Referee Mentor Handbook

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The Program

The AYSO National Referee Program is intended to develop the best-qualified referees possible for the conduct of all AYSO games. An integral part of this program is providing advice and support to referees to help them improve individual performance and maintain the highest standards of officiating performance throughout AYSO.

The Mentor

Referee development is a major responsibility of the AYSO National Referee Program and the first level this support for AYSO referees is the Referee Mentor Program.

Under this program, Regional Referee Administrators and Regional Referee Directors of Assessment identify and assign qualified referees to act as a helping hand to new and less experienced referees. This helping hand consists of frequent contact to support and encourage the development of the referee; experience has proven that mentoring is a valuable aspect to referee development, retention and recruiting.

Mentor Role

The Referee Mentor plays many important roles in the development of referees:

- As **Friend**, the Mentor must be persuasive in his comments to the referee. The referee must trust the motives as well as the judgment of the Mentor and believe that the Mentor gives freely of time and effort.
- As **Observer**, the Mentor must provide sound, simple advice and assistance that leads the referee on the shortest path to success. The referee must believe in the sincerity and credibility of the assistance given.
- As **Supporter**, the Mentor offers encouragement in unlimited supply. In this view, the referee can do no wrong, but can always be encouraged to do better. *This is unconditional support for the person, not for everything the person does.*
- As **Advocate**, the Mentor is obligated to take the part of the referee in all encounters. No criticism or dissent can go unchecked; no party can challenge without the proactive, positive involvement of the Mentor.
- As **Choreographer**, the Mentor helps the new and developing referee to stage the officiating process. From the opening -- arrival and inspection of the field – to closing -- the post-game ceremony and bookkeeping.
- **Advisor, the** Mentor provides accurate, factual information that gives the referee additional insight and understanding. The Mentor can encourage and assist the referee to move through the upgrade process.
- As **Coach**, the Mentor offers tactical instructions to help the referee manage his games with practical and realistic suggestions in improving his performance and enjoyment of the game.
- As **Role Model**, the Mentor gives t**h**e developing referee a real person to emulate. The Mentor's attitudes, values and behaviors set the example that the referee is likely to follow on the field.

Mentor Qualifications

As a Mentor you must have the following minimum technical qualifications:

1. Regional Referee certification. Intermediate Referee Certification is recommended.
2. Completion of the module “The AYSO National Referee Program” from the Intermediate Referee Course.

You should:

- Be committed to AYSO and the AYSO philosophies
- Be willing to devote time and energy to the Mentor Program
- Have clear and concise verbal communication skills
- Learn to properly observe a referee’s performance
- Have a positive attitude when presenting information
- Develop an aptitude for listening and responding to a referee’s questions and concerns
- Be able to encourage referees
- Have an understanding a referee’s shortcomings
- Serve as a role model to other volunteers
- Know the Laws of the Game and referee mechanics

Mentors are appointed by the Regional Referee Administrator (RRA) or Regional Director of Assessment (RDA)

Guide for Mentors

Initial Contact:
Contact the referee you are assigned to mentor as soon as possible. Initial contact may be by telephone or e-mail. Personal contact should be made as soon as possible. Do not expect the referee to make the initial contact with you.

Arrange an initial meeting in which you:

- Introduce yourself and explain your referee experience
- Describe the Mentor Program
- Make sure that the referee understands that the mentoring is intended to be a positive experience
- Learn as much about the referee as possible
- Understand the referee's goals, objectives, experience and concerns.
- Answer any questions or allay any doubts
- Arrange for a next meeting, including attending the referee's next game.

Develop objectives that meet the needs of the referee and AYSO.

As a Mentor You Should:

- Act as a Mentor in all of the roles outlined above
- Always present a positive attitude toward officiating and AYSO
- Create a safe, positive environment for improvement

As a Mentor You Should:

- Be available as often as needed to provide support and answer questions
- Observe the referee as often as needed
- Encourage the referee to continue certification to higher levels of officiating
- Ask the referee to be an Assistant Referee for one of your games
- Participate with the referee in continuing training and social activities offered by the Region
- Seek help from others to ensure that the needs of the referee are met
- Report to the Regional referee staff any special needs or problems that should be addressed for the referee
- Actively recruit other volunteers to become referees and Mentors
- Support the referee at any game you observe. This includes positive support to coaches, spectators and players.
- Provide positive feed back to the referee after all observations including:
    - At least two or three positive comments
    - Not more than two areas for improvement by the referee
    - Specific comments made to the referee using game experience or specific examples of performance.
    - Small, attainable, immediately improvable goals for the referee
- Use positive language such as:
    - “You might consider trying…”
    - “Other referees often find that…”
    - “From my experience…”
    - “It may be easier for you if you…”

- Avoid phrases such as:
    - “You should…”
    - “I always…”
    - “Never…”
    - “Always…”
- End discussions of observations with a positive comment
- Encourage the referee at all times.

Check List for a Mentor Observing a Referee

These observations are unlike observations for upgrade or assessments. These are not pass or fail situations and usually there is no written report prepared for the referee. All observations should be positive win-win experiences. Unlike an assessor, the Mentor need not be inconspicuous. If necessary, the Mentor should ensure that the coaches and spectators are aware of his presence. Mentors may participate with the referee, when necessary, in pre and post game activities. While not encouraged, limited discussion with the referee may take place during the halftime break. There must always be a post game discussion with the referee.

1. Pre Game: Did the referee-

a. Arrive early for the game?

b. Dress properly and have all necessary equipment?

c. Check the field?

d. Check the players?

e. Collect game cards?

f. Check the ball?

g. Give pre-game talk to players?

h. Introduce himself to the coaches?

i. Count the number of players?

j. Conduct a coin toss and kick off?

k. Begin the game on time?

2. Communications with Assistant Referees: Did the referee –

a. Give clear instructions?

b. Use the persons well?

c. Treat the persons with respect?

3. Positioning: Did the referee –

a. Keep play between himself and the Assistant Referee?

b. Remain close to play (15-20 yards)?

c. Maintain proper position on restarts?

4. Signals: Did the referee–

a. Whistle with authority?

b. Use proper hand signals?

c. Communicate with players and coaches by effectively using voice and positive body language?

5. Law Knowledge and Mechanics: Did the referee demonstrate –

a. Correct applications of the Laws?

b. Consistent application of the Laws?

c. Recognition of proper restarts?

d. Proper administration of restarts?

e. Good foul recognition?

6. Interaction with players and coaches: Did the referee display –

a. An attitude of helpfulness and tolerance?

b. Respect?

c. Friendliness without familiarity?

d. Credibility in responses and decisiveness?

e. Positive action even in disciplinary situations?

7. Post Game: Did the referee –

a. End the game on time?

b. Participate in the post-game handshake?

c. Thank the Assistant Referees?

d. Complete administrative duties such as game cards?

Most importantly, as mentors, always remember that…

"In AYSO, it's about more than the game!"

Notes