, illegal drugs, or other substances, including participation in binge drinking and drinking games; personal servitude; requiring social actions (*e.g.*, wearing inappropriate or provocative clothing) or public displays (*e.g.*, public nudity) that are illegal or meant to draw ridicule; excessive training requirements demanded of only particular individuals on a team that serve no reasonable or productive training purpose; sleep deprivation; otherwise unnecessary schedule disruptions; withholding of water and/or food; or restrictions on personal hygiene.
- c. Sexualized acts** – *e.g.*, actual, or simulated conduct of a sexual nature.
- d. Criminal acts** – *e.g.*, any act or conduct that constitutes hazing under applicable law.

Conduct may not rise to the level of Hazing if it is merely rude (inadvertently saying or doing something hurtful), mean (purposefully saying or doing something hurtful, but not as part of a pattern of behavior), or arising from conflict or struggle between persons who perceive they have incompatible views and/or positions.

11. Aiding and Abetting

Aiding and Abetting is any act taken with the purpose of facilitating, promoting, or encouraging a violation of this Policy. Aiding and abetting also includes, without limitation, knowingly:

- a. Allowing any person who has been identified as suspended or otherwise ineligible by the Center, Federation, or USL to be in any way associated with or employed by an organization affiliated with or holding itself out as affiliated with USL.
- b. Allowing any person who has been identified as suspended or otherwise ineligible by the Center, the Federation, or USL to coach or instruct Athletes.

- c. Allowing any person who has been identified as ineligible by the Center, the Federation or USL to have an ownership interest in a facility, an organization, or its related entities, if that facility/organization/related entity is affiliated with or holds itself out as affiliated with USL.
- d. Providing any coaching-related advice or service to an athlete who has been identified as suspended or otherwise ineligible by the Center, the Federation, or USL.
- e. Allowing any person to violate the terms of their suspension or any other sanctions imposed by the Center, the Federation, or USL.
- f. Allowing any person who would otherwise be ineligible to participate. For example, knowingly employing an individual with a criminal conviction that would disqualify them from participating.

Staff violates this section if someone acts on their behalf to engage in Aiding or Abetting.

12. Anti-Fraternization

In addition to the foregoing prohibitions, Covered Personnel may not engage in the following types of inappropriate conduct:

a. Intimate or Romantic Relationship

An adult Covered Person violates this Policy by engaging in any intimate or romantic relationship with any Minor participant. Further, regardless of whether the other participant is a Minor, a Covered Person violates this Policy by engaging in an intimate or romantic relationship where a Power Imbalance exists—*see Section II.A.13 below*.

Once a non-intimate or sport relationship is established between a coach and player, a power imbalance is presumed to exist throughout the coach-player relationship (regardless of age) and is presumed to continue for Minor players after the coach-player relationship terminates and until the player reaches 20 years of age.

A power imbalance may exist, but is not presumed, where an intimate relationship existed before the sport relationship (e.g., a relationship between two spouses or life partners that preceded the sport relationship).

b. Intentional Exposure

A Covered Person violates this Policy by intentionally exposing his or her buttocks, breasts, or genitals, or inducing another to do so (i) to a Minor or (ii) to another adult where there is a Power Imbalance or without the other adult's consent.

c. Inappropriate Physical Contact

A Covered Person violates this Policy by engaging in inappropriate physical contact with another person where there is a Power Imbalance. Such inappropriate contact includes, but is not limited to, intentionally (a) touching, slapping, or otherwise contacting the buttocks or genitals; (b) excessively touching or hugging; or (c) kissing.

13. Power Imbalance

Where a Power Imbalance exists, it is a violation of this Policy for the individual in the position of power to utilize their status, position, or power in a way to manipulate, coerce, sanction or intimidate another individual. Where a power imbalance exists, it may also be used when assessing the other forms of prohibited conduct listed in Section II.A.

As used in this Policy, a “**Power Imbalance**” means that one person has supervisory, evaluative, financial or other authority over another, based on the totality of the circumstances, including but not limited to: the nature and extent of the supervisory, evaluative, financial or other authority over the person; the actual relationship between the parties; the parties’ respective roles; the nature and duration of the relationship; and the age of the parties involved, both presently and at the time of the relationship’s conception.

In the case of a coach-player relationship, a power imbalance is presumed to exist throughout the coach-player relationship regardless of age. A power imbalance may exist, but is not presumed, where an intimate relationship that did not contain a power imbalance existed before the coach-player relationship (e.g., a relationship between two spouses or life partners that preceded the sport relationship).

14. Hostile Environment

Any of the above defined misconduct, when viewed under the totality of the circumstances, may create a Hostile Environment. A “**Hostile Environment**” exists when the conduct (i) affects tangible job benefits or (ii) is, both subjectively and objectively, sufficiently severe, persistent, and/or pervasive so as to: (x) unreasonably interfere with work performance; (y) create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment; or (z) deprive any individual of the opportunity to participate in any Covered Program or activity.

Whether a Hostile Environment exists depends on the totality of known circumstances, including, but not limited to:

- Frequency, nature, and severity of conduct.
- Whether the conduct was physically threatening.
- Effect of the conduct on the victim’s mental or emotional state.
- Whether the conduct was directed at more than one person.
- Whether the conduct arose in the context of other discriminatory conduct.

- Whether the conduct unreasonably interfered with any person's participation in sports, education or work programs or activities; and
- Whether the conduct involves concerns related to protected speech.

A Hostile Environment can be created by persistent or pervasive conduct or by a single or isolated incident that is sufficiently severe. The more severe the conduct, the less is needed to show a repetitive series of incidents to prove a Hostile Environment, particularly if the conduct is physical. A single incident of sexual contact, for example, may be sufficiently severe to constitute a Hostile Environment. In contrast, the perceived offensiveness of a single verbal or written expression, standing alone, is typically not sufficient to constitute a Hostile Environment.

15. Retaliation

This Policy prohibits any form of discipline, reprisal, intimidation, or retaliation for good faith reporting of incidents of harassment (or other forms of prohibited conduct) of any kind, pursuing any claim of harassment or prohibited conduct, or cooperating in related investigations. Any Covered Person who believes that they have been retaliated against for making or assisting in the investigation of a complaint should immediately report the matter to their employer (pursuant to any Club policies, if applicable) and contact the USL in accordance with the reporting mechanisms outlined in Section II.B below.

16. Prohibited Conduct by Minors

The USL does not tolerate, and its Clubs shall not tolerate, abusive, harassing, or discriminatory conduct between players, regardless of their ages. Depending on the facts and applicability of the above prohibitions to Minors, the USL and its Clubs may discipline players based on the above Prohibited Conduct. For instance, prohibitions on intimate relationships and electronic communications shall not apply as between Minors unless a significant age or power disparity creates cause for concern, or they otherwise involve Prohibited Conduct. Disciplinary measures shall be appropriate to the infraction and in accordance with the respective League Operational Standards. Nevertheless, Clubs shall have the authority to reasonably discipline their players and are encouraged to do so. Clubs and match officials shall have the authority to and are encouraged to take immediate action to stop abusive behavior in the moment of its occurrence or prevent its reasonably anticipated occurrence with the goal of protecting the victim.

B. Reporting

1. USL Members' Obligation to Report Misconduct

Without limiting the reporting obligations outlined below, all USL Covered Persons are obligated to report any suspected violation of this Policy involving team personnel or athletes of any age to the USL or the Federation. This obligation to report is not always satisfied by making an initial report. Under certain scenarios, the reporter may be required to report supplemental information of which they become aware that may be relevant to a pending investigation. Importantly, civil, or criminal statutes of limitations do not affect or negate the obligation of a Covered Person to report possible sexual misconduct to the Center.

Misconduct should be reported, regardless of when it occurred.

2. Reporting Suspected Child Abuse to Law Enforcement

The Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and SafeSport Authorization Act (“**SafeSport Act**”) of 2017 was signed into law on 14 February 2018. This comprehensive law amended the Victims of Child Abuse Act of 1990, 34 U.S.C. § 20341, et seq., and clarifies who is a mandatory reporter for cases of suspected child abuse. 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 such as the USL. By doing this, the law increases the standard of care and makes it a crime for an individual involved in a national governing body sports organization, including the USL, to ignore, or not report to law enforcement, any reasonable suspicion of an act of Child Abuse, including sexual abuse, within **24 hours**. Consequently, the USL urges all Clubs and their employees, and all USL participants to understand their reporting obligations under this important federal law. Under the SafeSport Act, 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. § 20341(a)(2). Under the Act, Child Abuse includes physical or mental injury, sexual abuse or exploitation, or negligent treatment of a child. “**Sexual Abuse**” includes, but is not limited to, 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.

In addition to these requirements, any USL participant or Covered Person must report an incident of child abuse (including, but not limited to sexual abuse) to law enforcement, the Center, the Federation, and the USL.

The SafeSport Act also includes qualified immunity for good faith reports. The USL urges all mandatory reporters to refrain from judging or evaluating the credibility of such allegations and to leave such assessments to law enforcement.

Failure to promptly report suspected Child Abuse to law enforcement authorities may constitute a violation of federal law and will also be deemed a violation of this Policy.

The message is clear: if you suspect Child Abuse, report it to law enforcement immediately.

C. Reporting to The U.S. Center for SafeSport

In addition to the above obligation to report to law enforcement as detailed above, Covered Persons must also immediately report any suspected incidents of sexual abuse – even if the incidents involve non-minors within 24 hours of becoming aware of the allegation. An allegation means any “good faith claim or assertion” that a potential violation has occurred. Additionally, and if the case involves potential claims of child abuse, Participants will be required to report any allegation to their local law enforcement.

In addition to the two entities above, participants should report all SafeSport issues to both the USL League Office and to the Federation. Please find the next section as a step-by-step guide on where to report allegations when they arise. Note that Clubs must notify all four entities below to satisfy SafeSport reporting requirements.

D. Monitoring and Enforcement

The USL takes all reports of potential violations of this SafeSport Policy seriously and is committed to confidentiality and investigation of allegations. The USL Safeguarding and/or Legal Department may conduct or manage code investigations. Employees who are being investigated for a potential code violation will have fair notice and an opportunity to be heard prior to any final determination.

The USL does not tolerate retaliation of any kind. No individual who makes such a good faith report will be subject to retaliation, including harassment, or any adverse employment consequence, as a result of making a report.

E. Background Screening

As noted by the Center, organizations should have a “*Sound, practical and reasonable screening practices to reduce the chances that an athlete will come in contact with potentially dangerous individuals.*” Accordingly, and consistent with the goals of the PROTECT Act of 2003 and the SafeSport Act 2017 and the Federation Soccer Framework, the USL requires background screening on all Covered Persons, Club representatives or Club participants as defined below who have regular contact with Minors within the USL Ecosystem, including:

- All Club employees (whether full or part-time) who are to have regular contact with Minors.
- All Club representatives such as Coaches, Team Managers, Administrators, or other staff members (regardless of whether they are employees, contractors, or volunteers) who have regular contact with Minors or who travel with the Club.
- All contractors at the Club have regular contact with Minors.
- All medical professionals such as massage therapists, physicians, nutritionists, etc. work directly with Minors.
- Any Club scouts who request to have contact with Minors.
- Adult players who have additional roles as coaches during clinics and camps with Minors.
- All other individuals who the USL determines, in its discretion, should be subject to a background check.

Note on Adult Players

The USL recognizes that there are teams where Minor players and adult players play together or against one another on opposing teams. The USL does not require adult players (who do not have any other roles which bring them into contact with Minors) to undergo background screening as they are not in an authoritative position and the MAAPP policies set out limiting one-to-one interactions with Minors in Section A.

1. Mandatory Self Disclosure

All Covered Persons have a mandatory self-disclosure obligation, which means that if at any point during their association with the USL and/or a Club, a Covered Person has been disqualified or declared by another sport organization or league to be temporarily or permanently ineligible or is on probation, the Covered Person is required to self-disclose this information immediately. Failure to disclose is a basis for discipline/disqualification.

2. Scope of Background Screening

The USL contracts with third-party vendors to conduct a robust background check on all Covered Persons that register with Clubs. Each Canadian Club will contract with a Canadian third-party vendor to perform a similarly substantially robust background check for all Covered Persons who register to a Club and reside in Canada. Prior to an applicant's first activity in connection with the Club, this background check will include checks and/or reviews of:

- Sex Offender Registries.
- Government Watch list databases.
- County Criminal/Other Public Records.
- Past Addresses as well as potential previous aliases.
- The Center's Centralized Disciplinary Database; and
- US Federation Database¹.

a. Screening Results

A criminal background check should be viewed as an additional tool when considering the suitability of the potential employee and should not be considered in isolation or as the determining factor. It's important to remember that a criminal background check is only going to record the convictions not the behavior an individual may present with.

As noted above, the USL uses third party vendors for criminal background checks. These vendors will screen for crimes and indictors such as watchlists, aliases, etc., which may raise immediate

¹ This activity is completed by USL Safeguarding as access to the Federation Risk Management Database is not public.

concern regarding the risk an individual presents with. There are offences that such as felony and/or misdemeanor level sexual or physical offenses involving children would be indicative of an individual who is not suitable to work with children. These individuals will be reported to the Center by the USL for their jurisdictional consideration.

Where a criminal background has other lower-level offences such as misdemeanor acquisitive offenses that do not involve children, the USL will consider these on a case-by-case basis taking into account the transferable risk the individual may have to a Minor in a soccer context.

F. Training and Education

The SafeSport Act requires amateur sports organizations to offer consistent training to adult members who are in regular contact with amateur athletes who are Minors, and subject to parental consent, and to members who are Minors, regarding the prevention of child abuse. The “Core SafeSport Training” offered by the Center meets the requirements of this Policy². It consists of three modules: (i) Sexual Misconduct Awareness Education; (ii) Mandatory Reporting, and (iii) Emotional & Physical Misconduct.

1. Training for Adults

All adult covered persons who have regular contact with Minor Athletes must successfully complete the required SafeSport training every year to participate in the USL. For the avoidance of doubt, the USL requires the following persons to complete the Core SafeSport Training prior to the commencement of their association with the USL Club, or within 45 days of being hired, appointed, or retained by a Club, but in any event before commencing contact with Minors:

- Individuals who will have regular contact with Minors.
- Club representatives (coaches, Club technical staff and administrators, physicians, massage therapists and other medical staff including first aiders)
- Contractors and vendors with access to Minors (security and other medical personnel not employed directly by the Club)
- Adult game officials
- Adult players- recognizing that there may be Minors in the team, and that players may have additional roles such as clinic appearances and camps provided by the Club.
- Chaperones, volunteers, and other individuals who have access to Minors.

In connection with the annual registration process, all Covered Persons affiliated with Clubs who will have regular contact with Minors will have to certify that they have completed the required SafeSport training. Training provides participants with the necessary tools, vocabulary, and information to safeguarding our league and Clubs, minimize the opportunities for child physical

² The Federation offers SafeSport Core Training free of charge. Access to the course can be requested by USL Safeguarding.

or sexual abuse and other types of misconduct, and respond to concerns more effectively. Once a participant has successfully taken all three “Core Training” modules (including Sexual Misconduct Awareness Education, Mandatory Reporting, and Emotional & Physical Misconduct), they have met the “SafeSport Trained” requirement. The training runs in a 4-year cycle as follows:

Year 1: SafeSport Trained – U.S. Soccer Federation

Year 2: Refresher 1

Year 3: Refresher 2

Year 4: Refresher 3

Year 5: SafeSport Trained – U.S. Soccer Federation (again)

This Policy requires adult participants to complete the Center’s Core SafeSport Training (i.e., the Center’s online training or the Center’s approved in-person training), and as applicable, follow-up refresher course training, with any new Adult Participants to receive initial training:

- Before regular contact with Minors begins; or
- Within 45 days of a new role within the USL Ecosystem.

2. Training for Minors

Minor athletes who participate in any of the USL Leagues, must be offered a free 15 minute training from the U.S. Center SafeSport every year and may take the training with parental consent. Clubs will keep track of which Minor Athletes have taken the SafeSport training and when they did so.

Course details

- Ages 5-12 SafeSport for Kids
- Ages 13 SafeSport for Youth Athletes

3. Training for Parents

The U.S. Center for SafeSport also provides training for parents of Minor Athletes. This is not a mandatory training, and Clubs are not expected to track this training. The USL would encourage Parents to take this training to enhance their knowledge and understanding of potential safeguarding concerns that may arise.

4. Additional Training

In addition to the training provided by the Center, the USL has commissioned Preventative Harassment and Discrimination web-based training. This will be mandatory yearly training for members of the USL Ecosystem from 2023 season onward.

III. PREVENTION POLICES: LIMITING ONE-ON-ONE INTERACTIONS BETWEEN ADULTS AND MINORS

Soccer is a team sport. Although appropriate physical contact and one-on-one interaction between Minor Athletes and Coaches/trainers, etc. may be conducive to improving physical skills, the USL believes prudent limitations on one-on-one interactions can reduce the potential for abuse and misconduct without negatively impacting player development or unnecessarily limiting one-on-one time with trusted adults.

Part II of the U.S. Center for SafeSport's Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policies ("MAAPP") requires the USL to implement the following policies which cover one-on-one interactions, meetings and training sessions, athletic training modalities, massages and rubdowns, locker rooms and changing areas, electronic communications, transportation, and lodging. The Federation Policy 212-3, contained in this Handbook requires that all U.S. Soccer Amateur Organization Members implement these policies in compliance with the MAAPP. Please see the MAAPP for additional guidance on each topic.

A. Establishing Boundaries: Avoiding Gifts

Individuals who groom children will often provide special gifts or privileges, as one strategy to gain the child's trust and fill a need in their life, in advance of sexually abusing the child. Accordingly, the USL discourages all adult USL participants, including employees and volunteers, from giving gifts or granting special privileges to athletes and prohibits any such gift or privilege when not available to the entire team.

B. Appropriate Physical Contact

The USL adheres to the following principles and guidelines with regard to physical contact with our athletes:

1. Common Criteria for Appropriate Physical Contact

Physical contact with athletes – for safety, consolation, and celebration – has multiple criteria in common which make it both safe and appropriate. These criteria include:

- The physical contact takes place in public.
- There is no potential for, or actual, sexual contact during the physical contact · the physical contact is for the benefit of the athlete, not to meet an emotional or other need of an adult.

a. Safety

The safety of our athletes is paramount, and in many instances, we make the athletic space safer through appropriate physical contact. Examples include:

- spotting an athlete so that they will not be injured by a fall or piece of equipment.
- positioning an athlete's body so that they more quickly acquire athletic skill, get a better

sense of where their body is in space, or improve their balance and coordination.

- making athletes aware that they might be in harm's way because of other athletes practicing around them or because of equipment in use.

b. Celebration

Sports are physical, and we recognize participants often express their joy of participation, competition, achievement, and victory through physical acts. We encourage these public expressions of celebration, which include:

- greeting gestures such as high-fives, fist bumps, and brief "side hugs", and
- congratulatory gestures such as celebratory hugs, "jump-arounds" and pats on the back for any form of athletic or personal accomplishment³

c. Consolation

It may be appropriate to console an emotionally distressed player (e.g., a Player who has been injured or has just lost a competition). Appropriate consolation includes publicly:

- Embracing a crying player, but only in a public place or circumstance.
- Putting an arm around a player while verbally engaging them to calm them down ("side hugs").
- Lifting a fallen player off the playing surface and "dusting them off" to encourage them to continue competition.

d. Supervision Generally

No Minor should be left alone at a training session or at any other time until they are picked up by their parent, older sibling, or other designated adult. It is recommended that the last adult, in addition to the coach or athletic trainer wait at the site until the Minor is picked up.

C. One-on-one interactions/Individual Meetings

An individual meeting may be necessary to address a player's concerns, training program, or competition schedule. Under these circumstances, Covered Persons are to observe the following guidelines when dealing with a Minor Player.

³ NOTE: this does not include "butt-pats" or "chest bumps." This outdated means of celebration makes many athletes uncomfortable and is best replaced with a high-five or a fist bump.

1. Interactions should be Observable and Interruptible

All one-on-one In-Program Contact between an adult participant and a minor athlete must be observable and interruptible, *except*:

- When a Dual Relationship exists; or
- When the Close-in-Age Exception applies; or
- If a minor athlete needs an Adult Participant Personal Care Assistant, and:
 - the minor athlete's parent/guardian has provided written consent to the Club for the Adult Participant Personal Care Assistant to work with the minor athlete; and
 - the Adult Participant Personal Care Assistant has complied with the Education & Training Policy; and
 - the Adult Participant Personal Care Assistant has complied with the Clubs' screening policy; or
- In other circumstances specifically addressed in this Policy that allow for certain one-on-one interactions if the Club receives parent/ guardian consent.

2. Interactions are Monitored

When one-on-one interactions between the Club and Minor Athletes occur at the Club or other USL facilities or sanctioned events that are partially or fully under the Federation's jurisdiction, over covered persons will 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.

3. Meetings

- Meetings between adult participants and minors at Club facilities may only occur if another adult is present. Such meetings must occur where interactions can be easily observed and at an interruptible distance from another adult.
- If a one-on-one meeting takes place in an office, the door to the office must remain unlocked and open. If available, it will occur in an office that has windows, with the windows, blinds, and/or curtains remaining open during the meeting.
- If a mental health care professional meets with minors at a Club facilities, a closed-door meeting may be permitted to protect patient privacy—provided that (i) the door remains unlocked, (ii) another adult is present at the facility, (iii) the other adult is advised that a closed-door meeting is occurring, and (iv) written consent of the parent/legal guardian of the minor is obtained by the mental health care professional consistent with applicable laws and ethical standards, with a copy provided to the Club.

- At no time during these one-on-one meetings should a minor be denied access to their cell phone or other personal device.

4. Individual Training Sessions

An In-Program individual training session with a minor athlete (meaning not team training, but training involving one athlete and one coach) may be necessary in order to further player development. Under these circumstances, the individual training session should be observable and interruptible by others. Additionally, written parent/guardian permission is required in advance of the individual training session(s) and must be documented at least annually. Parents/guardians are welcome to attend the individual training. Parents, guardians, and other caretakers must be allowed to observe individual training sessions.

5. Out of Program Contacts

Covered persons are prohibited from interacting one-on-one with minor players, to whom they are not related, in private settings outside of the program (including, but not limited to, one's home and individual transportation), unless parent/legal guardian consent is provided for each out of program contact. Such arrangements are nonetheless strongly discouraged.

D. Massage and Other Athletic Training Interactions

1. Requirements

All In-Program athletic training modalities, massages, or rubdowns of a minor athlete must:

- Be observable and interruptible.
- Have another Adult Participant physically present for the athletic training modality, massage, or rubdown.
- Have documented consent as explained in subsection 2 below (entitled "Consent").
- Be performed with the Minor Athlete fully or partially clothed, ensuring that the breasts, buttocks, groin, or genitals are always covered.
- Allow parents/guardians in the room as an observer, except for competition or training venues that limit credentialing.
- The provider should narrate the steps in the massage, rubdown, or athletic training modality before taking them, seeking assent of the Minor Athlete throughout the process.
- When possible, techniques should be used to reduce the physical touch of Minor Athletes.
- Only licensed providers should administer a massage, rubdown, or athletic training modality.

- Coaches, regardless of whether they are licensed massage therapists, should not massage Minor Athletes
- It is recommended that Parents/guardians are offered the U.S. Center for SafeSport education and training on child abuse prevention before providing consent for their Minor Athlete to receive an athletic training modality, massage, or rubdown.

2. Consent

Providers of athletic training modalities, massages, and rubdowns must obtain consent at least annually from Minor Athletes' parents/guardians before providing any athletic training modalities, massages, or rubdowns. Minor Athletes or their parents/guardians can withdraw consent at any time.

E. Electronic Communications / Social Media

Electronic communications are an ever-changing aspect of the way we communicate today. The specific rules below may reference certain forms of electronic communication, and the specific application of principles may change with regard to a given app, platform, or method of communication, but regardless of the means, **the following principles apply across all manner of electronic communication and should be used to guide adult behavior when communicating with Minor Players:**

1. Content Must be Professional in Nature:

All electronic communication between a coach/team personnel and a Minor Athlete must be professional in nature (i.e., soccer related) and for the purpose of communicating information about team activities or team-oriented communication (i.e., motivation, instruction).

- Communication or conversation regarding illegal or age-inappropriate topics (drugs, alcohol use, sexually explicit language or imagery, or discussion of adult personal life, social activities, relationship, or family issues) is not permitted.
- All communications must comply with the Prohibited Conduct Policy.

2. Communication Must Be Open and Transparent

The content of any electronic communication must generally be group-based and should always be readily available to share with the players' family, the Club, and the USL.

- Administrators, coaches, staff, and/or volunteers may not use Snap Chat (or any similar app or app functionality that automatically deletes the content of a communication) to communicate with minor players.
- If a covered person needs to communicate directly with a minor via electronic communications, **another covered person or the minor's parent/legal guardian must be copied.**

- If a minor communicates to the covered person privately first, the covered person should respond to the minor, copying another covered person or the minor's parent/legal guardian.
- A covered person communicating electronically to the entire team will copy another covered person.
- Consider using group-focused platforms under Club administrative control (e.g., but not limited to, Teamwork, Slack, etc.).

3. Keep Imagery Public

In posting imagery, Adults are expected to be sensitive to the status of minors. This means any imagery posted to a team website or social media should be soccer-related, not private (e.g., taken in public view), and age appropriate.

- Under no circumstances should imagery depict any conduct that would violate any aspect of this Policy.
- Requests of parents/guardians of minor athletes to remove imagery in which their child is recognizable and individually featured will be honored to the extent practicable.⁴

The following sections apply the above principles to specific areas of electronic communication and should not be viewed as narrowing the above.

4. Prohibited Electronic Communication- Direct Messaging

- Covered persons are not permitted to communicate privately via electronic communications (meaning directly message one individual versus a group message) with minors.
- Covered persons are not permitted to "private message," "instant message," "direct message," or send photos to a minor privately, regardless of what platform is used.
- Covered persons 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 minors; and existing social media connections with minors shall be discontinued (and, where necessary, the reason for discontinuing should be explained to the Minor). Instead, players and parents can "friend" the official organization's team page and coaches can

⁴ Where photos are team photos, generally no child is individually featured, but the request will nonetheless be considered in good faith.

communicate with Players through the site or through similar group-focused methods of communication.

- Players and coaches employed by Clubs may use email to communicate ***provided*** that the coach is using only his/her/their official Club email account and further provided that all email content between coach and player otherwise complies with this Policy. **When communicating with a minor through email, another covered person or the minor’s parent/legal guardian must be copied.**

5. Requests to Discontinue

Parents/legal guardians may request in writing that their minor child not be contacted through electronic communication by the organization or by covered persons. Clubs will abide by any such request, absent emergency circumstances.

a. Social media (including Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, texting, WhatsApp, GroupMe, TikTok and Similar Apps)

- **Keep personal pages personal.** Administrators, coaches, staff and/or volunteers may not invite or allow minor athletes to join a personal social media page unless the Dual Relationship Exception applies. Athletes should be reminded that initiating a “friend” request to administrators/coaches/ staff/volunteers is not permitted.
 - Administrators, coaches, staff and/or volunteers are encouraged to set their social media pages to private settings.
 - Similarly, those who work with Minor Athletes are reminded that they set an example for the Minor Athletes. If a page is not private, U.S. Soccer expects administrators, coaches, staff and/or volunteers who work with Minor Athletes to refrain from posting inappropriate, off-color content or content that would violate the Prohibited Conduct Policy or otherwise commenting on posts that would.
- **Choose Apps that support group-based communication.** Apps such as Team Works™ and GroupMe™ often provide a helpful way to communicate, but again, individual messages should be avoided.
- **Respect reasonable “soccer” hours:** Real-time electronic communications (e.g., texting via SMS, apps, etc.) between coaches and athletes on a group basis is generally allowed between **8 am - 8 pm**, unless there is a specific safety- or soccer related need to communicate.

F. Locker Rooms / Training Areas

Players (especially minors) are particularly vulnerable in locker rooms and changing areas due to various stages of dress/undress and because athletes are less supervised than at many other times. The risk of athlete-to-athlete problems, such as child sexual abuse and bullying, harassment, and hazing, is present when coaches or staff members are not monitoring athletes. This is especially true in locker rooms. Adherence to a locker room and changing areas policy enhances privacy and

reduces the likelihood of misconduct. The following guidelines are designed to maintain personal privacy as well as to reduce the risk of misconduct in locker rooms and changing areas.

1. Use of Cell Phone and Other Recordings Devices is Prohibited

Cell phones and other devices with recording capabilities, including voice recording, still cameras and video cameras, increase the risk for different forms of misconduct in locker rooms and changing areas. As a result, **USE OF A DEVICE'S PHOTOGRAPHIC OR RECORDING CAPABILITIES IN THE LOCKER ROOMS, REST ROOMS, CHANGING AREAS OR SIMILAR SPACES IS PROHIBITED.** Exceptions may be made for media and championship celebrations, if everyone is fully clothed, parent/legal guardian consent is provided, and such exceptions are approved by the Club and two or more Adults are present during all recording.

2. Isolated One-on-One Interactions/Monitoring

- At no time are unrelated adults permitted to be alone with a minor in a locker room, rest room, or changing area during In-Program Contact except when:
 - A Dual relationship Exists; or the close-in-age Exception Applies; or
 - A Minor athlete needs an Adult Participant Personal Care Assistant (“PCA”), and:
 - The Minor Athlete’s parent/guardian has provided written consent to U.S. Soccer for the Adult Participant PCA to work with the Minor Athlete; and
 - The Adult Participant PCA has complied with U.S. Soccer’s education and training policy; and
- The Adult Participant PCA has complied with U.S. Soccer’s screening policy. Clubs must provide a private or semi-private place for minor athletes to change clothes and/or undress at USL events.
- If a Club is using a facility that has access to a single set of facilities, times must be designated for use by each respective group (e.g., adults, minors, etc.).
- Locker rooms, restrooms and changing areas should be regularly and randomly monitored.
- Clubs should make every effort to recognize when a minor athlete goes to the locker room or changing area during practice and competition, and if the minor does not return in a timely fashion, the Club will check on the minor’s whereabouts.
- The USL discourages parents from entering the locker rooms and changing areas unless it is truly necessary. In these instances, it should be a same-sex parent, and the Club has given permission.

3. Non-Exclusive Facility

If your Club uses a facility not under its jurisdiction (e.g., for training or competition or similar events) and the facility is used by multiple constituents, covered persons are nonetheless required to adhere to the rules set forth here.

4. Undress

- Adults must not change clothes or behave in a manner that intentionally or recklessly exposes their breasts, buttocks, groin, or genitals to a Minor Athlete.
- Adults must not shower with Minor Athletes unless the adult meets the Close-In-Age Exception, or the shower is part of a pre- or post-activity rinse while wearing swimwear.
- Parents/guardians may request in writing that their Minor Athlete(s) not change or shower with USSPP(s) during In-Program Contact. U.S. Soccer and the USSPP(s) must abide by this request.

G. Transportation

- Clubs generally do not arrange for local travel for individual players from home to training/practice/competition and should generally avoid taking responsibility for coordinating local travel.
- It is the responsibility of the parents/legal guardians to ensure that the person transporting the minor player maintains the proper safety and legal requirements, including, but not limited to a valid driver's license, automobile liability insurance, a vehicle in safe working order, and compliance with applicable state laws.
- Covered persons who are not also acting as a parent/legal guardian shall not ride in a vehicle alone with an unrelated Minor, absent a medical emergency. Covered persons not also acting as a parent/legal guardian may only drive with Minors in groups of two or more or with another adult, unless otherwise agreed to in writing by the minor's parent/legal guardian (which consent may be withdrawn at any time).
- In any case where a staff member and/or volunteer is involved in a minor's local travel, a parental release is required in advance. Parents/legal guardians are advised to consult the Center's Parental Toolkit (<https://www.usef.org/forms-pubs/9gSPTAMFn2g/parent-complete-toolkit>) concerning Child Abuse prevention before providing consent for their Minor to travel alone with an unrelated Adult.
- We encourage parents/legal guardians to pick up their Minor first and drop off their Minor last in any shared or carpool travel arrangement.

H. Lodging

Team travel is a trip that requires overnight stays away from home and occurs when any Club or team sponsors, coordinates, or arranges for travel so that teams can compete locally, regionally, or nationally. Because of the potential for greater distances, coaches, staff, volunteers, and chaperones will often travel with the Players. Detailed travel plans should be provided to parents/legal guardians before any overnight travel. Written Parental/Guardian consent must be recorded prior to any travel.

1. Covered Persons Requirements

Covered Persons who travel with a team (whether Coach, ATC, Game Official, staff member, or volunteer/parent) *must* successfully pass a criminal background check and other screening requirements in compliance with the USL's screening policies and complete the Core SafeSport Training.

2. Travel to Competition

If possible, all travel duties should be assigned to a common carrier, but if that is not possible, specific Club-developed protocols should be followed. Each Club should set out requirements (like the below) for travelling to competitions.

When only one covered person and one minor travel to a competition (including, but not limited to, a minor Game Official), the minor must provide evidence of his/her/their parent's/legal guardian's written permission in advance of each competition before traveling alone with the covered person to a competition.

3. Travel Arrangements

For team/Club travel, hotels, bus, and air travel will typically be booked in advance by the Club. It is reasonable for players to share rooms, with 2–4 Players assigned per room depending on accommodations. The Club should also notify hotel management should any special arrangements be warranted. For example, depending on the ages in travel parties, the Club may ask hotels to block pay per view channels or clear mini bars. Depending on the size of the group, the Club may also request an additional large room or suite so that its members and players may socialize as a group. Meetings shall not occur in individual hotel rooms, and the Club will reserve a separate space for adults and players to socialize and/or to support appropriate athletic training appointments.

4. Hotel Rooms

Adults shall not share a hotel room or other sleeping arrangement with a minor (unless the covered persons/individual is the parent/legal guardian, sibling, or is otherwise related to the minor player and the parent/legal guardian has provided written consent prior to the lodging arrangement). Clubs shall make every reasonable effort to avoid assigning players to the same room who: (i) are not related and are more than two years apart in age (unless authorized in writing by the younger player's parent/legal guardian); or (ii) have a known history of misconduct either with or against one another. In addition, no adult should enter the hotel room or other sleeping arrangement of a

minor unless necessary for the safety of the minor (e.g., in the event of emergency). Team meetings should never be conducted in a hotel room used for sleeping.

Parents/legal guardians who wish to stay in the team hotel are permitted and encouraged to do so.

5. Meetings/Supervision

Meetings will be conducted consistent with the policy for one-on-one interactions—i.e., any such meeting shall be observable and interruptible.

As stated above, meetings may not be conducted in a hotel room used for sleeping. In the event that it is not possible, due to resources or availability, to reserve separate space to conduct meetings or allow for social interactions, then meetings may be conducted in rooms used for sleeping with adherence to strict protocols regarding time of day, number of individuals, and documentation of attendees, so long as the door to the room remains ajar, and/or with additional adults present, with at least one of those adults being the same gender as the player(s), when no other options are available. At no time and under no circumstances may these meetings/interactions be between one adult and one unrelated minor.

During team travel, when doing room checks, attending team meetings and/or other activities, the one-to-one interactions policy must be followed and at least two adults must be present to ensure observable and interruptible environments are maintained.

6. Mixed-Gender and Mixed Age Travel⁵

Players may only share a room with other players of the same age group (e.g., minors with minors, adults with adults) and gender-identity (if requested). Every effort will be made to room together any younger players that are “playing up”—i.e., players participating in divisions that are typically designed for players in greater age ranges (unless authorized in writing by the younger player’s parent/legal guardian). Players will also be further grouped by age (and gender, if applicable) for the purposes of assigning an appropriate chaperone. Clubs must make every effort to provide these groups with at least one chaperone of the same gender.

Regardless of gender or age, a coach shall not share a hotel room or other sleeping arrangement with a player (unless the coach is the parent/legal guardian, sibling, or spouse of that player).

Similarly, in the event of game official travel, an adult game official shall not share a hotel room or other sleeping arrangement with a minor game official (unless the adult is the parent/legal guardian, sibling, or spouse of that minor game official). And at no time should a game official and player or coach be sharing a room.

⁵ Generally speaking, USL does not operate leagues permitting mixed-gender teams. In the event of such a team in the future, however, athletes may only share a room with other athletes of the same gender.

7. Coach and Staff Responsibilities

During team travel, coaches and staff members will help athletes, fellow coaches and staff members adhere to policy guidelines in this Handbook. When not practicing, training, competing, or preparing for competition, coaches and staff will monitor the safety and activities of athletes, fellow coaches, and staff during team travel.

Coaches and staff will:

- prepare athletes for team travel and make athletes aware of all expectations. Supplemental information will be given to parents/guardians of athletes who are considered inexperienced travelers, new or relatively new to team travel, or who are under the age of 14 to familiarize themselves with all travel itineraries and schedules before the initiation of team travel.
- conform to, and monitor for others' adherence, all policies during team travel.
- encourage minor athletes to participate in regular, at least daily, scheduled communications with their parents/guardians.
- ensure athletes are not alone in a hotel room with any adult apart from a family member; this includes coaches, staff, and chaperones.
- not use drugs or alcohol in the presence of minors or be under the influence of alcohol or drugs while performing their coaching/staff duties (this applies 24/7 throughout a camp or travel trip)
- immediately report any concerns about physical or sexual abuse, misconduct, or policy violations to the USL, the Federation, and the appropriate authorities

APPENDIX 1: DEFINITIONS

Term	Definition
Adult	As defined in Section I.C.1.
Adult Participant	Any adult over the age of 18 who is: an athlete, employee, or board member within the USL Ecosystem.
Authority	When one person's position over another person is such that, based on the totality of the circumstances, they have the power or right to direct, control, give orders to, or make decisions for that person. See also the Power Imbalance definition in the SafeSport Code.
Center	As defined in Section I.
Covered Persons	All persons in the USL Ecosystem, including but not limited to all Club employees, staff, coaches, volunteers, externs, independent contractors, referees, security, athletic trainers, and health care professionals.
Covered Program	As defined in Section I.C.2.
Close in Age Exception	An exception applicable to certain policies is when an Adult Participant does not have authority over a Minor Athlete and is not more than four years older than the Minor Athlete. This exception only applies within the prevention policies and not regarding misconduct defined in the SafeSport Code, or to the screening and training requirements imposed by the Center and U.S. Soccer.
Club	All entities or organizations that have teams attend or otherwise participate in USL leagues or events (including employees, contractors, commissioned service providers, and other individuals acting on behalf of the Club).
Dual Relationship	An exception applicable to certain policies when an Adult Participant has a dual role or relationship with a Minor Athlete and the Minor Athlete's parent/guardian has provided written consent at least annually authorizing the exception.
Federation	As defined in Section I.

Term	Definition
Hostile Environment	As defined in Section II.A.4.
In-Program Contact	Any contact (including communications, interactions, or activities) between an Adult Participant and any Minor Athlete related to participation in sport. Examples of In-Program Contact include, but are not limited to competition, practices, camps/clinics, training/instructional sessions, pre/post-game meals or outings, team travel, review of game film, team or sport related relationship building activities, celebrations, award ceremonies, banquets, team or sport related fundraising or community service, sport education, or competition site visits.
MAAPP	<i>See “Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policies”</i>
Mental Injury	As defined in Section II.B.2.
Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policies	<p>The MAAPP is a collection of proactive prevention and training policies for the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Movement. It has three primary components:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An Education & Training Policy that requires training for certain Adult Participants within the Olympic & Paralympic Movement. 2. Required Prevention Policies, focused on limiting one-on-one interactions between Adult Participants and Minor Athletes, that Organizations within the Olympic & Paralympic Movement must implement to prevent abuse. 3. Recommended Prevention Policies.
Minor	As defined in Section I.C.1.
Minor Athlete	A participant under the age of 18. Please note that this also includes minor referees.
NGB	As defined in Section I.D

Term	Definition
Personal Care Assistant	An Adult Participant who assists an athlete requiring help with activities of daily living (ADL) and preparation for athletic participation. This support can be provided by a Guide for Blind or visually impaired athletes or can include assistance with transfer, dressing, showering, medication administration and toileting. Personal Care Assistants are different for every athlete and should be individualized to fit their specific needs. When assisting a Minor Athlete, PCAs must be authorized by the athlete's parent/guardian
"PCA"	<i>See "Personal Care Assistant"</i>
Policy	As defined in the preamble.
Regular Contact	Ongoing interactions during a 12-month period wherein an Adult Participant is in a role of direct and active engagement with any Minor Athlete(s). Examples include but are not limited to adult members within employees, volunteers, board members, medical staff, event staff (including contractors), officials, contractors and vendors who have regular contact with minors.
SafeSport Act	As defined in Section II.B.2.
Sexual Abuse	As defined in Section II.B.2.
Sexual Child Abuse	As defined in Section II.A.1.
Sexual Exploitation	As defined in Section II.A.2.
Sexual Interaction	As defined in Section II.A.1.
Ted Stevens Act	As defined in Section I.
The SafeSport Code	Amended SafeSport Code for the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Movements, (the "SafeSport Code," available at: https://uscenterforsafesport.org/response-and-resolution/policies-and-procedures/).



USL CHAMPIONSHIP, USL LEAGUE ONE, and USL SUPER LEAGUE ANTI-HARASSMENT POLICY

I. Introduction

This Anti-Harassment Policy (this “Policy”) is applicable to the USL Championship, USL League One, and Super League (collectively, “USL” or the “League”), each of their member clubs (each, a “Club”), and each of their respective owners, officers, directors, agents, employees or any and all other Persons engaged or appointed by them or having actual or apparent authority to act on their behalf, which, in the case of a Club, specifically includes its Coaches and Players (each a “Covered Person” and, collectively, “Covered Personnel”).

The principles set out in this Policy are intended to apply to any work-related context. Work-related contexts include, but are not limited to, matches, training, conferences, work functions, social events, meetings, and business trips without regard to whether the location is a League Facility, Club Facility, or offsite.

Harassment does not have any legitimate workplace function. The League and Clubs are committed to providing a safe environment for all Covered Personnel and preventing abusive conduct in any form. This Policy is intended to ensure that all Covered Personnel are able to work and to perform their duties without being subjected to any form of harassment, and the USL will not tolerate harassment or victimization under any circumstances. Clubs are required to adopt policies consistent with and in furtherance of this Policy. In the event of any conflict between this Policy and a Club policy, the provisions of this Policy will control.

The USL strongly encourages any Covered Person who feels that they have been harassed to take action, by making it clear that such behavior is unwelcome and offensive; alternatively, or in addition, follow the procedures for reporting the behavior.

Questions about this Policy may be directed to USL’s safeguarding department by emailing Safeguarding@USLSoccer.com.

II. Non-Exclusive Policy

This Policy may be enforced by USL against the Clubs and any Covered Person. This Policy may also be enforced by any Club against any Covered Person employed by it or otherwise under its control. However, Clubs may also have their own, separate policies, rules, regulations, processes, and procedures to address the reporting and prevention of harassment and other prohibited conduct (collectively, “Club Policies”). This Policy is intended to coexist with the Club Policies and not to replace or modify them in any way, except that a Club may not enact a policy that circumvents any provision of this Policy. Any Covered Person who feels that they have been a victim of harassment (or have witnessed or been informed of any type of harassment), should report the matter to both the USL pursuant to this Policy (as set forth in Section V) as well as to their employer or pursuant to any applicable Club Policies.

III. Players Covered Under a Collective Bargaining Agreement

This Policy is intended to work in conjunction with, and not to replace, amend, or modify any terms or conditions of employment stated in any collective bargaining agreement. Wherever terms of this Policy differ from the terms expressed in the applicable collective bargaining agreement, Covered Personnel should refer to the specific terms of the collective bargaining agreement, which will control.

IV. Prohibited Conduct

This Section IV contains provisions prohibiting the following types of conduct: Sexual Misconduct, Physical Misconduct, Emotional Misconduct, Bullying, Harassment, Hazing, and Aiding and Abetting, and Other Misconduct.

A. Sexual Misconduct

Covered Personnel may not engage in (1) Sexual Harassment; (2) Sexual Exploitation; or (3) Bullying, Hazing, or Other Inappropriate Conduct of a Sexual Nature, as further described below. Sexual misconduct may occur between persons of all genders and sexual orientations and is not limited to instances of opposite-sex misconduct.

- **Sexual Harassment.** It is a violation of this Policy for Covered Personnel to engage in Sexual Harassment. “Sexual Harassment” means any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favors, or other unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, whether verbal, non-verbal, graphic, physical, or otherwise, where: (a) submission to the conduct is explicitly or implicitly made a term or condition of employment, standing in sport, participation in Events, programs, or activities; (b) submission to the conduct is otherwise used as the basis for sporting decisions; or (c) the conduct creates a Hostile Environment. Sexual Harassment includes harassment related to gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. It may include acts of aggression, intimidation, or hostility, whether verbal or non-verbal, graphic, physical, or otherwise, even if the acts do not involve conduct of a sexual nature.
- **Sexual Exploitation.** It is a violation of this Policy for Covered Personnel to engage in Sexual Exploitation. “Sexual Exploitation” occurs when Covered Personnel purposely or knowingly: (a) allow third parties to observe private sexual activity from a hidden location (*e.g.*, closet) or through electronic means (*e.g.*, Skype or live-streaming of images) without Consent of all parties involved in the sexual activity; (b) record or photograph private sexual activity and/or a person’s intimate parts (including genitalia, groin, breasts, or buttocks) without Consent of all parties in the recording or photo; (c) engage in voyeurism (*e.g.*, watching private sexual activity or viewing another person’s intimate parts when that person would have a reasonable expectation of privacy), without Consent of all parties being viewed; (d) disseminate, show, share, forward or post images of private sexual activity and/or a person’s intimate parts (including genitalia, groin, breasts, or buttocks) without prior Consent of the person depicted in the images for any reason whatsoever; (e) intentionally expose another person to a sexually transmitted infection or virus without that person’s knowledge; or

(f) engage in prostituting or trafficking another person.

- **Bullying, Hazing, or Other Inappropriate Conduct of a Sexual Nature.** It is a violation of this Policy for Covered Personnel to engage in bullying, hazing, and other inappropriate conduct of a sexual nature, as further defined in Sections IV.D., IV.F., and IV.H.

B. Physical Misconduct

Covered Personnel may not engage in Physical Misconduct. “Physical Misconduct” means any intentional contact or noncontact behavior that causes, or reasonably threatens to cause, physical harm to another person. Examples of Physical Misconduct may include, without limitation:

- **Contact Violations** – *e.g.*, punching, beating, biting, striking, choking, or slapping another; intentionally hitting another with objects, such as sporting equipment; or encouraging or knowingly permitting a Player to return to play prematurely following a serious injury (*e.g.*, a concussion) and without the clearance of a medical professional.
- **Non-Contact Violations** – *e.g.*, isolating a person in a confined space, such as locking them in a small space; forcing another to assume a painful stance or position for no athletic purpose (*e.g.*, requiring them to kneel on a harmful surface); withholding, recommending against, or denying adequate hydration, nutrition, medical attention, or sleep; providing alcohol to a person under the legal drinking age; or providing illegal drugs or non-prescribed medications to another.
- **Criminal Conduct** – *e.g.*, any act or conduct described as physical abuse or misconduct under applicable federal or state law (*e.g.*, assault, battery, kidnapping and false imprisonment).

C. Emotional Misconduct

Covered Personnel may not engage in Emotional Misconduct. Emotional Misconduct may include, without limitation, (1) verbal acts, (2) physical acts, (3) acts that deny attention or support, (4) criminal conduct, and/or (5) stalking, as further described below. Emotional Misconduct is determined by objective behaviors, regardless of whether harm is intended or results from the behavior.

- **Verbal acts** – *e.g.*, repeatedly and excessively verbally assaulting or attacking someone personally in a manner that serves no productive training or motivational purpose.
- **Physical acts** – *e.g.*, repeated and/or severe physically aggressive behaviors, including but not limited to, throwing sport equipment, water bottles, or chairs at or in the presence of others or punching walls, windows, or other objects.
- **Acts that deny attention or support** – *e.g.*, ignoring or isolating a person for extended periods of time, including routinely or arbitrarily excluding a Player from practice.

- **Criminal conduct** means any act or conduct described as emotional abuse or misconduct under applicable federal or state law.
- **Stalking**, which occurs when a person purposefully engages in a Course of Conduct directed at a specific person, and Knows or Should Know, that the course of conduct would cause a reasonable person to (i) fear for their safety, (ii) the safety of a third person, or (iii) experience significant mental suffering or anguish. Stalking includes “cyber-stalking,” wherein a person stalks another using electronic media, such as the internet, social networks, blogs, cell phones, texts, or other similar devices or forms of contact.

D. Bullying

Covered Personnel may not engage in Bullying. “Bullying” means repeated and/or severe behavior(s) that are (a) aggressive; (b) directed at another Covered Person; and (c) intended or likely to hurt, control, or diminish the individual emotionally, physically, sexually, socially or professionally.

Examples of bullying behavior may include, without limitation, repeated and/or severe:

- **Physical Bullying** – *e.g.*, pushing, punching, beating, biting, striking, kicking, choking, spitting, or slapping, or throwing objects (such as sporting equipment) at another person.
- **Verbal Bullying** – *e.g.*, ridiculing, taunting, name-calling, or intimidating or threatening to cause someone harm.
- **Social Bullying** – *e.g.*, cyberbullying, use of rumors or false statements about someone to diminish that person’s reputation or professional standing; using electronic communications, social media, or other technology to harass, frighten, intimidate, or humiliate someone; or socially excluding someone and asking others to do the same.
- **Sexual Bullying** – *e.g.*, ridiculing or taunting based on gender or sexual orientation (real or perceived), gender traits or behavior, or teasing someone about their looks or behavior as it relates to sexual attractiveness.
- **Criminal Conduct** – Bullying includes any conduct described as bullying under applicable federal or state law.

Conduct may not rise to the level of Bullying if it is merely rude (inadvertently saying or doing something hurtful), mean (purposefully saying or doing something hurtful, but not as part of a pattern of behavior), or arising from conflict or struggle between persons who perceive they have incompatible views and/or positions.

E. Harassment

Covered Personnel may not engage in Harassment. “Harassment” means repeated and/or severe conduct that (a) causes fear, humiliation, or annoyance, (b) offends or degrades, (c) creates

a Hostile Environment, or (d) reflects discriminatory bias in an attempt to establish dominance, superiority, or power over an individual or group based on age, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, national origin, mental or physical disability and/or any other protected characteristic under federal or state anti-discrimination laws; or (e) any act or conduct described as harassment under federal or state law. Whether conduct is harassing depends on the totality of the circumstances, including the nature, frequency, intensity, location, context, and duration of the behavior.

Conduct may not rise to the level of Harassment if it is merely rude (inadvertently saying or doing something hurtful), mean (purposefully saying or doing something hurtful, but not as part of a pattern of behavior), or arising from conflict or struggle between persons who perceive they have incompatible views and/or positions.

As used in this policy, a “**Hostile Environment**” exists when the conduct affects tangible job benefits or is, both subjectively and objectively, sufficiently severe, persistent, and/or pervasive so as to (i) unreasonably interfere with work performance or (ii) create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment. Whether a Hostile Environment exists depends on the totality of known circumstances, including, but not limited to: (1) the frequency, nature, and severity of the conduct; (2) whether the conduct was physically threatening; (3) the effect of the conduct on the victim’s mental or emotional state; (4) whether the conduct was directed at more than one person; (5) whether the conduct arose in the context of other discriminatory conduct; (6) whether the conduct unreasonably interfered with any person’s educational or work performance and/or sport programs or activities; and (7) whether the conduct implicates concerns related to protected speech. A Hostile Environment can be created by persistent or pervasive conduct or by a single or isolated incident that is sufficiently severe. The more severe the conduct, the less need there is to show a repetitive series of incidents to prove a Hostile Environment, particularly if the conduct is physical. A single incident of sexual contact without Consent, for example, may be sufficiently severe to constitute a Hostile Environment. In contrast, the perceived offensiveness of a single verbal or written expression, standing alone, is typically not sufficient to constitute a Hostile Environment.

F. Hazing

Covered Personnel may not engage in Hazing. “Hazing” is any conduct that subjects another person, whether physically, mentally, emotionally, or psychologically, to anything that may endanger, abuse, humiliate, degrade, or intimidate the person as a condition of joining or being socially and/or professionally accepted by a group, team, or organization. Purported Consent by the person subjected to Hazing is not a defense, regardless of the person’s perceived willingness to cooperate or participate. Examples of Hazing include:

- **Contact acts** – *e.g.*, tying, taping, or otherwise physically restraining another person; or beating, paddling, or other forms of physical assault.
- **Non-contact acts** – *e.g.*, requiring or forcing the consumption of alcohol, illegal drugs, or other substances, including participation in binge drinking and drinking games; personal servitude; requiring social actions (*e.g.*, wearing inappropriate or provocative clothing) or public displays (*e.g.*, public nudity) that are illegal or meant to draw ridicule; excessive training requirements demanded of only particular individuals on a

team that serve no reasonable or productive training purpose; sleep deprivation; otherwise unnecessary schedule disruptions; withholding of water and/or food; or restrictions on personal hygiene.

- **Sexualized acts** – *e.g.*, actual or simulated conduct of a sexual nature.
- **Criminal acts** – *i.e.*, any act or conduct that constitutes hazing under applicable federal or state law.

Conduct may not rise to the level of Hazing if it is merely rude (inadvertently saying or doing something hurtful), mean (purposefully saying or doing something hurtful, but not as part of a pattern of behavior), or arising from conflict or struggle between persons who perceive they have incompatible views and/or positions.

G. Aiding and Abetting.

Covered Personnel may not affirmatively assist, support or encourage another Covered Person to engage in any conduct prohibited by this Policy.

H. Other Inappropriate Conduct

In addition to the foregoing prohibitions, Covered Personnel may not engage in the following types of inappropriate conduct:

- **Intimate or Romantic Relationship** – A Covered Person may not engage in an Intimate or Romantic Relationship with a Player where a Power Imbalance exists. An “Intimate or Romantic Relationship” is a close personal relationship—other than a familial relationship—that exists independently and outside of the sport relationship. Whether a relationship is an Intimate or Romantic Relationship is based on the totality of the circumstances, including: (a) regular contact and/or interactions outside of or unrelated to the sport relationship (electronically or in person), (b) the parties’ emotional connectedness, (c) the exchange of gifts, (d) ongoing physical and/or intimate contact and/or sexual activity, (e) identity as a couple, (f) the sharing of sensitive personal information, and/or (g) intimate knowledge about each other’s lives outside the sport relationship.

Aside from intimate and romantic relationships with Players, other intimate and romantic relationships which may occur between Covered Personnel within an office setting are not covered by this policy; however, such relationships may be subject to individual Club Policies.

- **Intentional Exposure** – Covered Personnel may not intentionally expose his or her breasts, buttocks, groin, or genitals, or induce another to do so.
- **Inappropriate Physical Contact** – Covered Personnel may not engage in inappropriate physical contact with an individual. Such inappropriate contact includes, but is not limited to, intentionally (a) touching, slapping, or otherwise contacting the breasts, buttocks or genitals; (b) excessively touching or hugging; or (c) kissing.

I. Power Imbalance

Where a Power Imbalance exists, it is a violation of this Policy for the individual in the position of power to utilize their status, position, or power in a way to manipulate, coerce, sanction or intimidate another individual. Where a power imbalance exists, it may also be used when assessing the other forms of prohibited conduct listed in Section A.

As used in this Policy, a “Power Imbalance” means that one person has supervisory, evaluative, financial or other authority over another, based on the totality of the circumstances, including but not limited to: the nature and extent of the supervisory, evaluative, financial or other authority over the person; the actual relationship between the parties; the parties’ respective roles; the nature and duration of the relationship; and the age of the parties involved.

J. Retaliation

This Policy prohibits any form of discipline, reprisal, intimidation, or retaliation for good faith reporting of incidents of harassment (or other forms of prohibited conduct) of any kind, pursuing any claim of harassment or prohibited conduct, or cooperating in related investigations. Any Covered Person who believes that they have been retaliated against for making or assisting in the investigation of a complaint should contact the USL in accordance with the reporting mechanisms outlined in Section V below.

V. REPORTING

The USL champions a culture of compliance, safety, and respect. As a part of this Policy, the USL encourages open communication in which all Covered Personnel feel empowered to report concerns that violate this policy.

A. Reporting to the U.S. Center for SafeSport (the “Center”)

The U.S Center for SafeSport (the "Center") has exclusive jurisdiction over allegations of Sexual Misconduct (irrespective of age), suspected Child Abuse and other misconduct involving Players who are Minors. All reports of this nature must be reported to the Center, by visiting www.safesport.org and selecting the “Report a Concern” link, or by calling the Center at (720) 531-0340.

B. Reporting to USL

Any Covered Person who feels that they are a victim of harassment or have witnessed or been informed of any type of harassment or prohibited conduct, including any retaliation or threat thereof, should immediately report the matter to their employer (pursuant to any Club Policies, if applicable) as well as to the USL.

To support Covered Personnel in making a report, the USL has contracted with i-Sight, an independent service provider specializing in secure and anonymous Whistle-blower Hotline and web-based reporting services. This hotline will enable an individual to anonymously report a

suspected violation by phone (888) 896-4835 or via the “Report a Concern” link on USL’s Safeguarding Webpage (<https://www.uslsoccer.com/safespace>).

For the avoidance of doubt, in the event the USL receives a report that implicates a reporting obligation to the Center and/or law enforcement, the USL will make the report directly and/or work with you to make the report.

The identity of any individual submitting a report in good faith will be fully handled discreetly and confidentially as possible, unless doing so does not comply with applicable law or prevents a full and effective investigation of the report. To the greatest extent possible, all personnel responsible for responding to such reports will maintain the confidentiality of the individual and the matters relating to the report.

Any Covered Person who is found, after appropriate investigation, to have engaged in a violation of this Policy will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action (which, if being enforced by an employer, may be up to and including termination of employment).

C. Reporting to U.S. Soccer

Covered Personnel are also welcome to report a violation of this policy to U.S. Soccer via their online reporting process: www.ussoccer.com/integrity-hotline or by calling (312) 528-7004.

D. Intentionally Filing a False Allegation

In addition to constituting misconduct, filing a knowingly false allegation that Personnel engaged in Prohibited Conduct may violate state criminal law and civil defamation, slander and other tort laws. Any person making a knowingly false allegation shall be subject to disciplinary action by USL.

An allegation is false if the events reported did not occur, and the person making the report knows or should have known that the events did not occur.

A false allegation is different from an unsubstantiated allegation; an unsubstantiated allegation means there is insufficient supporting evidence to determine whether an allegation is true or false. Absent demonstrable misconduct, an unsubstantiated allegation alone, is not grounds for a Code violation.

VI. VIOLATIONS OF THIS POLICY

Any Covered Person, regardless of position or title, whom USL determines has subjected an individual to harassment or retaliation in violation of this Policy, will be subject to discipline. Disciplinary sanctions issued by the USL can include (without limitation) suspensions, fines, mandatory education and exclusion from League activities.

In addition, and independent of any finding by the USL, the Club may make its own determination in accordance with its internal Club Policies, discipline for which may include termination of employment.

APPENDIX 1

DEFINITIONS

1. **“Bullying”** has the meaning set forth in Section IV.D.
2. **“Club”** has the meaning set forth in the Preamble.
3. **“Club Policies”** has the meaning set forth in the Preamble.
4. **“Coercion”** means the use of an unreasonable amount of pressure to gain intimate and/or sexual access. Coercion is more than an effort to persuade, entice, or attract another person to engage in sexual activity. When a person makes clear their decision not to participate in a form of Sexual Contact or Sexual Intercourse, their decision to stop, or their decision not to go beyond a certain sexual interaction, continued pressure can be coercive. Whether conduct is coercive depends on: (i) the frequency of the application of the pressure, (ii) the intensity of the pressure, (iii) the degree of isolation of the person being pressured, and (iv) the duration of the pressure.
5. **“Coach”** means an individual authorized by a Club to perform soccer-specific duties in connection with Players, including (without limitation): training and coaching of Players; selecting Players for matches and competitions; or making tactical choices during matches and competitions.
6. **“Consent”** is (a) informed (knowing), (b) voluntary (freely given), and (c) active (not passive). Consent must be demonstrated by clear words or actions, indicating that a person who is legally and functionally competent has indicated permission to engage in mutually agreed-upon sexual activity. Consent to any one form of sexual activity does not automatically imply Consent for any other forms of sexual activity. Previous relationships or prior Consent does not imply Consent to future sexual activity. Once given, Consent can be withdrawn through clear communication. Consent cannot be obtained: (a) by Force, (b) by taking advantage of the Incapacitation of another, where the person initiating sexual activity knew or reasonably should have known that the other was Incapacitated, (c) from someone who lacks Legal Capacity, or (d) where a Power Imbalance exists.
7. **“Course of Conduct”** means at least two or more acts, in which a person directly, indirectly, or through third parties, by any action, method, device, or means, follows, monitors, observes, surveils, threatens, or communicates to or about another person, or interferes with another person’s property.
8. **“Covered Person”** has the meaning set forth in the Preamble.
9. **“Covered Personnel”** has the meaning set forth in the Preamble.
10. **“Emotional Misconduct”** has the meaning set forth in Section IV.C.
11. **“Facility”** shall mean any facility, when at such time the Facility is either owned or being leased, rented, or used by USL or a USL Club.
12. **“Force”** means influencing a person to take an action or omission through (a) the use of

Physical Violence, (b) Threats, (c) Intimidation, or (d) Coercion.

13. **“Harassment”** has the meaning set forth in Section IV.E.

14. **“Hazing”** has the meaning set forth in Section IV.F.

15. **“Hostile Environment”** has the meaning set forth in Section **Error! Reference source not found.** IV.E.

16. **“Incapacitation”** means that a person lacks the ability to make informed, rational judgments about whether to engage in sexual activity. A person who is incapacitated is unable, temporarily or permanently, to give Consent because of mental or physical helplessness, sleep, unconsciousness, or lack of awareness that sexual activity is taking place. A person may be incapacitated because of consuming alcohol or other drugs, or due to a temporary or permanent physical or mental health condition. Incapacitation is a state beyond drunkenness or intoxication. A person is not necessarily incapacitated merely because of drinking or using drugs. The impact of alcohol and other drugs varies from person to person and is evaluated under the specific circumstances of a matter. A Personnel’s being impaired by alcohol or other drugs is not a defense to any violation of this Policy.

17. **“Intimate or Romantic Relationship”** has the meaning set forth in Section IV.H.

18. **“Intimidation”** means menacing or causing reasonable fear in another person. A person’s size, alone, does not constitute intimidation; however, a person’s size may be used in a way that constitutes intimidation (*e.g.*, by blocking access to an exit).

19. **“League”** has the meaning set forth in the Preamble.

20. **“Physical Misconduct”** has the meaning set forth in Section IV.B.

21. **“Physical Violence”** means the exertion of control over another person using physical force (*e.g.*, by hitting, punching, slapping, kicking, restraining, choking, or brandishing or using a weapon).

22. **“Player”** means a player who participates on a Club.

23. **“Policy”** has the meaning set forth in the Preamble.

24. **“Power Imbalance”** has the meaning set forth in Section IV.I.

25. **“Sexual Contact”** means any intentional touching of a sexual nature, however slight, with any object or body part (as described below), by a person upon another person. Sexual Contact includes but is not limited to: (a) kissing, (b) intentional touching of the breasts, buttocks, groin, or genitals, whether clothed or unclothed, or intentionally touching of another with any of these body parts; and (c) making another touch themselves or another person with or on any of these body parts.

26. **“Sexual Exploitation”** has the meaning set forth in Section IV.A.

27. “**Sexual Harassment**” has the meaning set forth in Section IV.A.

28. “**Sexual Intercourse**” is any penetration, however slight, with any object or body part (as described below), by a person upon another person. Sexual Intercourse includes (a) vaginal penetration by a penis, object, tongue, or finger; (b) anal penetration by a penis, object, tongue, or finger; and (c) any contact, no matter how slight, between the mouth of one person and the genitalia of another person.

29. “**Threats**” means words or actions that would compel a reasonable person to engage in unwanted sexual activity (*e.g.*, threats of physical/sporting harm or revealing private information).

30. “**USL**” has the meaning set forth in the preamble.



USL Best Practices for Coach to Player Socialization

Club members that hold a position of authority must be aware that they have tremendous influence and power over their players. By having such an influence, it inherently creates a power imbalance. A coach's goal should be to create a judgment free environment where expectations external to the game of soccer do not exist. It is imperative that coaches set clear socialization boundaries with their players.

Each player should expect to be treated with the utmost respect, and his or her welfare should always be considered in decisions by the club. A player should respect the boundaries set forth by this document and others within the team ecosystem. A healthy coach – player relationship is at the core of all athletic endeavors. In order to maintain a healthy, positive, respectful external relationship between a coach and the player, the following guidelines have been established by the USL as best practices for socialization.

Guidelines for Alcohol Consumption

The importance of drinking responsibly helps to mitigate risk management. The impaired judgment that comes from alcohol consumption can loosen inhibitions and result in inappropriate behavior.

Coaches and players shall observe all laws regarding use and/or possession of alcohol and tobacco while at any league, club, or team event.

Remember moderation is the key. Alcohol consumption at any club or team function to include sporting venues, team travel and team functions should not get to an intoxicated or impaired level.

Guidelines for Interpersonal Interactions

Team building away from the pitch is an important component of team cohesion. Under these circumstances it is important for no one-on-one interactions between any coach and any player to happen outside of the appropriate team settings.

Meeting one-on-one is strickled prohibited outside of club venues and team events.

No Player/coach should engage in any conduct that could be reasonably construed as romantic or sexual, including, but not limited to verbal statements, physical interactions, and social media.

Pursuing or maintaining a romantic relationship where a power imbalance exists is strictly prohibited.

Definitions

- A. **“Coach”** means an individual employed in a soccer-specific occupation by a member Club whose:
- a. Employment duties consist of one or more of the following: training and coaching of players, selecting players for matches and competitions, making tactical choices during matches and competitions; and/or
 - b. Employment requires the holding of a coaching license or specification in accordance with domestic or continental licensing regulation.
- B. **“Position of Authority”** applies to the term “coach” and includes Team head coaches and assistant coaches. A Head Coach has the responsibility and authority to determine, among other things, player recruitment, selection, evaluation, retention, playing time.
For individual players; substitutions; player positions; offensive and defensive strategy and tactics; player development; practice formats and goals; physical and mental fitness and conditioning of players; determining benching, trades and waivers for players; Team administration, travel, and logistics for players and related employees; and selection, supervision, and evaluation of assistant coaches, technical staff and volunteers. Assistant Coaches, position coaches and other ancillary staff, i.e., athletic trainers, nutritionist, strength & conditioning, will be considered positions of authority as it pertains to socialization best practices.
- C. **“Power Imbalance”** means that one person has supervisory, evaluative, financial or other authority over another, based on the totality of the circumstances, including but not limited to: the nature and extent of the supervisory, evaluative, financial or other authority over the person; the actual relationship between the parties; the parties’ respective roles; the nature and duration of the relationship; and the age of the parties involved.

Section 2

Player Care Officers



Player Care Officer (“PCO”) Roles & Responsibilities

Overview of the United Soccer League (USL)

The United Soccer League (USL) is shaping the future of soccer in America. We are the nation’s largest and fastest-growing professional soccer organization, bringing the world’s game to more and more communities across the United States and Canada. Based in Tampa, Fla., the USL oversees multiple professional and elite pre-professional leagues, including the USL Championship, USL Super League, USL League One, USL League Two, USL W League, USL Academy, and Super Y League.

Position Purpose

The club Public Care Officer will directly contribute to the health, safety, and wellness of their club ecosystem. The PCO will act as the liaison between the USL Safeguarding Department and their clubs. This role serves as the pivotal position for ensuring that education and training is executed within the club. Club PCO’s should be versed in all Safeguarding Policies as well as Pro Standards for any professional teams. They will facilitate any reported or suspected violations to SafeSport, USSF and USL Safeguarding as mandated. They are responsible for managing the misconduct reporting and the investigation process through its conclusion. Club PCO’s ensure record keeping meets educational and informational compliance.

Duties and Responsibilities

Specific duties include, but are not limited to:

- 1) USL PCO’S’s are expected to be knowledgeable of USL Safeguarding Policies, Federation Policies, the Center for SafeSport’s Code, and the USSF Professional League Standards (if Appropriate), once completed please fill out and turn in PCO’S On-boarding policy Review (Form 2306).
- 2) Serves as liaison between the club & USL Safeguarding.
- 3) PCO’S communicates with club staff and players on Safeguarding initiatives.
- 4) The PCO’S will be responsible for ensuring background checks are completed, if the U18 Threshold has been met. And the corresponding dates of completion are recorded in the club’s Audit Worksheet. (Ensuring does not mean completed by the PCO’S, your club’s HR component may complete the screenings.)
- 5) The PCO’S will be responsible for ensuring SafeSport Certifications are current for ALL members of the club ecosystem and recorded in their club’s Audit Worksheet.
- 6) The PCO’S will be responsible for ensuring SportsRadar (Sports Betting Integrity Training) Certifications are current for ALL members of the club ecosystem and are recorded in their club’s Audit Worksheet.
- 7) Professional league PCO’S’s will be responsible for ensuring all Federation Professional League Standards are met for players and coaches.
- 8) Support Club compliance by executing mandatory annual training and education. Maintain documentation in support of these mandates in their club’s Audit Worksheet. File the USL Designated Safety Officer Annual Compliance Report, Form S2309.

- 9) The PCO'S will be responsible for ensuring referrals are made to SafeSport, the USL and Law Enforcement as required/directed and documentation of referrals.
- 10) All PCO'S's must use the USL's official DBL/Safeguarding Reporting Form to file a complaint and must follow the written Safeguarding procedures for investigations.

USSF Mandates on the Player Safety Officer (USL title Player Care Officer)

viii. Player Safety and Respect

1. The League must establish a Player Safety Officer responsible for ensuring team compliance with player safety standards regarding issues of Misconduct.
 - a. The Player Care Officer must be available to receive complaints of Misconduct, monitor team implementation of safety standards, coordinate relevant training, address retaliation concerns, and provide regular reports to the league.
 - b. The League Player Care Officer should be in regular contact with USSF's Player Safety Office and must submit annual reports in a format guided by the Federation.
 - c. League must fully indemnify or ensure the League Player Safety Officer for acts within the scope of employment permitted by law.
 - d. League must notify the Federation of any change in employment to the League Player Safety Officer position.
2. Teams must identify an individual within their organization responsible for player safety (Player Safety Officer). This individual's direct line of reporting must not be to any technical staff at the team, and they must have protection from retaliation by team officials. Such individual must not be in a position of power or authority over players. In situations where the player safety officer has additional responsibilities within the organization, such as player operations, they may have a dotted line to a member of the technical staff.**

Who can be a PCO?

A Club staff member who is not the Club owner, or coach, not in a position of authority or power over players, who is committed to ensuring safety and able to take an active role in embedding a culture of safety. Basically, no one that has "Power over Pay or Play"

Examples:

- CMPC – Certified Mental Performance Consultant
- MH Care/Wellness Professional
- Trainer
- Team Administrator
- Player Operations



USL Player Care Officer Questionnaire- Professional Leagues

The USL firmly believes that Safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone within the Ecosystem. To maintain high standards for our athletes, coaches, and clubs the USSF has mandated that all leagues/clubs MUST have a position that manages player safety. At USL this position is the Player Care Officer (PCO). This questionnaire allows USL to determine if you are the best fit candidate to fulfill this role.

Potential PCO Name: _____ **Date:** _____

League: _____ **Club:** _____

Email: _____ **Phone No.** _____

Do you have any power over 'pay or play' for any member within the club? Please explain.

Please list ALL your titles within the club ecosystem.

Please list who you directly report to for each of your titles (name/title).

How often do you come in physical contact with the coaches/players?

This position requires an average of 15 hours a week (pre-season) and 5 hours a week (in season). In your current roles, do you have time to commit to this position?

Is your physical office located at the training facility?

Is your office in a private and secluded setting? Or is your office in an area where leadership could observe players coming into your office?

Please have an individual in leadership review and sign this document.

Owner/President/GM Signature: _____

Date: _____

Thank you for completing the questionnaire!
Betsy Cutler and I will review these answers and
inform you if your current position aligns with
one of a PCO!

-Mycah Blevins



MYCAH BLEVINS

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Safeguarding Contact Expectations for Pro-club Player Care Officers

Pre-Season Federation Compliance Training

- During the 8-week pre-season, Safeguarding begins to communicate to various club personnel (President's Roundtable & PCO's) about Federally mandated training compliance plans per club. (Mandatory ALL club Presentations, could be individual club conversations)
- This Communication continues until after the Season Kick-off OR ALL trainings are complete. Whichever comes first per club.
- We also send weekly updates regarding said compliance status.

Monthly Lunch & Learns with PCO's

- The Safeguarding department hold monthly Lunch & Learns open to all Pro-level PCO's.

Safeguarding OR DBL (Discriminatory Behavior and Language) Investigations

- This is on an as needed basis. If a report is filed for either of the Misconduct Investigation Units, multiple USL departments will be in contact with various Club Personnel depending on the level of the severity of the claim. From leadership, PCO and possibly media and comms.

On-Boarding & Training

- All new clubs must meet with Safeguarding early in the process, to discuss the USL Best Practice Hiring expectations and to incorporate and follow the USL Background Screening Policy.
- ALL new PCO's MUST complete 2 (45min/each) training sessions upon acceptance of the position.

PRN Communication

- The Safeguarding department communicates with club PCO's with any important information about procedure updates, new policies to review, or general USL information needed for our clubs.

Section 3

Registration & Background Screenings



United Soccer League Background Screening Policy

Purpose:

The United Soccer League ("USL") is committed to the safety of its athletes and participants. Accordingly, in accordance with the USL Safeguarding Policy, the USL requires its Clubs to conduct background checks to:

- Foster an environment that creates a safe living, training, and competitive environment for athletes and Club staff.
- Create a safe training and competitive environment for athletes and other individuals associated with the USL Clubs.
- Protect persons at risk including, but not limited to, minors and vulnerable adults.

Policy Statement:

This USL policy sets forth the minimum standards and outlines basic requirements for Clubs to incorporate into their background screening policies. Clubs may adopt background screening standards that are more demanding than this policy. The USL may decide that its background check requirements will not apply to certain or all people under 18 years of age, provided that it clearly publishes that fact in its policy documentation.

NOTE: Due to reporting and other limitations, information from a background check should not be relied upon as the sole basis for selection, but rather as an important indicator in the overall selection process.⁶

A. Application

This policy applies to all Clubs, which must ensure that their respective background policies cover, at a minimum, the following groups, and individuals:

1. All **League** and **Professional Team** personnel must be checked against U.S. Soccer's Risk Management list, and the League and/or team must perform reasonable diligence regarding any individual being vetted on U.S. Soccer's Risk Management list.
2. All Organization Members with adult individuals authorized to have Regular Contact with or authority over Minor Athletes must implement, in the least, and enforce a policy that requires USOPC "Gold Standard", a check against the U.S. Soccer's disqualification list, and the SafeSport disciplinary records⁷.

⁶ Clubs should know applicable state laws.

⁷ The SafeSport Code is available at: <https://www.safesport.org/policies-procedures>.

3. Other individuals who have regular contact with athletes as determined by the Club, in its discretion.

B. Background Screening Search Components

The first year is a “full screening,” while year two, is a supplemental, pared down standard. Risk management databases are mandated components for background screenings for all League and professional team personnel, and any organization member that has contact or authority over minor athletes.

The first two components are completed by the Club and the League, respectively.

1. **SafeSport Centralized Disciplinary Database** - Clubs must review SafeSport’s Centralized Disciplinary Database for any potential Coaching staff/ancillary team staff hire, **prior** to commencing employment or registration. This is free to access by using this link, <https://uscenterforsafesport.org/response-and-resolution/centralized-disciplinary-database/>
2. **USSF Risk Management Disqualification List** – The Club is responsible for forwarding all candidates that meet the Section 1. A. criteria, to the USL Safeguarding department to ensure each candidate does not appear on The Federation Disqualification List. This step must be completed **prior** to initiating the Candidate Background Screening.
3. **Background Checks** – All Head Coaches are mandated to compete a USCOPC “Gold Standard” background screening, **prior**, to be hired. If an offer is extended **prior** to the screening being completed, it is incumbent of each club to add verbiage notifying the candidate’s employment is conditional on passing a background check.

C. Background Screening Vendors

The USL Safeguarding Department is offering 2 Tiers of Background Screening Options.

1. Tier 1 – “Other” club personnel that do not have regular contact with U18 players.

This level is not mandatory but offered to those clubs that want to perform background screening to all their staff and potentially their players.

All Professional Clubs will use S2Verify to background screen club personnel that do not need a “Gold Standard.” Staff that will not interact with U18 players at any time. (i.e. Director of Ticketing, HR Consultant, Marketing personnel)

- a. The USL has negotiated an annual fee of \$11.25.
- b. Reports will go directly to the club and flagged reports will be sent to the Safeguarding Department.
- c. Each club will set up its own account with S2Verify, to simplify initiating a background screening.
- d. Each club has its own account, therefore S2Verify will be direct billing each club.

2. Tier 2- Personnel needing a USOPC “Gold Standard”

This level is mandatory if a club has U-18 Players. (“MAAPP”) and for all Head Coaches.

- A. All Professional Clubs will use the National Center for Safety Initiatives (NCSI) for club personnel that require a USOPC Gold Standard screening. The first year is a “full screening,” while year two, is a supplemental, pared down standard. Risk management databases are mandated components for background screenings for all League and professional team personnel, and any organization member that has contact or authority over minor athletes.
- B. Flagged reports come directly into the Safeguarding Department for additional vetting.

a) Year One Background Screenings - Prior to Hiring

All background screens will include at least the following search components based on the US Soccer’s mandate standards, the “USOPC” Gold standard.

- 1) Social Security Number
- 2) Name and address history records
- 3) Two Independent Multi-Jurisdictional Criminal Database searches covering 50 states plus DC, Guam, and Puerto Rico
- 4) Federal District Courts search for each name used and district where the individual currently lives or has lived during the past 7 years, going back the length of time records are available and reportable.
- 5) County Criminal Records or each name used and county where the individual currently lives or has lived during the past seven years, going back the length of time records are available and reportable for each county searched.
- 6) Two National Sex Offender Registry database searches of all available states, plus DC, Guam, and Puerto Rico.
- 7) Multiple National Watch Lists
- 8) Comprehensive International Records search U.S. citizens who have lived outside of the United States for six consecutive months in any one country, during the past seven years.

- 9) Motor Vehicles Records of at least a 3-year history in the state of licensure (if driving is required for the position)

b) Supplemental Background Screenings

Supplemental off-year background screens will be conducted using at least the following search components:

- 1) Multi-Jurisdictional criminal database covering 50 states plus DC, Guam, and Puerto Rico. (Automatically initiated by NCSI.)
- 2) Sex Offender Registry database searches of all available states, plus DC, Guam, and Puerto Rico. (Automatically initiated by NCSI, if they a.)

D. Timeline

1. League Presidents must be notified of ALL candidates in consideration for positions of authority to include Club Executives, Owners, Head Coaches and Leadership **prior** to the hiring process.
2. All Disciplinary and Risk Management lists MUST be reviewed for any candidate in consideration for positions of authority to include Club Executives, Owners, Head Coaches and Leadership **prior** to the hiring process.
3. A USOPC background check should be completed **prior** to the commencement of a new role or competition for all applicable individuals.
4. Adult individuals authorized to have Regular Contact with or authority over Minor Athletes must have their background check completed by the earlier of 1) prior to Regular Contact with a Minor Athlete; or 2) within the first 45 days of the individual taking on the role giving them access to Minor Athletes.
5. Background checks will be conducted on all applicable individuals every two years using at least the background check search components referenced in Section 3A.
6. A supplemental, partial, background check will be conducted in the off years using at least the background check search components referenced in Section 3B of the Background Procedures. (Automatically initiated by NCSI, if they are your chosen vendor.)

E. Background Check Report Review

1. **USL Background Checks:** Any Club initiated background check that results in a report of a disposition or resolution of a criminal proceeding, other than an adjudication of not guilty, for any of the below criminal offenses will be subject the USL policies and procedures and possibly referred to U.S. Center for SafeSport to determine the individual's level of access and involvement. For the avoidance of doubt, any conviction relating to an offense against a minor, regardless of when the event occurred, must be referred to the U.S. Center for SafeSport.

- a) Any felony

b) Any Misdemeanor involving:

i. All sexual crimes, criminal offenses of a sexual nature to include but not limited to:

Rape

- a. Child Molestation
- b. Sexual Battery
- c. Lewd Conduct
- d. Possession and Distribution of
 - i. Child Pornography
 - ii. Obscene material
- e. Prostitution
- f. Indecent Exposure
- g. Public Indecency
- h. Any sex offender registrant

ii. Any drug related offenses

iii. Harm to minor and vulnerable person(s), including, but not limited to:

- a. Child Abandonment
- b. Child Endangerment / Neglect / Abuse
- c. Contributing to the delinquency of a minor
- d. Driving Under the Influence with a minor

iv. Violence against a person (including crimes involving firearms and domestic violence)

v. Stalking

vi. Harassment

vii. Blackmail

viii. Violation of a Protection Order

ix. Destruction of Property

x. Arson

xi. Criminal Mischief / Vandalism

xii. Animal Abuse or Neglect

xiii. Motor Vehicle Offenses

- a. Being under 21 years of age
- b. Suspended license, revoked license, or the absence of a valid driver's license.
- c. More than two moving violations and/or accidents in the past two years.
- d. Any major conviction within the past two years, including, but not necessarily limited to:
 - i. DUI / DWI
 - ii. Possession of an open container
 - iii. Any drug related motor vehicle incident
 - iv. Leaving the scene of an accident
 - v. Assault (in any form) by use of a motor vehicle
 - vi. Reckless driving (willful or wanton disregard for safety of persons or property in any form)
- c) **Mandatory Self-Disclosure Candidates**– All candidates have a mandatory self-disclosure obligation, which means that if at any point that person was disqualified or declared by another sport organization or League to be temporarily or permanently ineligible, the candidate is required to self-disclose this information immediately. Failure to disclose is a basis for discipline/disqualification.
- d) **Mandatory Self-Disclosure Covered Persons** – All covered persons have a mandatory self-disclosure obligation, which means that if at any point during their association with the USL and/or a Club a covered person has been disqualified or declared by another sport organization or League to be temporarily or permanently ineligible, the Covered Person is required to self-disclose this information immediately. Failure to disclose is a basis for discipline/disqualification.

In addition, all Candidates/Covered Persons must likewise self-disclose to their Club any arrests or citations for a felony, gross misdemeanor, or alcohol / drug related driving offense (example: Driving Under the Influence, Impaired Driving).

2. Background Screening Results – NCSI will report the findings of its search based on a “Red Light / Yellow Light / Green Light” system. If NCSI is not your chosen vendor, then Clubs must ensure a version of this process is being followed.

- a) **Green Light** – “meets the criteria” finding indicates that the background check did not identify criteria that would indicate that the individual is unsuitable for the intended role or activity. A Green Light finding, however, is not a certification of safety or

permission to bypass / ignore other screening efforts. Other disqualifying factors may exist and can be revealed through other means.

- b) **Yellow Light** – finding indicates that an application contains certain errors or omissions that must be resolved. A Yellow Light finding requires that an applicant review his / her / their application and contact your vendor (NCSI if they are your chosen vendor) to fix the error and resubmit necessary application materials.
 - c) **Red Light** – “Does not meet the criteria” finding indicates that one or more of the above listed criteria was flagged during the background screening process and triggers the Problematic Background Screening Review Process. (See D.2 below.)
3. **Background Screening Appeal** – Individuals are directed to communicate directly with NCSI/S2Verify concerning any correction(s) to disclosures or dispute of accuracy of the sourced recorded.
4. **Unfavorable or Problematic Background Screening Review Process** – If an applicant receives an unfavorable or problematic result during a background check or as result of an individual disclosure, the individual will be notified and will have an opportunity to review their background check report. Based upon the information in the background check and any additional information provided by the applicant; each Club will make a hiring decision subject to USL approval. (If your vendor is not NCSI, please forward all Unfavorable or Problematic results to the USL Safeguarding Department for review.)
5. **Documentation** – The i-Sight reporting system shall be used to document the decision process regarding any background check that was flagged or referred for review.

APPENDIX 1

DEFINITIONS

1. **“Affiliates”** means any individual or entity directly or indirectly controlled, controlled by or under common control with the Club or the League, as applicable.
2. **“Club”** means, collectively, the entity entitled to operate a team in the League, its Affiliates, and their respective successors and assigns.
3. **“Club Personnel”** means any owners, officers, directors, agents, employees or other individuals or entities engaged or appointed by the Club.
4. **“Coach”** means an individual employed in a soccer-specific occupation by a member Club, including assistant, position, or other ancillary staff whose:
 - a. Has the responsibility and authority to determine, among other things, Player recruitment, selection, evaluation, and retention; playing time for individual Players; substitutions; Player positions; offensive and defensive strategy and tactics; Player development; practice formats and goals; physical and mental fitness and conditioning of Players; determining benching, trades and waivers for Players; Team administration, travel, and logistics for Players and related employees; and selection, supervision, and evaluation of assistant Coaches, technical staff and volunteers
 - b. Employment duties consist of one or more of the following: training and Coaching of Players, selecting Players for matches and competitions, making tactical choices during matches and competitions; and/or
 - c. Employment requires the holding of a Coaching license or specification in accordance with a domestic or continental licensing regulation.
5. **“League”** means, collectively, the entities entitled to operate the Leagues currently known as the USL Championship, USL League One, their Affiliates, and their respective successors and assigns. Where appropriate, such term shall be deemed to include a reference to the USL Championship or USL League One (and their successors), as applicable.
6. **“Player”** means an individual who participates in soccer within a Club.
7. **“Position of Authority”** applies to the term “Coach” and includes Team head Coaches and assistant Coaches, position Coaches and other ancillary staff, i.e., athletic trainers, nutritionist, strength & conditioning, will be considered positions of authority.



Pro-League Hiring & Background Screening Process for Leadership/Head Coaches

Policy Statement:

The USL Background Screening policy sets forth the minimum standards and outlines basic requirements for Clubs to incorporate into their background screening policies. Clubs may adopt background screening standards that are more demanding than this policy. Other individuals who have regular contact with athletes as determined by the Club, in its discretion.

"All League and Professional Team personnel must be checked against U.S. Soccer's Risk Management list, and the League and/or team must perform reasonable diligence regarding any individual being vetted on U.S. Soccer's Risk Management list."

All Organization Members with adult individuals authorized to have Regular Contact with or authority over Minor Athletes must implement, in the least, and enforce a policy that requires USOPC "Gold Standard", a check against the U.S. Soccer's disqualification list, and the SafeSport disciplinary records." USSF Policy

League President's Hiring Expectations for Leadership & Head-Coaches:

All USL League Presidents utilize the same process when clubs hire Leadership/Head-Coaches.

NOTE: Due to reporting and other limitations, information from a background check should not be relied upon as the sole basis for selection, but rather, as an important indicator in the overall selection process.

Process:

Step One — Clubs

Prior to commencing employment, clubs must send a name and DOB to the League President and Safeguarding Department.

Step Two — USL Safeguarding Department

SafeSport Centralized Disciplinary Database

Safeguarding Department must review SafeSport's Centralized Disciplinary Database for any potential Coaching/Sporting/Executive/Administration candidate.

Link: <https://uscenterforsafesport.org/response-and-resolution/centralized-disciplinary-database/>

Review Candidates — USSF Risk Management Disqualification List

Prior to commencing employment or registration, clubs must send those names along with their DOB's, to the League President and the USL Safeguarding Department to examine USSF's Disqualification List. The Safeguarding Department will vet the candidates and report to clubs each names status. Potential status terminology: Approved/Clear or Concerns to be addressed.

Step Three — Clubs

Clubs will perform a USOPC Gold Standard Background Check. ALL Head Coaches must have a USOPC Gold Standard Background Check, regardless of U18 Players. (Refer to USL Background Policy for further instructions.)



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United Soccer League 2025 Background Screening Vendors FAQ's

Below are the Facts around why we chose NCSI and S2Verify.

A. 2025 – Background Screening Vendors (*USL Standard – See 2025 Background Screening Policy*)

1. Personnel needing (Tier 2) USOPC Gold Standard. (Already being used by several Clubs in all Leagues)
All Professional Clubs will use the National Center for Safety Initiatives (NCSI) to background screen club personnel that require a USOPC Gold Standard screening.

Why NCSI:

- a) They are one of only two national vendors that do USOPC “Gold Standard” screenings.
- b) There is a significantly reduced “bulk” screening cost (Domestic - \$30; Canadian - \$105; International - \$180)
- c) It's integrated into SportsEngine, which will also house training and professional certifications
- d) NCSI costs reflect a 2-year screening process. The first year is a “full screening,” while year two, is a supplemental, pared down standard. Risk management databases are mandated components for background screenings for all league and professional team personnel, and any other organization member that has contact or authority over minor athletes.
- e) Flagged reports come directly into the Safeguarding Department for additional vetting.
- f) NCSI has instituted a client portal which allows each candidate to be responsible for following their own background process and addressing issues, removing the PCO from this task.

2. “Other” club personnel that do not have regular contact with U18 players.

All Professional Clubs *may use* (Tier 1) S2Verify to background screen club personnel that do not need a “Gold Standard.” Staff that will not interact with U18 players at any time. (i.e. Director of Ticketing, HR Consultant, Marketing personnel, etc.)

Why S2Verify:

The USL has negotiated an annual fee of \$11.25.

- a) The USL Safeguarding department was able to mandate the top 5 criteria to be used.
- b) Reports will go directly to the club and flagged reports will be sent to the Safeguarding Department.
- c) Each club will set up its own account with S2Verify, to simplify initiating a background screening.
- d) Each club has its own account, therefore S2Verify will be direct billing each club.



United Soccer League Professional Club Registration Procedure

Standard: All Professional Clubs will use SportsEngine to register Front Office Personnel and Sporting/Technical Personnel.

Purposes:

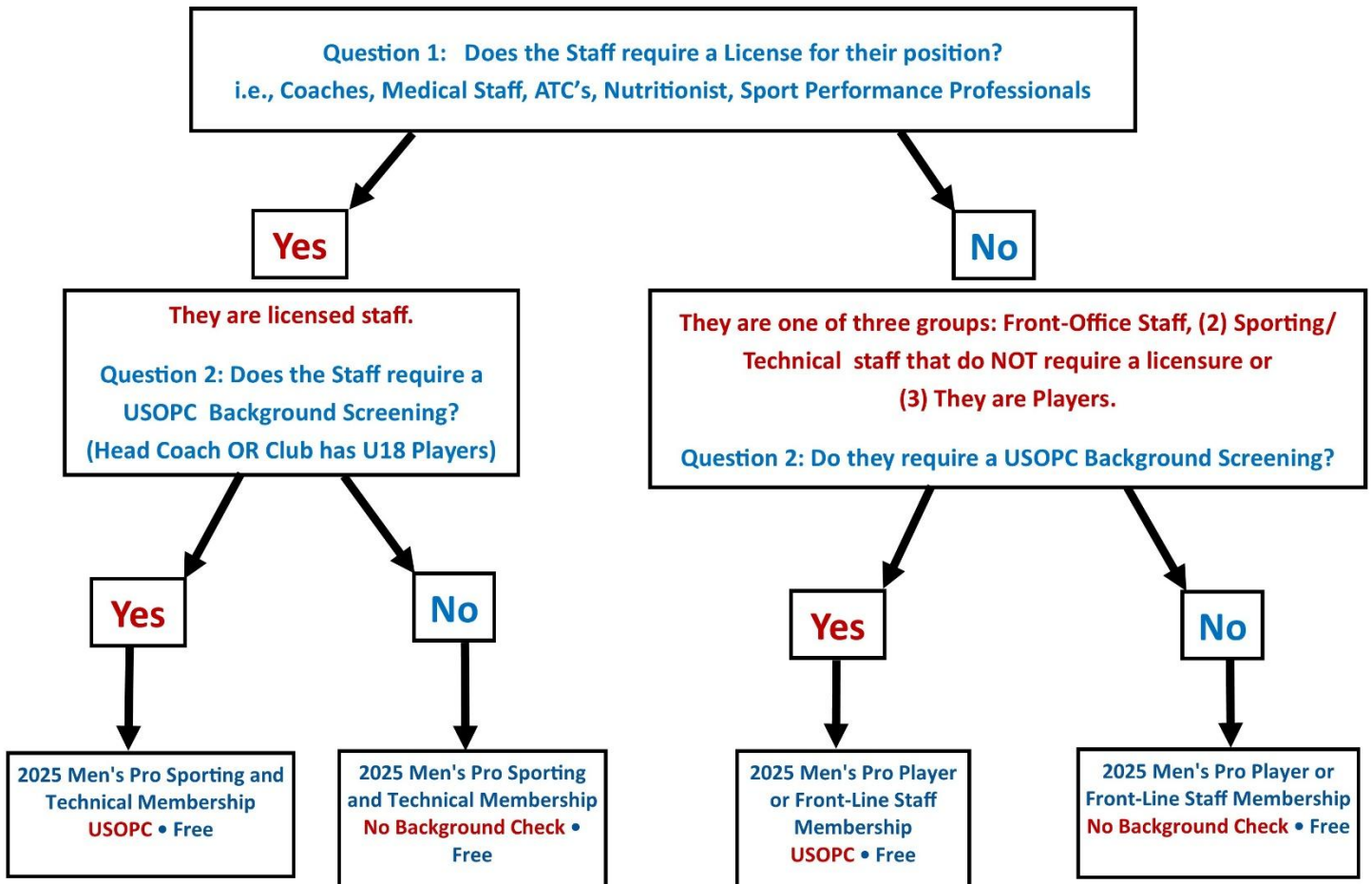
1. Memberships, SportsEngine's terminology for "Registrations," utilize a clear eligibility system for club personnel. Green = Eligible; Yellow = In-eligible. The system allows club admin and all members to view their status. All can view which of the criteria needed to meet eligibility the member is missing.
2. Allows for a streamlined process where certification and training documentation is stored, reducing club Player Care Officers of redundant procedures. All members, no matter the type of membership, are not considered eligible unless they have uploaded all the requirements; SafeSport certification, any corresponding licensure for Sporting/Technical Personnel, and applicable background screening documentation. In addition, it automatically stores any NCSI background screenings. There are 4 types of memberships:
 - A. Memberships without Background Screenings:
 - 1) (Men's/Women's) Pro Sporting and Technical Membership No Background Check
This membership is for Sporting/Technical Staff that require "LICENSURE, " i.e. Coaching license, medical staff, Nutritionist, Sport Performance, etc. BUT do NOT require a "USOPC" Background Screening (Club has No U18 players).
 - 2) (Men's/Women's) Pro Player or Front-Line Staff Membership No Background Check
This membership is for (1) ANY Front-office staff OR Sporting/Technical Staff (with no "Licensure" requirement) and (2) DO NOT require a "USOPC" Gold Standard Background Screening (Club has U18 Player/s) AND (3) Players not participating in Camps/Clinics with minors.
 - B. Membership including USOPC Background Screenings
 - 1) (Men's/Women's) Pro Sporting and Technical Membership USOPC
This membership is for any Sporting or Technical staff that require "LICENSURE, " i.e. Coaching License, Medical staff, Nutritionist, Sport Performance, etc. AND requires a "USOPC" Gold Standard Background Screening (Club has U18 Player/s).
 - 2) (Men's/Women's) Pro Player or Front-Line Staff Membership USOPC
This membership is for (1) ANY Front-office Staff OR Sporting/Technical Staff (with NO "Licensure" requirement) BUT do require a "USOPC" Gold Standard Background Screening (Club has U18 Player/s) OR (3) Players doing camps/clinics with minors.

3. With all club personnel registered/given a membership (SportsEngine's terminology) it makes initiating a background Screening much easier.
4. SportsEngine is our data repository for demographics of club personnel. Hosting this data helps several departments in the league office to build critical, specialized programming.

Procedure:

1. Club Personnel responsible for registrations, Human Resources (HR) or Player Care Officers (PCO), must register all full-time and appropriate part-time personnel in SportsEngine within 7 days of hiring. Club personnel includes any seasonal personnel, interns, externs, or volunteers that are involved with more than one club event per season.
2. Assigned Club Personnel Registrars (HR/PCO) must ensure that appropriate level background screenings have been completed prior to the personnel taking the pitch, especially if there is an under 18-player (U18).

USL Registration Flowchart



2025 USL Safeguarding Registration Flow Chart



United Soccer League

PCO Guide to Adding SportsEngine Memberships for Staff/Players

ADDING MEMBERSHIPS

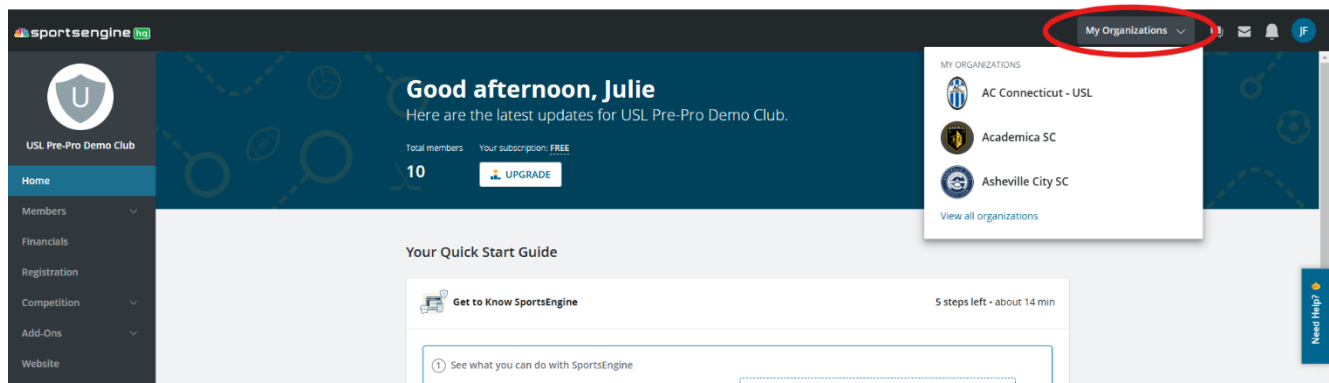
STEP 1: Ensure you are added as an Admin on SportsEngine Platform

You may receive a LINK to accept SportsEngine accessibility to be an Admin for your club OR if there is a Sporting Admin already using SportsEngine, you may ask for them to grant you Admin access.

- IF there is no existing Admin for your Club, submit a request via [this form](#) to have SportsEngine grant you access to your club HQ.

STEP 2: Make sure you have claimed your organization (club account)

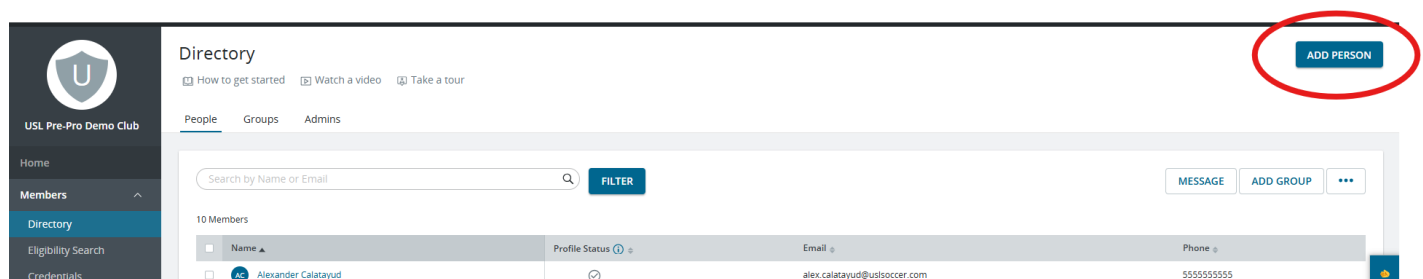
- Once logged into SportsEngine, click the dropdown at the top that says “My Organizations” to check to see if you have access to your club.
- If you have access, you will see your club in the dropdown, if you do not, please reach out to someone in your club to grant you access, or if no one in your organization has access please submit a request via [this form](#) to have SportsEngine grant you access to your club HQ.



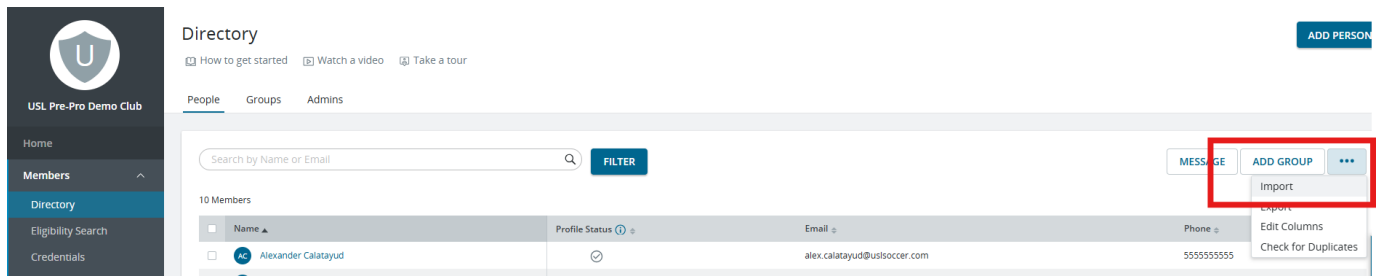
- Questions about granting/removing permissions? [Click Here for support.](#)

STEP 3: Purchasing a Membership for Coaches/Staff/Players

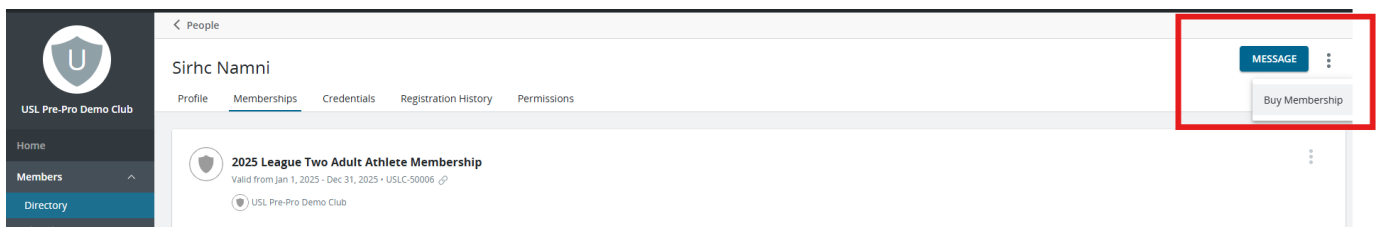
- Once logged into SportsEngine and on your club organization page, the club admin should click on the following:
 - To add an individual: Members -> Directory -> Add Person



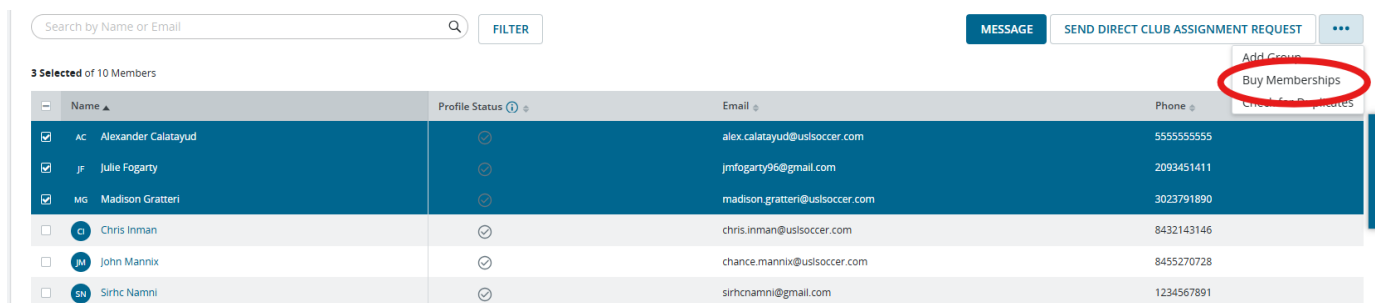
- To add multiple people: Memberships -> Directory -> ... (three dots) -> Import
- Use [this template](#) to import multiple members.



- Once a coach/staff/player is added, they will receive an email to accept their SportsEngine account.
- After adding the staff/coach/player, they will appear in your Directory. The next step is to purchase a membership on behalf of the individual. **You do not have to wait for them to accept their account before proceeding to purchase their membership.**
 - Click on the person's name within the Directory
 - Click on the Memberships tab
 - Click Buy Membership



- To bulk purchase memberships for coach/staff/players who need the SAME MEMBERSHIP, select multiple users in the club directory by checking the box next to the name of each person for which you would like to purchase a membership.



- Select each person's name in the directory.
- Click the menu and select Buy Memberships

- You will select from the following membership categories:

Men's Leagues

- For all Coaches and Technical Staff select one of the following:
 - 2025 USL Championship (or USL League One) Technical Staff Membership – USOPC
 - 2025 USL Championship (or USL League One) Technical Staff Membership – No Background Check
- For all Front Office Staff/Players/Other Staff select one of the following:
 - 2025 USL Championship (or USL League One) Player or Front-Office Staff Membership – USOPC
 - 2025 USL Championship (or USL League One) Player or Front-Office Staff Membership – No Background Check

Super League (**Starts in New Season July 1, 2025)

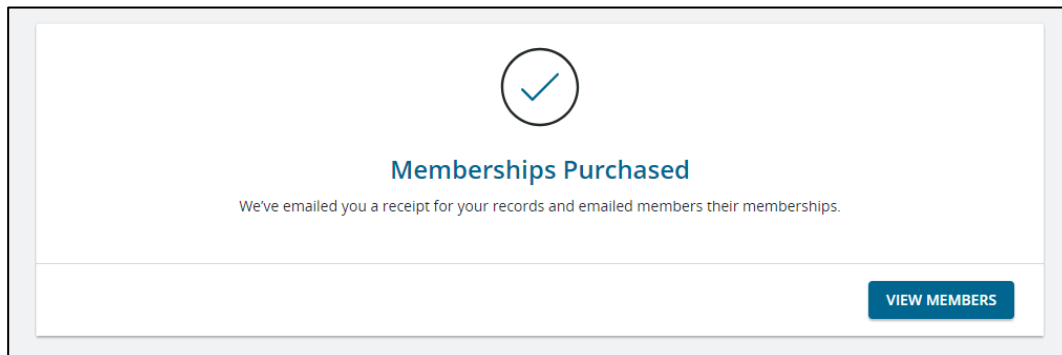
- For all Coaches and Technical Staff select one of the following:
 - 2025/2026 USL Super League Technical Staff Membership – USOPC
 - 2025/2026 USL Super League Technical Staff Membership – No Background Check
 - For all Front Office Staff/Players/Other Staff select one of the following:
 - 2025/2026 USL Super League Player or Front-Office Staff Membership – USOPC
 - 2025/2026 USL Super League Player or Front-Office Staff Membership – No Background Check
- As you go through the purchase process for the staff/coach/player, here are a few things to keep in mind.
 - Enter today's date under the dropdown once a membership type is selected.
 - Example: 02/08/2025

The screenshot displays the 'Memberships' section of the sportsengine USL Corporate portal. It features a list of available membership types, categorized by role (Coach, Technical Staff, Front-Line Staff, Player/Athlete) and league (2025 USL Championship, 2025/2026 USL Super League). All listed memberships are currently 'Free'. The interface includes a sidebar with navigation links, a top navigation bar with user information, and a main content area with filters and a list of membership options, each with a 'View Active Eligibility' link.

Add Information:

- Once you confirm a membership type that best describes the individual's role within your organization, you may be prompted to Add Information to purchase the membership. You will only be asked to submit this information for individuals without that information in the system. If you are bulk purchasing memberships, you may not need to complete this step for all individuals.

- The Information required to purchase a person's membership is the following:
 - Phone Number, Address, City, Country, State, Postal Code
 - If an individual's residence is unknown OR they are Canadian/International at the time of purchase, please put your club's physical address and phone number. And the following SS# 899-99-999.
- After the information is filled in, click continue.
- You will see a Membership Purchased screen once complete along with receive an email receipt.



To view eligibility for your members, follow the instructions found [here](#).

NEED HELP?

Please visit our [Club Help Resources Page](#) for step-by-step guides for acquiring memberships.

If you need additional help, you may grant USL league staff limited access to support the purchase of memberships through [Top-Down Permissions](#).

Top-Down Permissions give the ability for a Club to give Permissions to Leagues and USL, so that we have authority to work in your club.

Navigate to your Settings Tab > Organization Tab > Affiliation Access.

Admins for the Organizations you provide permissions to will now have access to your Directory, Members, and Competition tab to assist in assigning memberships.

This access will grant USL Staff with league-level Memberships permissions to access a limited portion of the information within your club HQ. Staff would be able to see:

- A list of individuals in your club directory, and the associated memberships.
 - USL staff will not have access to personal information about individuals in the directory.
- A list of available memberships.

sportsengine

hq

9 Task(s) Remaining

My Organizations

USL Youth Demo Club

Home

Members

Financials

Registration

Competition

Add-Ons

Commerce

Website

Safety

Settings

Organization Settings

Account Settings

Financial Settings

API Integrations

Organization Settings

GeneralBank AccountsListing

Organization Details

Edit

Organization NameUSL Youth Demo Club

SportsSoccer

Acronym--

Logo

Website

www.usleaguetwo.com

Genders Supported--

Images must be in GIF, JPEG, JPG, or PNG format

RemoveReplace

Color--

Contact Information

Edit

Email--

Phone--

Venue

1715 N. Westshore Blvd, Suite 825
Tampa, FL 33607
United States

Timezone

(UTC-05:00) Eastern Time (US & Canada)

Rostering

Edit

Rostering Options

All options

Roster Restrictions

No restrictions

Owner Permissions

No access

Affiliation Access

USL Co...

USL Le...

April 2025

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Section 4

Policies and Procedures - Incident Management



USL Safeguarding Incident Procedural Guidelines

Professional Leagues

Here are the Incident Management Procedure Guidelines and the corresponding policies which support their inclusion in this process.

Step 1: Club Preliminary Notified of the Alleged Report of Misconduct

The following 4 entities need to be preliminarily notified to begin triage and strategic planning.

- Club Leadership & PCO
- Notify the USL League President
- Notify the USL Safeguarding Department
- Notify USLPA

Club PCO refers to the **USL Safeguarding Incident Reporting Procedural Overview & Severity Matrix for Misconduct (Form- S2301)**.

(The order may be different for each alleged violation, but these 4 entities must be preliminarily notified ASAP.)

Step 2: USL Leadership & Safeguarding, Club Personnel Triage Incident

Leadership & Safeguarding, collaboratively, review the Severity of Misconduct Matrix and determine if the incident warrants investigation and who has jurisdiction. PCO utilizes **USL Safeguarding Referral Form (Form S2301)** to record basic facts

- a. If the alleged offender is a coach/front-end staff, the League **MUST** take the lead on the investigation. Therefore, these investigations **MUST** not be led by the club.

[USSF Pro league Standards Section 1. e. vi. Accountability Pg.4](#)

- 2) League and/or team, as applicable, must conduct timely investigations into allegations of Misconduct, impose appropriate discipline, and immediately disseminate investigation outcomes.

- a. League must exercise oversight when a team investigates allegations of Misconduct involving player safety by one of its employees. Where an allegation involves Misconduct by a team's owner, executive staff, or head coach, the league must take primary responsibility for the investigation.

- b. If the allegation qualifies as Sexual Misconduct at Tier 2 and/or Tier 3 for an adult, it **MUST** be reported to SafeSport within 24 hours.

[USL Safeguarding Policy, Section II. E. Pg. 17](#)

C. Reporting to The U.S. Center for SafeSport

Covered Persons must also immediately report any suspected incidents of sexual abuse – even if the incidents involve non-minors within 24 hours of becoming aware of the allegation. An allegation means any “good faith claim or assertion” that a potential violation has occurred. Additionally, and if the case involves potential claims of child abuse, Participants will be required to report any allegation to their local law enforcement.

- c. If the allegation qualifies as Sexual Misconduct and the victim is a Minor, The Mandatory Reporting Policy is automatically enacted. (SafeSport & Law Enforcement notification standards).

[Safeguarding Policy, Section II. B. Pg. 12](#)

This comprehensive law amends the amends the Victims of Child Abuse Act of 1990, 34 U.S.C. § 20341, et seq., and clarifies who is a mandatory reporter for cases of

suspected child abuse. 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 such as the USL. By doing this, the law increases the standard of care and makes it a crime for an individual involved in a national governing body sports organization, including the USL, to ignore, or not report to law enforcement, any reasonable suspicion of an act of Child Abuse, including sexual abuse, within 24 hours. Consequently, the USL urges all Clubs and their employees, and all USL participants to understand their reporting obligations under this important federal law.

Step 3: Club submits Incident Report to USL:

PCO completes and submits the **USL Safeguarding Referral Form (Form S2302)** to the USL Safeguarding Department and follows the **Safeguarding Incident Reporting Flow Chart** to guide the process with parties associated with the event.

Step 4: Implement Safety and Retaliation Policy:

If needed, the jurisdictional entity (USL/Club), utilizes the **USL Administrative Suspension Template (S2303CBA)** to guide the process with parties associated with event.

[USL Safeguarding Policy, Section II. E. Pg. 17](#)

E. Monitoring and Enforcement

The USL takes all reports of potential violations of this SafeSport Policy seriously and is committed to confidentiality and investigation of allegations. The USL Safeguarding and/or Legal Department may conduct or manage (SafeSport)code investigations. Employees who are being investigated for a potential code violation will have fair notice and an opportunity to be heard prior to any final determination.

The USL does not tolerate retaliation of any kind. No individual who makes such a good faith report will be subject to retaliation, including harassment, or any adverse employment consequence, as a result of making a report.

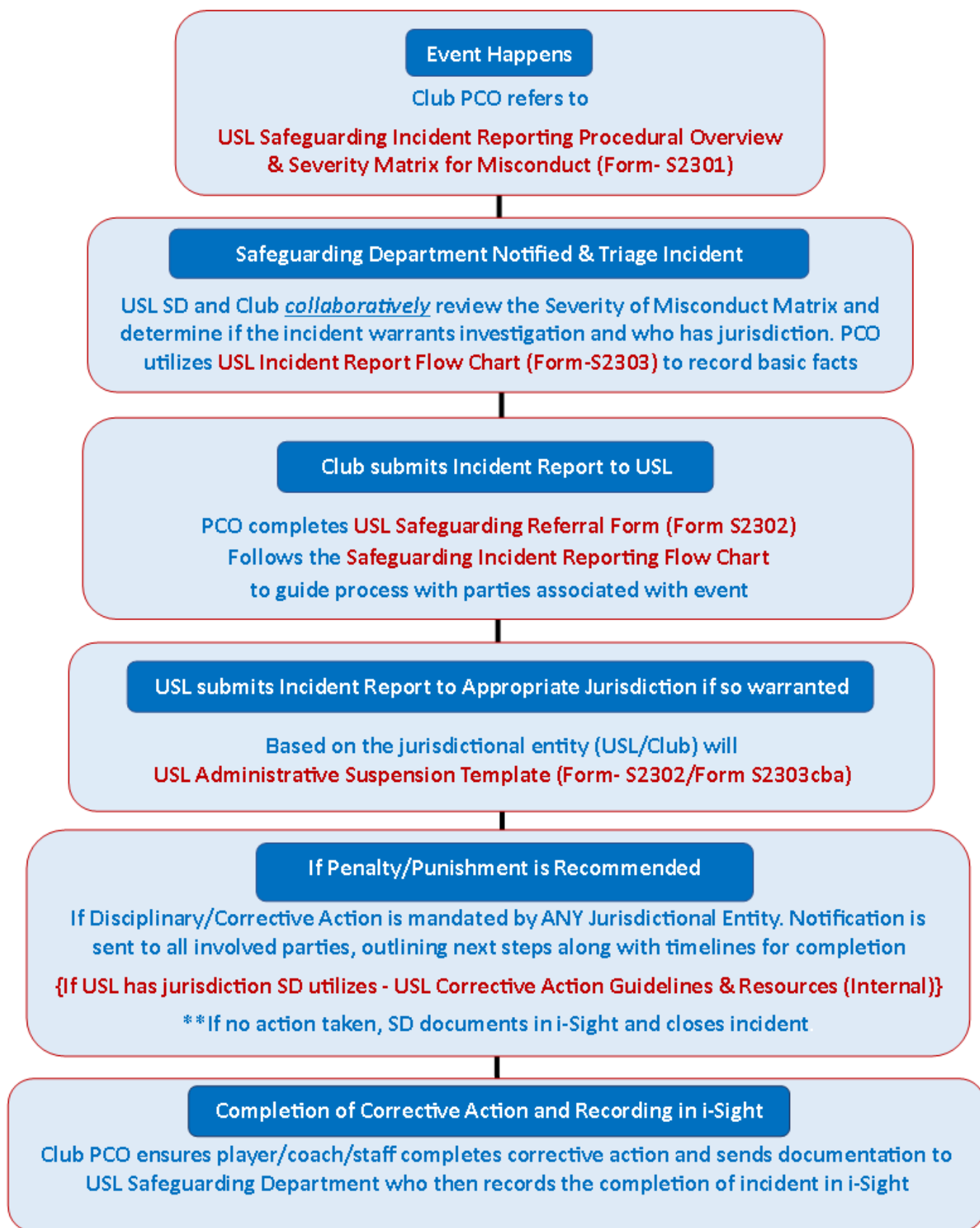
General Points of Clarity:

Clubs are PROHIBITED from Using a Non-Disclosure and Non-Disparagement agreement.

[USSF Pro league Standards Section 1. e. v. Transparency Pg.4](#)

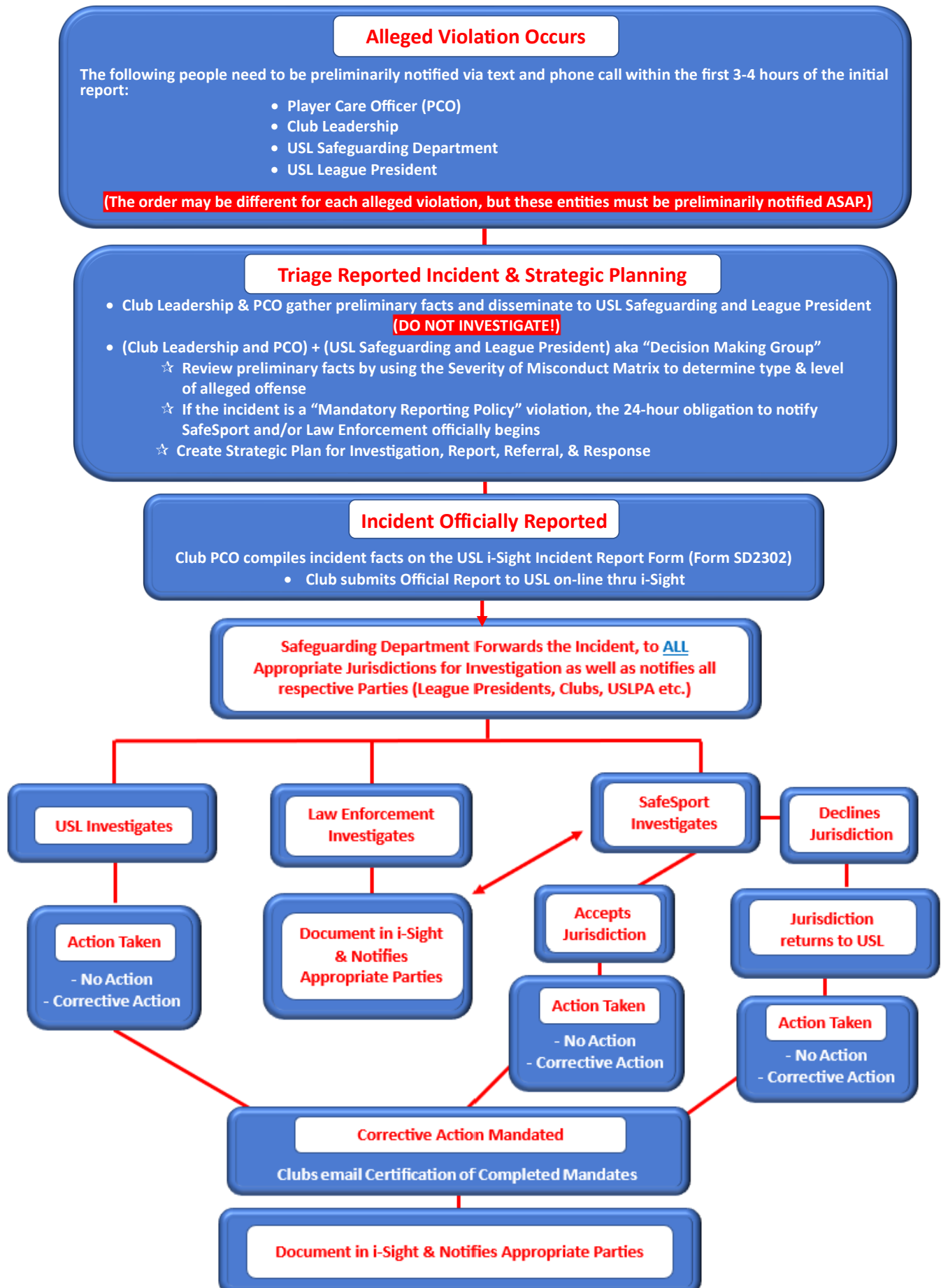
3. League must prohibit the use of non-disclosure and non-disparagement agreements that specifically act to shield information relating to allegations of Misconduct.

USL Safeguarding Incident Procedural Overview



USL Incident Management Process

Professional Leagues



USL Safeguarding Incident Report Severity Matrix for Verbal, Physical & Sexual Misconduct

The USL is committed to ensuring that soccer is a safe, positive, and inclusive experience for the thousands of individuals who regularly engage in soccer activity and attend events throughout the USL Ecosystem. The USL firmly believes that Safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone within the Ecosystem.

The USL champions a culture of compliance, safety, and respect. The USL encourages open communication in which all athletes, participants, and employees feel comfortable reporting concerns, whether the concerns involve suspected abuse, other misconduct, or violations of the Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policy (“MAAPP”) (see Section III of the USL Safeguarding Policy). Everyone is encouraged to raise concerns in the manner that is suitable to them, whether it be to coaches, game officials, team administrators, USL Safeguarding, or to the Center.

Overview

- Misconduct matrixes are to be used as a guide and framework for categorizing misconduct and determining the next steps and appropriate discipline
- Matrixes 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 matrixes are not explicit penal codes
- Matrixes provide a non-exhaustive list of examples of misconduct; instances of abuse may exist that are not detailed in these matrixes
- 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 misconduct and willingly accepted discipline and rehabilitation
- The perpetrator was responding to an emergency situation.

VERBAL MISCONDUCT MATRIX	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
Misconduct Examples <i>Non-exhaustive</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minor and brief incident of targeted yelling that is not providing constructive criticism or encouragement Instance of targeted blaming Instance of targeted humiliating Instance of condescension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent berating Multiple instances of targeted yelling / singling out an individual Verbal manipulation to control an individual's actions Verbal threats of physical abuse resulting in consistent fear Abusive, derogatory language Threats of retaliation for reporting misconduct Discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, disability, sex, and sexual orientation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent verbal harassment as detailed in Tier-2, spanning the duration of a season, multiple seasons, or years Frequent threats of severe physical or sexual abuse that put the player in immediate danger or harm Overt and frequent discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, disability, sex, and sexual orientation
Club's Initial Response Staff, Coach, Administrator or PCO are notified on an alleged Misconduct Event <u>MUST Notify USL Safeguarding within 24 hours of Incident Reporting</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather preliminary facts - put in writing, send an email to safeguarding@usl.com 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather preliminary facts - put in writing, send an email to safeguarding@usl.com 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make sure the claimant is safe Ensure alleged offender is off the premises and is placed on immediate Administrative Suspension (See USL Form S2303) Gather preliminary facts - put in writing, using the Safeguarding Referral Form (Form S2302)
Reporting Procedure	<p>The victim is an <u>adult:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report to member organization <p>Victim is a <u>minor:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report to member organization 	<p>The victim is an <u>adult:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report to member organization <p>Victim is a <u>minor:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report to member organization 	<p>The victim is an <u>adult:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report to member organization <p>Victim is a <u>minor:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report to Center for SafeSport Report to U.S. Soccer's Office of Participant Safety Report to law enforcement
Jurisdiction & Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member organization is responsible for investigating the report and determining adequate discipline in a timely fashion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member organization is responsible for investigating the report and determining adequate discipline in a timely fashion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For minors, Center for SafeSport <u>may</u> exercise jurisdiction, but it is likely to be pushed back to member organization for investigation

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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
Suggested Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reprimand, review, and educate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Probation / Temporary suspension • Temporary removal of Safe Soccer Clearance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expulsion • Permanent removal of Safe Soccer Clearance

PHYSICAL MISCONDUCT	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
Misconduct Examples <i>Non-exhaustive</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Singular incidents 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) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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
Club's Initial Response Staff, Coach, Administrator or PCO are notified on an alleged Misconduct Event <u>MUST Notify USL Safeguarding within 24 hours of Incident Reporting</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather preliminary facts - put in writing, send an email to safeguarding@usl.com 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure the claimant is safe • Ensure alleged offender is off the premises and is placed on immediate Administrative Suspension Form (See USL Form S2303) • Gather preliminary facts - put in writing, using the Safeguarding Referral Form (Form S2302) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure the claimant is safe • Ensure alleged offender is off the premises and is placed on immediate Administrative Suspension (See USL Form S2303) • Gather preliminary facts - put in writing, using the Safeguarding Referral Form (Form S2302)
Reporting Procedure	<p>The victim is an <u>adult:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to member organization <p>Victim is a <u>minor:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to member organization 	<p>The victim is an <u>adult:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to member organization <p>Victim is a <u>minor:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to Center for SafeSport • Report to U.S. Soccer's Office of Participant Safety • Report to law enforcement 	<p>The victim is an <u>adult:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to member organization <p>Victim is a <u>minor:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to Center for SafeSport • Report to U.S. Soccer's Office of Participant Safety • Report to law enforcement
Jurisdiction & Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member organization is responsible for investigating the report and determining 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For minors, the Center for SafeSport <u>may</u> exercise jurisdiction, but it is likely to be pushed back to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For minors, the Center for SafeSport <u>may</u> exercise jurisdiction, but it is likely to be pushed back to member

	<p>adequate discipline in a timely fashion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<p>member organization for investigation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For adults, member organizations are 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 	<p>organization for investigation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For adults, member organizations are 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
Suggested Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reprimand, review, and educate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Probation / Temporary suspension • Temporary removal of Safe Soccer Clearance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expulsion • Permanent removal of Safe Soccer Clearance

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
<p>Misconduct Examples <i>Non-exhaustive</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Singular sexual innuendo, remark, joke, questions • Viewing or engaging in sexual behavior without attempts to shield others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 sexual behavior • Knowingly exposing another individual to a STD • Prostituting another person
<p>Club's Initial Response Staff, Coach, Administrator or PCO are notified on an alleged Misconduct Event</p> <p><u>MUST Notify USL Safeguarding within 24 hours of Incident Reporting</u></p>	<p>The victim is an <u>adult:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather preliminary facts - put in writing, send an email to safeguarding@usl.com <p>Victim is a <u>minor:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure the claimant is safe • Ensure alleged offender is off the premises and is placed on immediate Administrative Suspension (See USL Form S2303) • Gather preliminary facts - put in writing, using the Safeguarding Referral Form (Form S2301) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure the claimant is safe • Ensure alleged offender is off the premises and is placed on immediate Administrative Suspension (See USL Form S2303) • Gather preliminary facts - put in writing, using the Safeguarding Referral Form (Form S2302) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure the claimant is safe • Ensure alleged offender is off the premises and is placed on immediate Administrative Suspension (See USL Form S2303) • Gather preliminary facts - put in writing, using the Safeguarding Referral Form (Form S2302)
<p>Reporting Procedure</p>	<p>The victim is an <u>adult:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to member organization <p>Victim is a <u>minor:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to Center for SafeSport • Report to U.S. Soccer's Office of Participant Safety 	<p>The victim is an <u>adult:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to Center for SafeSport • Report to U.S. Soccer's Office of Participant Safety <p>Victim is a <u>minor:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to Center for SafeSport • Report to U.S. Soccer's Office of Participant Safety 	<p>The victim is an <u>adult:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to Center for SafeSport • Report to U.S. Soccer's Office of Participant Safety <p>Victim is a <u>minor:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to Center for SafeSport • Report to U.S. Soccer's Office of Participant Safety

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to local law enforcement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to law enforcement
Jurisdiction & Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For minors, Center for SafeSport exercises jurisdiction and investigates • For adults, member organizations are 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SafeCenter 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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
Suggested Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reprimand, review, and educate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Probation / Temporary suspension • Temporary removal of Safe Soccer Clearance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expulsion • Permanent removal of Safe Soccer Clearance

OTHER MISCONDUCT MATRIX	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
<p>Misconduct Examples <i>Non-exhaustive</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent pattern of unexpected tardiness or absence to practice, matches, or team-sanctioned events • Singular instance of a legal adult being under the influence during a team event and in the presence of minors • Instance of unwarranted retaliation whereas the punishment is not abusive in nature (e.g., cutting playing time) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Misdemeanor criminal offenses not resulting in jail time • Possession of legal drugs not prescribed by a physician • Failure to complete proper Safe Soccer education • Refusal to complete appropriate background screening • Multiple instances of alcohol abuse • Making intentionally false or inaccurate statements in a misconduct investigation or inquiry in an attempt to cover-up an incident • <u>Providing alcohol to a player under the legal drinking age (**if player is under 21, this should be reported to the Center)</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Felony criminal offenses • Exposing players to dangerous materials such as illegal weapons, hard drugs, or chemicals • Exposing players to gang activity • Providing or forcing use of illegal or non-prescribed drugs • Forcing alcohol consumption
<p>Club's Initial Response Staff, Coach, Administrator or PCO are notified on an alleged Misconduct Event</p> <p><u>MUST Notify USL Safeguarding within 24 hours of Incident Reporting</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather preliminary facts - put in writing, send an email to safeguarding@usl.com 	<p><u>If Victim is Under 21.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure the claimant is safe (<u>*If alcohol related.</u>) • Ensure alleged offender is off the premises and is placed on immediate Administrative Suspension (See USL Form S2303) • Gather preliminary facts - put in writing, using the Safeguarding Referral Form (Form S2302) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure the claimant is safe • Ensure alleged offender is off the premises and is placed on immediate Administrative Suspension (See USL Form S2303) • Gather preliminary facts - put in writing, using the Safeguarding Referral Form (Form S2302)
<p>Reporting</p>	<p>The victim is an adult:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to member organization <p>Victim is a minor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to member organization 	<p>The victim is an adult:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to member organization <p>Victim is a minor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to member organization (<u>**Providing alcohol to a player under the legal drinking age (if player is under 21, this should be reported to the Center</u> 	<p>The victim is an adult:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to member organization <p>Victim is a minor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to Center for SafeSport • Report to U.S. Soccer's Office of Participant Safety • Report to law enforcement



Discriminatory Behavior and Language Out of Game Reporting Procedure:

The following processes are meant to outline the procedures for Players and Club personnel to report any incidences of Discriminatory Behavior and/or Language (DBL) that occur either in match (and not reported to a match official) or outside the confines of which a player could have reported to a match official, including direction to the Player Care Officer (PCO) in handling DBL claims. Additionally, this document is meant to outline the procedures of all parties involved to bring these matters to resolution outside of the game day procedure. Please note that after the incident is reported to the League it will investigate these allegations thoroughly.

Summary of Processes and Procedures for Players and Club Personnel:

1. If Player or Club personnel (participant) becomes aware of a potential DBL incident, said incident should be reported as soon as possible to your Club's PCO. The PCO is then responsible, as outlined below, for gathering the information and creating a report of the incident that will be sent to the USL.
2. The PCO should ensure that the participant who is making the allegation is given time and space to fully explain what they are alleging. If the PCO is not familiar with the word or action used, ask for clarification or an explanation as to how the language or behavior reflects discriminatory intent. It is not up to the PCO to determine if the word or action is discriminatory in nature. If the participant states that it is discriminatory, it must be treated as discriminatory behavior. It is extremely likely that they will be in an emotional state, and it may take time to fully make sense as to what the person is reporting. The PCO should be empathetic and supportive. Use a teammate/colleague of the reporting participant to facilitate communication if necessary and available. PCOs are encouraged to take their time in the initial investigation of the incident, so as to not rush the process. PCOs shall gain as much detail as possible from the person reporting the conduct, such as when and where it happened, who was responsible for the conduct, and what exact words were used, or behavior demonstrated. Make notes if necessary to aid recollection later when creating the report, it's imperative that you include all details of the discriminatory nature of the language or behavior used in said report.
3. If possible, PCO should speak with the alleged offender and make them aware of the allegation being made. If the alleged offender is on another team the PCO should note said fact in their report and proceed with the process. The USL investigative unit will conduct all interviews of the alleged offender. Please note that no PCO should reach out to opposing players or club personnel who are not within their jurisdiction.
4. The PCO's report should include a detailed account of the full circumstances, including actual words used in the initial reporting of the incident to the PCO, and if possible, any responses from the alleged

offender. During the reporting process, reference should be made to any notes taken at the time of the incident. Such notes should be retained, as production of these may be required later. The more detail provided in the post-match recap as well as the “in-match” notes the better for an investigation of the incident by the League’s Investigative Unit.

5. Once informed of an allegation, and a report is created by the PCO, said PCO should send the report to the USL via email at compliance@uslsoccer.com as soon as reasonably possible.
6. The USL Compliance Officer will review the report and assign it to the appropriate Investigative Unit.
7. If the report is assigned to the DBL Investigative Unit, they shall then follow the procedures set forth within the DBL investigative unit guidelines to effectively investigate the report and incident. This shall include reaching out to the alleged offenders’ PCO, said offender, or Club personnel to receive additional information on the incident if the reporting PCO has not already interviewed the alleged offender.



USL Safeguarding & DBL Information Gathering Template

Reported Date: _____ **Reported Time:** _____

Incident Date: _____ **Incident Time:** _____

Incident Location: Locker Room / On the Field / Outside of Soccer / Other (be specific as possible) :

League: Super League / Championship / League 1 / League 2 / W League / Academy / USLY

Club: _____ **City:** _____ **State:** _____

Does this report involve allegations of Physical or Sexual abuse? YES / NO

**If yes, has it been reported to appropriate law enforcement authorities?* YES / NO

Does this require a referral to the US Center for SafeSport? YES / NO

Respondent (Suspect): _____

Address: _____

DOB: _____ **Phone:** _____ **Email:** _____

Reporter / Employee / Parent (or guardian) / Other: _____

Address: _____

DOB: _____ **Phone:** _____ **Email:** _____

Witness: _____

Address: _____

DOB: _____ **Phone:** _____ **Email:** _____



CBA Administrative Suspension Letter - Player Template

[League Name]

[Date]

[Club Name]

[President/Owner/Manager Name]

[Player Name]

[Player Association, Executive Director]

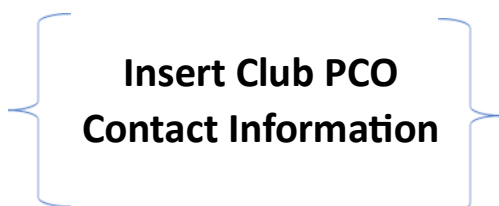
This letter is to notify you that the **[Club Name]** and the United Soccer League (USL) is placing **[name]** on administrative suspension for alleged USL Safeguarding Policy Violations, pending investigation, effective immediately. **[Name]** suspension does not mean that the **[Club Name]** has already decided that **[he/her/pronoun]** is guilty. Instead, this administrative suspension is to allow time to investigate the following allegation(s) **[briefly and in general terms describe the allegation]**. The **[Club Name]** will not keep **[Name]** suspended for longer than is necessary to carry out the investigation and decide on what action to be taken, if appropriate.

[Name] must cooperate with our investigation. During **[Name]** administrative suspension, the Club will continue to pay **[him/her/pronoun]** under their employment agreement. **[Name]** employment is continuous during their administrative suspension and their terms and conditions of employment continue to apply. **[Name]** must not have any conversations regarding alleged event with any other staff or players, if possible, avoid all team contact. While **[Name]** is suspended, **[he/she/pronoun]** must not carry out any work duties and should not come into the workplace. However, they must be available to answer any work-related queries. This may require them to go the workplace for interviews or other meetings related to the suspension or matters under investigation.

The investigation will begin within 48hrs of receiving written notification of the alleged violation(s). As part of the investigation, interviews will be scheduled with **[Name]** and any other party with pertinent information regarding the allegation(s). Per the USL Player CBA, athletes are entitled to request player representation to be present for all interviews. As this matter is under investigation, please keep it confidential and do not discuss it with colleagues. Participating in a complaint process is protected from retaliation under all circumstances. As a reminder, no one will be subjected to retaliation, intimidation, or corrective action because of reporting in good faith (USL's Anti-Harassment Policy). Any form of retaliation will not be tolerated by **[Club Name]** and the USL.

When the investigation is complete, the **[Club Name]** and/or any other sanctioning body, will let all the pertinent parties know the outcome of the investigation.

The **[Club Name]** and the USL realizes that this may be an unsettling time for **[Name]** and would like to remind **[him/her/pronoun]** that confidential counselling and support is available to them. **[Name]** should reach out to their Club's Human Resources or Betsy Cutler, the USL's VP, Corporate Wellness and Safeguarding, for access to these resources.



Insert Team Logo

Administrative Suspension Letter – Coach or Staff

[League Name]

[Date]

[Club Name]

[President/Owner/Manager Name]

[Alleged Offender]

This letter is to notify you that [Club Name] and the United Soccer League (USL) is placing [Name] on administrative suspension, for alleged USL Safeguarding Policy Violations, pending investigation, effective immediately. [Name] suspension does not mean that the USL has already decided that [he/her/pronoun] is guilty. Instead, this administrative suspension is to allow time to investigate the following allegation(s) [briefly and in general terms describe the allegation]. The USL will not keep [Name] suspended for longer than is necessary to carry out the investigation and decide on what action to be taken, if appropriate.

[Name] must cooperate with our investigation. During [Name] administrative suspension, the Club will continue to pay [him/her/pronoun] under their employment agreement. [Name] employment is continuous during their administrative suspension and their terms and conditions of employment continue to apply. [Name] must not have any conversations regarding alleged event with any other staff or players, avoid all team contact for the duration of the investigation. While [Name] is suspended, [he/she/pronoun] must not carry out any work duties to include any electronic, virtual communication or conduct and should not come into the workplace. Club may petition the league for certain situations. Approval is subject to league review, on a case-by-case basis. However, they must be available to answer any work-related queries. This may require them to go the workplace for interviews or other meetings related to the suspension or matters under investigation.

The investigation will begin within 48hrs of receiving written notification of the alleged violation(s). As part of our investigation, the USL will be scheduling interviews with [Name] and any other party with pertinent information regarding the allegation(s). As this matter is under investigation, please keep it confidential and do not discuss it with colleagues. Participating in a complaint process is protected from retaliation under all circumstances. As a reminder, no one will be subjected to retaliation, intimidation, or corrective action because of reporting in good faith. Any form of retaliation will not be tolerated by the USL.

When the investigation is complete, the [Club Name] and/or any other sanctioning body, will let all the pertinent parties know the outcome of the investigation.

The [Club Name] and the USL realizes that this may be an unsettling time for [Name] and would like to remind [him/her/pronoun] that confidential counselling and support is available to them. [Name] should reach out to their Club's Human Resources or Betsy Cutler, VP, Corporate Wellness and Safeguarding, for access to these resources.

Insert Club PCO
Contact Information

Section 5

Compliance



Safeguarding Audit Standards

The United Soccer League (USL) audit purpose is to objectively evaluate adherence to Educational and Training Policy requirements. Additionally, the audit examines any areas of potential improvement or inconsistencies.

The Club's Player Care Officer's (PCO's) act as Compliance Officers for mandatory player, coach, and club training. For the league to aggregate each club's compliance, the clubs must provide annual reports that capture the following information **PRIOR TO THE START OF COMPETITION:**

1. **Risk Management Assessment**

a. **SafeSport Centralized Disciplinary Database.** ***Please record the date of completion.***

Clubs PCO's must check all Club personnel against the Organization Member's suspension database the SafeSport disciplinary records available at: www.safesport.org⁴.

<https://uscenterforsafesport.org/response-and-resolution/centralized-disciplinary-database/>

b. **USF's Risk Management Disqualification List.** ***This is completed by the USL Safeguarding Department.***

USL HQ must check all Club personnel against the Organization Member's suspension database, U.S. Soccer's disqualification list.

2. **Background Screening.** ***Please record the date of completion.***

At a minimum, the policy should include screening against applicable sex offender registries in the relevant state and a check against the Organization Member's suspension database, U.S. Soccer's disqualification list and the SafeSport disciplinary records available at: www.safesport.org⁴.

5. All Organization Members with adult individuals authorized to have Regular Contact with or authority over Minor Athletes must implement, in the least, and enforce a policy that requires USOPC "Gold Standard," a check against the U.S. Soccer's disqualification list, and the SafeSport disciplinary records⁸. (*See USL Background Screening Policy 2024 for guidelines.)

6. Other individuals who have regular contact with athletes as determined by the Club, in its discretion.

3. **SafeSport Certification.**

a. All club "Covered Personnel" (Leadership, Staff, Coaches, Players etc.) are required to annually (every 12 months) complete U.S. Center for SafeSport training. The PCO must record in your Club SharePoint File, "Audit Worksheet."

b. Send an email to all covered persons with the link to get SafeSport Certified. They will then login into account on their SE membership and they will indicate a green completion once done.

c. SafeSport Certifications can be kept internally by the Club PCO by asking for the individuals certificate.

- i. Ensure these individuals are prevented from participating until certification is completed.

⁸ The SafeSport Code is available at: <https://www.safesport.org/policies-procedures>.

- ii. Failure to comply may result in club discipline ranging from fines up to restriction from participating in any league activities.

4. **Sports Betting Integrity On-Line Training Webinar (SportsRadar). Please record the date of completion.**

- a. All club "Covered Personnel" (Leadership, Staff, Coaches, Players etc.) are required to annually (every 12 months) complete U.S. Center for SafeSport training. The PCO must record in your Club SharePoint File, "Audit Worksheet."
- b. Send an email to all covered persons with the link to complete Sports Betting Integrity training through Sportsradar. Instructing them to forward their completion certification to the PCO.
- c. Sports Betting Certifications are kept internally by the Club PCO.
- d. Mark any Participant who has not completed the required training in the Club's database (SharePoint Audit Worksheet) as "not in good standing."
 - i. Ensure these individuals are prevented from participating until certification is completed.

- ii. Failure to comply may result in club discipline ranging from fines up to restriction from participating in any league activities.

*For the following Policies, they are integrated into One Presentation, but they must be recorded separately in the SharePoint Audit Worksheet. **Please use the date of completion.***

5. **Anti-Harassment Policy Review**

6. **Anti-Retaliation Policy Review**

7. **Anti-Fraternization Policy Review**

8. **Socialization Policy Review**

9. **Player's Rights / Protections / Reporting Misconduct Training**

For the following policies are for any club that has U18 players. Each must be recorded separately. The certification is for "entire ecosystem" with the following information required for both.

10. **Minor Player - Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Program / SafeSport Training**

- a. Annually (every 12 months) offer and provide training to minor athletes regarding prevention and reporting of child abuse. Ensure these trainings are communicated to minor athletes by either email or newsletter. Get parental consent prior to their completion of training. Track the following:
 - i. A description of the training.
 - ii. The date the training was offered and given.

NOTE: If you use the SafeSport Youth Certification Training just state that.

11. **Player-Parent - Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Program / SafeSport Training (if U18 Player)**

- a. Annually (every 12 months) clubs must offer and provide links to "parent training" regarding prevention and reporting of child abuse. Ensure these trainings are communicated to parents by either email or newsletter. Track the following:
 - i. A description of the training.
 - ii. The date of the training was offered, and links given.

12. **U18 Academy Contract-Player Safeguarding Plan (See U18 Safeguarding Plan Template.)**

The USL U18 Academy-Player Pro contract states that all clubs must include a Safeguarding Plan for any U18 academy-contracted player. It must include provisions for all the MAAPP requirements. In addition, there must be oversight and check-ins for the players Health and Wellbeing.

******* New/Transferred Players & Coaches**

It is commonplace for players and coaches to move clubs throughout a season. It is important to ensure those new players/staff are captured on your Compliance Audit Worksheet. Below are the steps to add to their compliance items:

- 1) Add them to your Worksheet- notate they are new by ***NP & Date** (New Player) or ***NC & Date** (New Coach) next to their name. (*****New for Men's Leagues in the 2025 season, coach and player sections will be separate, Super League is already using this format for 2024).***
- 2) Send an email to Mycah Blevins and Betsy Cutler notifying of the new/transferred player/coach.
 - a. If "New" to the USL ecosystem, complete all the mandated trainings and keep worksheet up to date. Notify Safeguarding when complete.
 - b. If they are a transfer from another USL club, reach out to that club's PCO and ask for dates of their training completions. (I did a screenshot of a transferred player and sent it to the new club.) Then update your club worksheet.
- 3) Who should be registered:
 - All Sporting/Technical Staff



USL Safeguarding Annual Compliance Report - Professional Leagues

The USL is committed to ensuring that soccer is a safe, positive, and inclusive experience for the thousands of individuals who regularly engage in soccer activity and attend events throughout the USL Ecosystem. The USL firmly believes that Safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone within the Ecosystem. To maintain high standards for our athletes, coaches, and clubs the USSF has mandated that all leagues/clubs MUST have a position that manages player safety. At USL this position is the Player Care Officer (PCO). To maintain high standards for our athletes, coaches, and clubs our PCO's administer league-wide education, training, and manage incidents because of a potential policy violation. It is important for the PCO to be knowledgeable in all safety policies and mandates throughout the soccer landscape.

As the PCO for your club, you must schedule, execute, and record the following training/educational mandates. Your signature below signifies that each of these training/policy reviews were executed at your club for the current year.

PCO Name _____ Position _____

Club Name _____ League _____

	Name of Policy	Date Completed	Initials
1	Risk Management Assessment: a) SafeSport Centralized Disciplinary Database		
2	Risk Management Assessment: b) USSF's Risk Management Assessment		
3	Background Screening (See USL Background Screening Policy 2024 for Covered Person Criteria)		
4	SafeSport Certification (USL SafeSport LINK)		
5	Sports Betting Integrity (SportsRadar)		

	Name of Policy	Date Completed	Initials
6	Anti-Harassment Policy Review		
7	Anti-Retaliation Policy Review		
8	Anti-Fraternization Policy Review		
9	Socialization Policy Review		
10	Training on players' rights, protections, & reporting inappropriate conduct.		
11	<p>Minor Athlete SafeSport Training (If U18 Player)</p> <p>The Organization must annually provide training on prevention & reporting of child abuse. You must provide a description of the training and how the training was offered. After parental consent and completion, the athlete must provide their certification.</p>		
12	<p>Parent-Minor Athlete SafeSport Training (If U18 Player-Parent)</p> <p>The Organization must, on an annual basis, offer training to parents on the prevention and reporting of child abuse.</p>		
13	U18 Academy Contract-Player Safeguarding Plan		

Your signature below signifies that each of these training/policy reviews were executed at your club for the current year. PCO

Signature _____ Date _____



USL Comprehensive U18 – Player Safeguarding Plan for Professional Clubs

2025 Season

Completion Instructions:

- PCO and other club staff need to personalize this document **PER PLAYER**. You may use find and replace to insert the club's name in highlighted sections.
- Where prompted in other highlighted areas, PCO/Club Personnel will need to insert contact information.
- PCO/Club personnel must check off all section boxes, to confirm they have been read, and the team is complaint.
- Make sure PCO and any other team personnel have signed the document and returned it to the USL Safeguarding Department.
- Make sure U18 player and their guardian have signed the document before submitting for approval.

Directions to Submit for Player Registration (Updated February 2025)

Effective immediately safeguarding plans need to be approved and submitted before the Academy Agreement is submitted for registration for those players who are under the age of 18. The requirement to have a safeguarding plan in place has always been there for under 18 players (regardless of Professional or Academy Status).

In addition to the required documentation for registering any U18 professional or academy player you must also submit proof of the safeguarding department approval email of your plan in PDF format to registration. This can be accomplished by screenshotting the Safeguarding approval email and submitting as a PDF.

“Loaned Players” Any club that is hosting a ‘Loaned’ U18 player, must have their own “Away Team” U18 Safeguarding Plan approved by the Safeguarding department prior to loan approval.

Men's 2025 & Women's 2025/26 U18 – Player Safeguarding Plan

The Player's Name _____

League Name _____ Club Name _____

Today's Date _____ Current Age _____ DOB _____

"Club Name" certify that one of the following (as indicated) is true for this player.

***** For All MAAPP Policies see 2025 MAAPP in the Safeguarding Document Library****

INTRODUCTION

"Club Name" Soccer Club is committed to providing a safe environment where players and staff can develop and thrive. "Club Name" recognizes that particular care must be taken regarding athletes under the age of 18 ("Minor Athlete(s)"). "W" also understands that Minor Athletes are employees of "Club Name" and agrees to cooperate with the USL to ensure a safe and appropriate work environment.

OBJECTIVE

In accordance with the USL Guidelines for Minor Athletes, this U18 Safeguarding Plan and corresponding procedures related to Minor Athletes signed by a Pro-Team, establish guidelines for team players and "club" employees when interacting with minors.

All policy plans must follow the one-on-one interactions policy, as stated in MAAPP. *"All one-on-one In-Program Contact between an Adult Participant and a Minor Athlete must be observable and interruptible, except in emergency circumstances. Exceptions exist and may apply to specific policies, and/or appropriate consent is obtained."*

SCOPE

This policy applies to all coaches, staff, volunteers, and anyone involved in activities with U18 soccer players within "Club Name" Soccer Club or sanctioned events.

I. GENERAL POLICIES RELATING TO MINOR ATHLETES SIGNED BY THE CLUB

"Club Name" Soccer Club currently has Minor Athletes on the roster and is committed to cooperating with the USL's policies and guidelines for Minor Athletes.

A. Compliance with Applicable Laws

"Club Name" Soccer Club will cooperate with the USL's efforts to comply with laws applicable to the USL, including Minor Athletes, relating to issues such as work permits, work hours, rest breaks, and schooling requirements.

B. SafeSport and Other Training

By longstanding USL requirements, all **"Club Name"** Soccer Club coaching staff, support staff, and players must complete SafeSport training provided by U.S. Soccer.

To the extent that **"Club Name"** Soccer Club employs persons who are mandatory reporters, under the SafeSport Act, 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. § 20341(a)(2). **"Club Name"** Soccer Club will ensure that **"Club Name"** Soccer Club complies with mandatory reporter training requirements.

We will provide training for all minor athletes on the prevention and reporting of child abuse. This training will be tracked to include a description of the training, the method in which the training was presented, dates and signatures for all training. All participants will receive SafeSport Training.

C. Policies Prohibiting Misconduct

As a complement to **"Club Name"** Soccer Club and USL's Policy to Prevent and Eliminate Workplace Discrimination, Harassment, and Bullying applicable to players and USL personnel, **"Club Name"** Soccer Club has adopted policies applicable to its employees prohibiting misconduct, including bullying, hazing, harassment (including sexual harassment), emotional misconduct, physical misconduct, and sexual misconduct. In addition, **"Club Name"** Soccer Club has developed Community Expectations to ensure that all members of the Team community treat each other with respect.

D. Safeguarding Procedures

1. Recruitment and Screening:

All coaches and staff working with U18 players must undergo USOPC "Gold Standard" background checks.

2. Supervision:

Ensure adequate and appropriate supervision of U18 players during all soccer-related activities, including training sessions, and events.

a. For Supervision during trainings, coaches will be there to help supervise

b. Player Appearances/Events Supervision will adequate **"Club Name"** Soccer Club staff will be in attendance to supervise.

E. Reporting Procedures

Implement a clear and confidential reporting system for concerns or suspicions regarding the well-being of U18 players. Clearly outline the steps for reporting to the Player Care Officer.

PCO/Player Care Officer is Sara Hess. She can be reached at "Club Name".

1. Reporting Concerns: Any individual who becomes aware of a safeguarding concern, suspicion, or incident involving a U18 player must report it promptly to the Player Care Officer.
2. Player Care Officer: The Player Care Officer for our club is XXXXXXXX. She can be reached at "Club Name".
3. Immediate Concerns: In cases where there is an immediate risk of harm to a U18 player, the person with concerns should take immediate action to ensure the player's safety. This may involve contacting emergency services.
4. Written Report: The person reporting the safeguarding concern should document the details of the incident or suspicion as thoroughly as possible. This may include date, time, location, individuals involved, and any relevant information.
5. Confidentiality: Emphasize the importance of maintaining confidentiality throughout the reporting process. Information should only be shared with the Player Care Officer and other relevant authorities, as necessary.
6. Reporting Channels: Reports can be submitted in person, via email, or through a designated reporting form available upon request.
7. Support for the Reporter: Reassure individuals reporting concerns that they will be treated with sensitivity, and their welfare is of utmost importance. Provide information about available support mechanisms for those who may be distressed by the reporting process.
8. Acknowledgment and Follow-Up: The Player Care Officer will acknowledge receipt of the report promptly. They will initiate an investigation, involving appropriate authorities as needed, and take necessary actions to address the safeguarding concern.
9. Informing Parents/Guardians: Where appropriate and in consultation with relevant authorities, the safeguarding officer will communicate with the parents/guardians of the U18 player, while respecting confidentiality laws and regulations.
10. Record-Keeping: Maintain accurate and secure records of all safeguarding concerns, reports, and actions taken in accordance with legal and regulatory requirements.
11. Review and Monitoring: Periodically review the effectiveness of the reporting procedures and make any necessary adjustments to ensure continuous improvement.
12. Protection from Retaliation: Emphasize that individuals reporting concerns will be protected from any form of retaliation, and the club/organization is committed to fostering a culture of openness and accountability.
13. Legal Obligations: Remind all stakeholders of their legal obligations to report safeguarding concerns and cooperate fully with any investigations.

II. SAEFGUARDING AND MAAPP SPECIFIC POLICIES

A. Supervision

All “Club Name” Soccer Club front office/club staff, coaching & technical staff must have completed SafeSport courses prior to meeting with a U18 player. All other “Club Name” Soccer Club sanctioned events will be supervised by “Club Name” Soccer Club Academy Directors and/or “Club Name” Soccer Club front office personnel. The players will be supervised at all training sessions by coaching staff and medical staff. Written consent is maintained and audited for all supervision requirements on an annual basis. Audit will occur in mid-February of each year (this consent may be withdrawn at any time).

B. Communication (Meetings, Emails, Messages)

☐ Confirm Read & Compliant

“Club Name” Soccer Club does not permit Team staff to have one-on-one in-person private meetings with any players, regardless of age, except in an emergency. When meeting with a Minor Athlete, two staff members will be present. All meetings must be observable and interruptible and will occur in an open/common space or room with the door open. If the topic of the meeting is sensitive (being waived, end-of-season performance, etc.), the meeting will occur in a private space only if two staff members are present, in which case the door must remain unlocked and open. Minor Athletes must not be denied access to their cell phone or other personal communication device during any such meeting, whether in person or virtually.

Any individual meetings with a Minor Athlete that are held virtually (Teams, Zoom, etc.) will be recorded if only one staff member is present.

All written communication with a Minor Athlete may only go through an official team email, text message, (with all recipients BCC-ed), or if a team communication app is used. The use of any other electronic communications with Minor Athletes is prohibited. Any individual message from a staff member to the player will include a second staff member or the player’s parent in the message and will be professional. If the player communicates to a staff member privately first, the adult will respond and copy another staff member or the player’s legal guardian. Parents or guardians may request in writing that their child not be contacted through any form of email or text electronic communication by team staff without including the parent or guardian in the communication. Parents or guardians may not opt-out of Minor Athletes’ participation in communications via team app but will be advised that all app communications will include multiple staff members, and individual communication is not permitted.

“Club Name” Soccer Club will abide by any such request absent emergency circumstances.

Team staff are prohibited from sending communications to Minor Athletes regarding illegal or age-inappropriate topics (*e.g.*, drugs, alcohol use, sexually explicit language or imagery, or discussion of adult personal life/social activities) all of which are prohibited.

Staff members with authority over a Minor Athlete will not be permitted to maintain private social media connections with the Minor Athlete and will not be permitted to accept new personal page requests on social media platforms from the Minor Athlete, unless the staff member has a fan page, or the contact is deemed as celebrity contact vs. regular contact. Existing social media connections on personal pages with the Minor Athlete will be discontinued.

Per the above on medical treatment, the club will include the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) in all communication regarding the player's medical treatment.

C. Athletic Training Standards

☐ Confirm Read & Compliant

The club medical staff will not authorize any third-party medical treatment without authorization from the Minor Athlete's parent(s) or guardian(s) including treatment like massage, acupuncture, surgeries, special referrals, etc. We will ask the Minor Athlete's parents to sign an authorization that would allow us to make medical decisions in emergencies that could occur during training or games (both home and away) and would allow us to perform "routine" treatment (e.g., taping), which we will define in the form. All other medical treatments will require a parent's permission. Parents/Legal Guardians are permitted to be in the room as an observer for any athletic modality, massage, or rubdown on a Minor Athlete.

All club medical treatments will take place in an open space or room with an open door. If a closed door is needed due to the nature of the medical treatment, a second staff member will be present (preferably gender appropriate staff when possible).

All medical treatment provided on an away trip will occur in the common "training room" space provided at the team hotel. This is typically a meeting room that is fully accessible to all players and staff during the entirety of the trip. If a Minor Athlete needs to be undressed to receive treatment, medical staff will ensure that the Minor Athlete is not undressed near any other persons and that the Minor Athlete is not present when another person is undressed.

Before signing a Minor Athlete, "Club Name" Soccer Club medical staff will be trained on the Minor Athlete Abuse and Prevention Policy Guidelines.

D. Team Facilities (Locker Room, etc.)

☐ Confirm Read & Compliant

"Club Name" Soccer Club staff members are required to make every effort to recognize when a minor enters the locker room or changing area during camps and clinics and, if they do not return in a timely fashion, will check on the minor's whereabouts.

Accordingly, we will designate a private changing area for the Minor Athlete, and, if no area is available, we will designate different times of use for adults and Minor Athletes. Notwithstanding the player's separate changing area, the Minor Athlete may be present in the team locker room when adults and other Minor Athletes are not undressed. For example, the player may attend team meetings before warmups, after warmups, and at halftime in the locker room, so long as no person in the room is undressed.

Unrelated adults at our facility are strictly prohibited from being undressed (disrobed or partial or full nudity where private body parts are exposed) in front of minors, and minors are not permitted to be undressed in front of any other person at "Club Name" Soccer Club facility, except as necessary to receive medical treatment.

The use of any device's recording capabilities in locker rooms, restrooms, changing areas, or similar spaces is strictly prohibited.

Please check 'YES' for any of the following options that apply:

E. Transportation

1. In Market

☐ YES☐ N/A

- a. If the Minor Athlete and his family permanently reside in "Club Name", "Club Name" Soccer Club will expect his parent/guardian to provide primary transportation for the player to all team activities (training, etc.) until the Minor Athlete receives a driver's license. If the parents/guardians are unable to provide transportation to a team activity and provide written consent to the Club, "Club Name" Soccer Club will provide transportation in the same vehicle with at least two staff members.
- b. In-program transportation requirements are met if the adult participant is accompanied by another adult participant or at least two minors.
- c. One-on-one in program travel is only permitted between an adult participant and a minor athlete when advance written consent is obtained from a parent or guardian on an annual basis. Audit will occur in mid-February of each year (this consent may be withdrawn at any time)
- d. Written consent must be obtained by a parent or guardian annually for all transportation sanctioned by the organization

2. Out of Market

☐ YES☐ N/A

Academy players (under the age of 18) shall be provided transport to all out of market "Club Name" Soccer Club sanctioned events by the Team bus. Team transportation is permitted when advance written consent is obtained from a parent or guardian on an annual basis. Weekly wellness checks by PCO to ensure transportation needs are being met.

(If Player using out of market transportation, "Club Name" is in receipt of guardian signed waiver.)

☐ Confirm Read & Compliant

F. Team Travel & Lodging

☐ Confirm Read & Compliant

If selected for the traveling team roster, the Minor Athlete will participate in all team travel activities, including flight, ground transportation, training, meetings, and meals. On all team flights, we will follow airline policies regarding minors traveling without a parent or guardian. Even though minors are generally allowed to travel without identification, "Club Name" Soccer Club will assist the Minor Athlete, if requested, in obtaining proper identification to travel (REAL ID, passport, etc.) in addition to applying for TSA Precheck to ensure the player can smoothly navigate through the airport.

During team travel, when doing room checks, attending team meetings, and/or other activities, two-deep leadership, and observable and interruptible environments will be maintained when the Minor Athlete is present.

"Club Name" Soccer Club currently requires all adult players to have a roommate on the road. No Minor Athlete will be required to have a roommate unless the roommate is also a Minor Athlete. No adults will share a hotel room or other sleeping arrangement with a Minor Athlete (unless the adult is a parent or legal guardian of the Minor Athlete has provided consent.) Minor Athletes are not permitted to enter any hotel room other than their assigned hotel room and are not permitted to allow anyone into their assigned hotel room other than their Minor Athlete roommate, parent, or guardian. If a Minor Athlete's

parent or guardian requests permission to have another family member travel with the Minor Athlete, the Minor Athlete's parent or legal guardian must make such a request in writing which request must be approved in writing to "Club Name" Soccer Club and approval can be withdrawn if any issues develop with that family member's participation in the travel. The Minor Athlete's parent or legal guardian will be informed that it is their responsibility to ensure that the family member understands and follows all applicable guidelines.

On each road trip, the player will be assigned a staff member as a chaperone. The chaperone will be responsible for the player's whereabouts, including overseeing the player's modified schedule (i.e., study block) and expectations (i.e., not leaving the team hotel on her own). The chaperone's interactions with the player are subject to "Club Name" Soccer Club requirement that all interactions between adults and Minor Athletes be observable and interruptible. If the Minor Athlete or the Minor Athlete's parents/guardians have any concerns relating to that assigned chaperone before, during, or after the trip, they should report such concerns immediately to the General Manager or the Assistant General Manager.

We will offer the player's parents/legal guardians education concerning child abuse prevention, including the SafeSport module "Parent's Guide to Misconduct in Sport" before obtaining consent for the Minor Athlete to travel with the team.

We will coordinate with our legal counsel and/or the USL to ensure that travel expectations comply with local and federal laws.

Please check 'YES' for one of the following options:

G. Housing and Living Arrangements

1. In Market Housing

☐ YES☐ N/A

- a. If the Minor Athlete is already a resident of the "location" area, he would continue to reside with his parent/guardian. Any changes to his residential plans while he is a minor would need to be approved by the parent/guardian and reviewed by our counsel.

2. Out of Market Housing

☐ YES☐ N/A

- a. If the Minor Athlete is not already a resident of the "Club Name" area, "Club Name" Soccer Club will provide them with appropriate and approved housing.
- b. If the Minor Athlete is accompanied by a parent/guardian a two-bedroom of accommodation will be provided.
- c. If the Minor Athlete is living with a Host Family or in an approved apartment, the player will reside in housing which will include furniture, Wi-Fi and internet accessibility, utilities, appliances, separate beds, close proximity to bathrooms, nutritious meals, and transportation to club sanctioned activities.
- d. All host families will be thoroughly vetted by using the guidelines that are established by "Club Name" Soccer Club or the USL Safeguarding department.

Please state the living/housing location for player (i.e., Host Family, Apartment, etc.)

Please list other teammates in this housing location: _____

III. DOCUMENTS, AGREEMENTS, & GUIDELINES

A. Compliance with Applicable Laws

☐ Confirm Read & Compliant

All clubs should confer with outside counsel to ensure that policies and practices comply with applicable law.

Prior to signing a Minor Athlete, “Club Name” Soccer Club should have a set of documents detailing the club policies and standards regarding a contracted Minor Athlete. Listed below are the specific policies and agreements that should be endorsed by the Minor Athlete and his/her parent or guardian. Additionally, these policies need to be presented to all adult players and team staff to ensure they fully understand and are accountable for the policies involving Minor Athletes.

1. Code of Conduct
2. Travel and Hotel Guidelines and Expectations
3. Anti-Fraternization Policy
4. Anti-Harassment Policy
5. Anti-Retaliation Policy
6. Socialization Policy
7. Sports Betting Integrity
8. Training on players’ rights, protections & reporting inappropriate conduct
9. Minor Athlete SafeSport Training
10. Parent Minor Athlete SafeSport Training

IV. HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICIES FOR MINOR ATHLETES

☐ Confirm Read & Compliant

“Club Name” Soccer Club is committed to providing an environment where players and staff mental health and wellbeing is a priority. “Club Name” Soccer Club recognizes that particular care must be taken regarding athletes under the age of 18 (“Minor Athlete(s)"). “Club Name” Soccer Club also understands that Minor Athletes are employees of “Club Name” and agrees to cooperate with the USL to ensure the wellbeing needs are being considered and addressed appropriately and in a timely manner.

A. Health

1. Physical Health Monitoring:
 - Provide access to sports medicine professionals for immediate assessment and treatment of injuries.
 - Educate players on proper nutrition, hydration, and rest to optimize their physical performance and recovery.

B. Player Development:

1. Training Plans:
 - Provide regular assessments and feedback sessions to track players' progress and adjust training plans accordingly.
 - Foster a growth mindset that encourages players to embrace challenges and view setbacks as opportunities for learning and development.

2. Technical Skill Development:

- If asked, the technical staff will offer their specialized coaching knowledge to help enhancing players' technical skills, such as ball control, passing, shooting, and dribbling.
- Utilize video analysis tools to provide visual feedback and identify areas for technical refinement.
- Facilitate small-sided games and drills that simulate real-game scenarios to reinforce technical skills in a competitive environment.

3. Injury Prevention Programs:

- Integrate dynamic warm-up routines and stretching exercises into training sessions to reduce the risk of injuries.
- Provide education on proper technique and biomechanics to prevent common sports-related injuries.
- Emphasize the importance of adequate rest and recovery periods to prevent overuse injuries and burnout.

4. Mental Health Support:

- Wellness Check-ins by **Name of club personnel**, bi-monthly check-ins.
 - Is the player acclimating to his/her new environment?
 - Are they making friends?
 - Do they feel safe in their housing environment?
 - Do they feel safe in the team/locker room environment?
 - Are they maintaining nutritious eating habits?
 - Are they getting good/regulated sleep?
 - If they do not feel safe are there concerns of any misconduct?
- Offer confidential counseling services provided by qualified professionals to address any mental health concerns or challenges.
- Establish a supportive team environment where players feel comfortable discussing mental health issues without fear of stigma or judgment.
- In the event a medical/social/emotional issue arises, the player's parent/guardian will be notified prior to providing treatment.

5. Psychosocial Development:

- Foster a positive team culture based on respect, collaboration, and sportsmanship.
- Promote leadership skills and encourage players to take on roles as mentors and role models within the team.
- Organize community outreach activities and volunteer opportunities to instill values of empathy, teamwork, and social responsibility.

C. Secondary Education

☐ Confirm Read & Compliant

The parent(s) or guardian(s) of a Minor Athlete who has not yet graduated from high school are expected to ensure that the player continues their education by applicable law, which may vary depending on the state of residency. **"Club Name"** Soccer Club will work cooperatively with the USL to ensure that Minor Athletes and their parent(s) or guardian(s) are informed of applicable requirements. Often, the requirements can be satisfied through an online homeschool program.

Written consent is maintained and audited for all education on an annual basis. Regular check-ins OR a weekly education status report will be sent to the PCO. This process will allow "Club Name" Soccer Club to confirm that courses and schoolwork are being completed, keeping the minor athlete on track for graduation (including GPA and class credit requirements). If the USL and/or General Manager believes that the Minor Athlete's educational performance is suffering, the General Manager will discuss and develop a plan which may include consulting with the coaching staff, the player, and/or the player's parent(s) or guardian(s), to ensure that the player has sufficient time and resources to devote to his education. During the school year, "Club Name" Soccer Club will cooperate with the USL in designating a two-hour "study block" on the Minor Athlete's daily schedule for each school day he is traveling and on days where he is working more than a certain number of hours.

Your signature below indicates that each of these areas have been reviewed by appropriate staff, player, and player guardian at your club for the current year.

Player's Signature _____

Player's Guardian Signature _____

Club Representative's Signature _____

Date _____

PCO OR Sporting/Technical Director

☐

"Club Name" Soccer Club certifies that a signed copy of this plan has been distributed to the Player's Parent/Legal Guardian.



Best Practices USL U-18 Safeguarding / MAAPP Checklist

The USL is committed to ensuring that soccer is a safe, positive, and inclusive experience for the thousands of individuals who regularly engage in soccer activity and attend events throughout the USL Ecosystem. The USL firmly believes that Safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone within the Ecosystem. To maintain high standards for our athletes, coaches, and clubs the USSF has mandated that all leagues/clubs MUST have a position that manages player safety. At USL this position is the Player Care Officer (PCO). To maintain high standards for our athletes, coaches, and clubs our PCO's administer league-wide education, training, and manages incidents because of a potential policy violation. It is important for the PCO to be knowledgeable in all safety policies and mandates throughout the soccer landscape.

As the PCO for your club, you must schedule, execute, and record the following training/educational mandates for U-18 athletes. Your signature below signifies that each of these training/policy reviews were executed at your club for the current year.

PCO Name _____ Position _____

Club Name _____ League _____

	Name of Policy	Descriptions of Trainings	Date Completed	Initials
1	One-on-one Interactions	N/A		
2	Meetings and Training Sessions	N/A		
3	Athletic Training Modalities, Massages, and Rubdowns	N/A		
4	Locker Rooms and Changing Areas	N/A		
5	Electronic Communications	N/A		
6	Transportation	N/A		
7	Lodging	N/A		

	Name of Policy	Descriptions of Trainings	Date Completed	Initials
1	Out-of-program Contact	N/A		
2	Gifting	N/A		
3	Photography / Video	N/A		

Your signature below signifies that each of these training/policy reviews were executed at your club for the current year.

PCO Signature_____ Date_____



SportsRadar Betting Integrity Training Instructions

The USL promotes fair and equitable competition prohibits any sort of betting, whatsoever, on any soccer game.

Any person, including any player associated in any way with any League team or with the League, who bets or gambles, or attempts to bet or gamble, any amount whatsoever on any soccer game, including a League game, shall be disciplined at the League's discretion via fine, suspension, or the potential of being permanently banned from all League activities.

The League has partnered with Sportsradar for integrity and bet monitoring purposes to ensure that all players, coaches, front office personnel, and officials are aware of the repercussions of betting on soccer while participating in the League. As such, the League will provide sports betting integrity training that must be completed by all personnel (players, coaches, front office staff, officials, etc.) prior to each season. The training will only last approximately 45-60 minutes.

This training **MUST** be completed prior to the first competition, if not, the player/coach may not take the pitch.

Directions for the Sportsradar Training.

The training is available in English and Spanish.

- 1) Click on the Link below. The user will be able select which language version they wish to use.
<https://education.sportradar.com/USLIntegrityTraining/#/login>
- 2) You will be prompted to create an account. Utilizing the Guest Account is not permitted. You must create an account to verify the identity of the user.
- 3) Once you have completed the course, a certificate of completion will be emailed to you. You **MUST** download the certificate or take a picture of it and send it to your Team PCO.
- 4) Should you have any questions please contact the USL Compliance Office at compliance@uslsoccer.com or your Clubs Player Care officer.



SafeSport Certification Instructions Staff & Players

SafeSport Training for Staff and Players:

- Staff should enroll in the “SafeSport Trained- U.S. Soccer” course. All Players born in 2005 or older must complete the “Abuse Prevention for Adult Athletes- U.S. Soccer” course through SafeSport.
 - If a player is 17 but will be turning 18 this year, please ensure that you have parental consent before they take this course.
- Players between the ages of 13-17 should be encouraged with parental consent to take the 15-minute course titled “SafeSport for Youth Athletes”. This course educates players about bullying prevention, having positive online interactions, and reporting misconduct. Parental consent is required for this training.

Training instructions:

The code below is the U.S. Soccer Federation’s national governing body access code allowing all USL members to complete training at no charge to the member. This access code is for Club staff use only, so please don’t post it on your website or other public domain, as it’s to be used only by the League members.

If you are completing training **for the first time:**

1. Use this link: <https://safesporttrained.org?KeyName=JJFAQsQPWNRj01edWcPr>
2. Complete information on “Sign Up” page.
3. If prompted, log in to the new account you just created.
4. Click on “Menu” and select “Catalog.”
5. Click the enroll button for “SafeSport Trained – U.S. Soccer Federation” to complete the course.
6. **If an enrollment key is requested, please use:**
[JJFAQsQPWNRj01edWcPr](https://safesporttrained.org?KeyName=JJFAQsQPWNRj01edWcPr)

Instructions for downloading a certificate of completion are as follows:

1. Please select the “Menu” icon at the top right of your page.
2. Select “Transcript”.
3. Once the transcript page displays, locate the most current completion for the course under the “Certificates” section.

If you already have an account and **have taken training before,** log in here:

<https://safesporttrained.org/#/dashboard>



SafeSport Certification Instructions Players-Parents

SafeSport Training for Players - Parents:

- Parents should enroll in the “Parents Guide to Misconduct - U.S. Soccer” course.

Training instructions:

The code below is the U.S. Soccer Federation’s national governing body access code allowing all USL members to complete training at no charge to the member. This access code is for Club staff and athletes’ and their parent/guardian use only, so please don’t post it on your website or other public domain, as it’s to be used only by the League members.

If you are completing training **for the first time:**

7. Use this link: <https://safesporttrained.org?KeyName=JJFAQsQPWNRj01edWcPr>
8. Complete information on “Sign Up” page.
9. If prompted, log in to the new account you just created.
10. Click on “Menu” and select “Catalog.”
11. Click the enroll button for “SafeSport Trained – U.S. Soccer Federation” to complete the course.
12. **If an enrollment key is requested, please use:**
[JJFAQsQPWNRj01edWcPr](#)
13. Click on the LNK below to take you directly to parent training if you cannot find it in the Catalog
<https://safesporttrained.org/#/curricula/8ac098f7-2574-4095-8537-b12efb447749>

Instructions for downloading a certificate of completion are as follows:

4. Please select the “Menu” icon at the top right of your page.
5. Select “Transcript”.
6. Once the transcript page displays, locate the most current completion for the course under the “Certificates” section.

If you already have an account and **have taken training before**, log in here:

<https://safesporttrained.org/#/dashboard>



USL Professional League Safeguarding Compliance Fine Structure

The USL is committed to ensuring that soccer is a safe, positive, and inclusive experience for the thousands of individuals who regularly engage in soccer activity and attend events throughout the USL Ecosystem. It is the Safeguarding Department's role to provide safety measures, to meet USSF standards and provide avenues to report misconduct. It is the Safeguarding Department's responsibility to ensure all USL professional clubs are compliant with USSF mandates and USL mandates.

Mandates that are subject to fines:

- 1) The USSF mandates that each club has a Player Safety Officer whose primary responsibilities relate to preventing and addressing Misconduct towards players.

“Teams must identify an individual within their organization responsible for player safety (Player Safety Officer). This individual's direct line of reporting must not be to any technical staff at the team, and they must have protection from retaliation by team officials. “ USSF Professional League Standards

To meet this mandate, the USL Safeguarding Department provides a Player Care Officer Sanctioning Questionnaire to each club. It must be completed and returned to the department within 7 days. The USL Safeguarding Department must approve each club's Player Care Officer. If a PCO leaves their position/club, said club shall immediately name an Interim-PCO, an approved full-time Player Care Officer should be named no longer than 7 days after the previous PCO left. The Safeguarding Department has discretion for extenuated circumstances.

Fine: Failure for a USL Professional club to have a “Safeguarding Approved” Player Care Officer.

- 2) The Safeguarding Department has mandated numerous policies to be reviewed in the club ecosystem. These policies are mandated by the USSF. This review should be done with 7 days of the staff, coaches, or players' employment. The date of completion should be entered into the club's Safeguarding Audit Worksheet.

Fine: Failure to review and record mandated training within 7 days of employment and record it in a club's Safeguarding Audit Worksheet will result in a fine.

Fine: Failure to record training completions in a club's Safeguarding Audit Worksheet within 7 days will result in a fine.

- 3) The Safeguarding Department has mandated procedures for a U18 Player.
 - a. A Safeguarding Plan for each player that is 17 years of age or younger must be submitted and approved prior to the start of employment.

Fine: Failure to complete a U18 Player Safeguarding Plan will result in a fine and prohibit the player from taking the pitch.

- b. The department also mandates policy reviews for all players including the U18 player. This review should be done prior to the player taking the pitch.

The date of completion should be entered into the club's Safeguarding Audit Worksheet.

Fine: Failure to review and record mandated U18 training within 7 days of employment and record it in a club's Safeguarding Audit Worksheet will result in a fine.

- c. The USSF "MAAPP" ("USOPC Gold Standard") mandated background screenings must be completed prior to the U18 player to take the pitch.

Fine: Failure to be compliant with this mandate may result in a fine.

- 4) All Player Care Officers are mandated to attend Mandatory Trainings throughout the year.

Fine: Failure to be compliant with this mandate may result in a fine.

- 5) All Professional Clubs must have a Professional Human Resources (SHRM-CP level) on staff OR a 3rd party mechanism to handle staff Misconduct Reporting & Investigations. Each club shall prominently display how to report misconduct within the ecosystem.

Fine: Failure to be compliant with this mandate will result in a fine.

Clubs that fail to comply shall incur a \$500 fine for each occurrence of a violation of the above mandates. The fines shall be cumulative on a 7-day schedule. Failure to pay fines may result in any of the following: player(s) registration will be suspended, a forum with USL HQ, and/or the postponement games until the club is compliant. The initiation of all fines are subject to the discretion of the USL Safeguarding Department and League Presidents.