

INFORMATION BULLETIN

Bulletin #: I2023-24
Date: June 5, 2023
To: Ontario Soccer; District Membership and Associate Members
CC: Ontario Soccer; Board of Directors, Staff
From: Johnny Misley, Chief Executive Officer
Subject: Match Official Anti-Bullying and Harassment Program Update

The following Bulletin is being issued to provide an update on the [multi-year program around Match Official Anti-Bullying and Harassment](#), which was launched last year as announced in [Bulletin I2022-042](#). As the Bulletin describes, the program takes a holistic approach to addressing the issue through policy/discipline reform and public/participant education, supported by a marketing and awareness campaign called "No Ref, No Game". The program was launched following research showed a drastic decrease in Match Official recruitment and retention largely due to Match Official abuse.

Phase 1 of the Match Official Anti-Bullying and Harassment program, which was carried out last spring and summer, involved three key initiatives. First, the Ontario Soccer Board of Directors and District Association Leaders signed a [Match Official Pledge and Charter](#), publicly committing to supporting Match Officials with a zero-tolerance approach and supporting the anti-bullying and harassment programs we are developing.

The second initiative involved the [creation, dissemination and displaying of physical and digital signage](#) in support of our No Ref, No Game campaign, providing a visual cue around the issue of Match Official abuse around various fields, stadiums and locations across Ontario. The third initiative was a campaign in partnership with Dairy Farmers of Ontario to provide new Match Officials with branded swag promoting the No Ref, No Game campaign, providing further visual cues and awareness building.

Phase 2 involved the consultation of various working groups to inform on policy and discipline regulation refinements to Ontario Soccer's Operational Procedures with respect to Match Official abuse. These refinements are currently in review by Ontario Soccer Senior Management. Final updates to Ontario Soccer's Operational Procedures will be reviewed and approved by the Board of Directors in December and will go in effect January 1, 2024.

Phase 3 currently underway, involves the implementation of various pilot project initiatives for the 2023 and 2024 Outdoor Seasons. The pilots include:


- **No Ref No Game** - the continued promotion of the No Ref, No Game marketing and awareness campaign.



**ONTARIO
SOCCER.**

EST. 1901

ONTARIO SOCCER
7601 Martin Grove Road, Vaughan ON, L4L 9E4
905.264.9390 ontariosoccer.net

Proud Member of 

Play.
Inspire.
Unite.

- **Take 5** – this initiative involves giving Match Officials the ability to give five minute ‘timeouts’ to individuals throughout the course of a match, to diffuse highly emotional situations. The “Take 5” pilot will begin in the U11 and below divisions at festivals. Details around this new strategy are still being finalized and will be shared once available.
- **No Ref, No Game toolkit** – much like the second initiative in phase one, this strategy involves providing further resources and marketing collateral to Clubs and District Associations to join in the awareness building and marketing efforts surrounding No Ref, No Game.
- **Body cameras** – [as you may have seen on various media channels this week](#), the body camera pilot involves the use of cameras mounted on select Match Officials’ chest to act as a visual deterrent and data gathering mechanism for disciplinary and research purposes. The pilot will begin July 1 with the U9 and U11 divisions with plans to expand further. Details around this pilot are still being finalized as well.
- **University of Ottawa study** – Through a partnership with the University of Ottawa, Ontario, Saskatchewan and British Columbia, are participating in a longitudinal research project studying the effects of “Ref Abuse” on the mental health of youth aged Match Officials.

Match Officials are a vital part of our game as without them, games cannot take place. It is imperative that all soccer organizations in Ontario, support the above initiatives and do our part to protect and provide a safe environment for all our participants, including our Match Officials. Ontario Soccer is eternally grateful to all those who have officiated, and are committed to making the game of soccer in Ontario safe for all participants.

If you have further questions, please contact [Johnny Misley, Chief Executive Officer](#).

How do I stay connected to Ontario Soccer?

If you have not subscribed to our weekly e-Newsletter, [Subscribe to INSIDE THE 18](#). Follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#).

