



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 of safeguarding claims to the appropriate channel. All pre-professional Clubs are recommended, but are not mandated, to have a “PCO.”

In order 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.

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.

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

In addition, the Center has exclusive jurisdiction over certain claims of suspected Child Abuse and other misconduct involving Players who are “**Minor**”(s). **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.4 – “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

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 “**Covered Person**” defined as all persons in the USL Ecosystem, including but not limited to all Club employees, staff, coaches, volunteers, interns/externs, independent contractors, referees, security, athletic trainers, and health care professionals

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.4 – “Reporting Suspected Child Abuse” (with the exception of the requirement to report to the Center), (iii) Section III – “Prevention Policies: 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.

## **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 Participant**” (s) (and those covered personnel of other NGBs); and (b) misconduct that is reasonably related to an underlying allegation of sexual misconduct by adult participants. 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 minor 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 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 minor 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 than 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. US Center for SafeSport Minor Amateur Athlete Prevention Policies**

Part II of the U.S. Center for SafeSport’s Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policies (“MAAPP”) requires the USL to follow all guidelines 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 Policy 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. Please use the following link to US Center’s Policy

<https://maapp.uscenterforsafesport.org/> .

## 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 may be taken against any covered person in the USL Ecosystem found to have violated the Prohibited Conduct Policy herein. Appropriate action also may be taken against any Covered Person.

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***

Covered Personnel may not engage in Sexual Misconduct. "**Sexual Misconduct**" 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. Examples of Sexual Misconduct may include, without limitation:

#### **a. *Intentional Exposure***

A Covered Person violates this Policy by intentionally exposing his or her buttocks, breasts, or genitals, or induce 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.

#### **b. *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.

### **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 Covered Person from normal and expected activities related to their job.
- **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; or providing illegal drugs or non-prescribed medications to another.
- **Criminal Conduct** – *e.g.*, providing alcohol to a person under the legal drinking age; 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 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.

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 reference 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.
- g. Willful Tolerance - An Adult Participant violates this Code by willfully tolerating any form of Prohibited Misconduct, when there is a Power Imbalance between that Participant and the individual(s) who are being subjected to the Prohibited Conduct.

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

## ***12. Power Imbalance***

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.

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.

Moreover, because of the real or perceived power imbalance that may exist, such a relationship may also raise questions about the mutuality of consent. Such situations may cast doubt on the objectivity and fairness of the workplace, damage workplace morale, and place the USL and/or its Clubs within their Ecosystem in a legally vulnerable position.

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).

Once a non-intimate or sport relationship is established between a coach and player a power imbalance is presumed to exist throughout that 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

### **13. *Anti-Fraternization***

#### **a. Intimate or Romantic Relationship between any covered persons in the position of authority and a subordinate**

It is expressly prohibited to engage in a consensual romantic or sexual relationship between individuals in inherently unequal positions of authority, such relationships could have the effect of impeding the success of the work environment. Moreover, because of the real or perceived power imbalance that may exist, such a relationship may also raise questions about the mutuality of consent. Such situations may cast doubt on the objectivity and fairness of the workplace, damage workplace morale, and place the USL and/or its Clubs within their Ecosystem in a legally vulnerable position.

##### **1) Disclosing Relationships**

If any workplace relationship develops, the person in the position of greater authority must disclose the relationship by completing a Conflict of Interest and Commitment (COIC) disclosure form. Human Resources, in partnership with management, will evaluate the situation and ensure that alternate supervisory or evaluative arrangements are in place to address any conflict of interest including the creation of a Management Plan.

#### **b. Fraternalization between covered persons without positions of authority**

The USL and its Clubs within their Ecosystem discourage *consensual* relationships to ensure its employees can work in an environment where they can be objectively supervised, instructed, or evaluated. Moreover, to provide equal treatment and avoid potential conflicts of interest, favoritism, exploitation, harassment, or professional standard breaches,

##### **1) Disclosing Relationships**

If any workplace relationship develops, both covered persons must disclose the relationship by completing a Conflict of Interest and Commitment (COIC) disclosure form. Human Resources, in partnership with management, will

evaluate the situation and ensure that alternate supervisory or evaluative arrangements are in place to address any conflict of interest including the creation of a Management Plan.

**d. [Fraternization/Socialization between Staff and Players \(See the USL Anti-Fraternization Policy for further explanation.\)](#)**

Relationships between owners, leadership, staff and players is inherently complex due to an uneven power dynamic, potential for bias, and the need for clear professional boundaries. The quality of these relationships is crucial for an athlete's well-being and performance. Owners, leadership, coaches, and staff significantly influence an athlete's physical and psychological development. All covered persons should be aware of this dynamic and err on the side of caution when socializing with players.

**e. [Guidelines for Alcohol Consumption \(See the USL Anti-Fraternization Policy for explanation.\)](#)**

Fraternization as it is used in this policy refers to both professional and social interactions outside of the club environment between any Covered Persons. The importance of drinking responsibly helps to mitigate risk. The impaired judgment that comes from alcohol consumption can loosen inhibitions and result in inappropriate behavior.

#### **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 the 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 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 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. Anti-Retaliation Policy**

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, daily operations, 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.

- a. This policy prohibits any form of discipline, reprisal, intimidation, or retaliation against any covered person who attempts to coerce, intimidate or force another covered person to perform or submit to behavior that is not in the scope of their job duties or potentially violates Local, State or Federal law.
- b. 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 and Investigative Process**

### **1. USL Safe Space Misconduct Reporting**

All suspected Safeguarding Misconduct must be reported via the USL Safe Space webpage. Claimants will be linked to the i-Sight reporting platform. The Safeguarding Department will acknowledge the receipt of the report within 72 hours.

<https://www.uslsoccer.com/safespace>

## **2. USL Participants are obligated to report Sexual & Physical Misconduct issues to the USL League Office.**

Participants are obligated to report Physical Misconduct issues to the USL League Office immediately after becoming aware of them, including any medical treatment and/or law enforcement response.

Participants are obligated to report Sexual Misconduct issues to the USL League Office immediately after becoming aware of the allegations. The USL Safeguarding Department supports our members in ensuring Law Enforcement, US Center for SafeSport, and the Federation’s mandatory reporting obligations have met the **24-hour reporting mandate**. Below are those reporting standards.

Misconduct should be reported, regardless of when it occurred.

## **3. USL Members’ Obligation to Report Sexual or Physical Misconduct to The U.S. Center for SafeSport**

Covered Persons must 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 (see below for reporting standard).

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.

## **4. Mandatory 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.

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. Investigations**

The USL is committed to providing an unbiased and timely investigation of allegations of misconduct. The USL Safeguarding Department may conduct league investigations or engage with third-party investigators. 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 filing or participating in a safeguarding investigation.

The Safeguarding Department receives potential misconduct reports via the i-Sight reporting system. Once received the department reviews the claim(s) to determine if it meets the threshold of misconduct that requires investigation. Several factors determine this assessment: clearly stated potential violation, are the claimant and respondent defined as a covered person, and is there enough information to complete interviews, anonymous reporting may limit the ability to complete an investigation. ([See USL Safeguarding Misconduct Matrix – Guidelines for Temporary Measures & Discipline for further explanations.](#))

If it is determined to move forward with an investigation, the department then triages the potential severity of claim(s) and if there is a continued risk if the respondent remains in the club ecosystem. The final assessment is discussed with the corresponding league president and other appropriate USL leadership.

There may be other extraneous circumstances the Safeguarding and Legal departments may consider for each step in the process.

#### **1. Level of Severity and Potential for Covered Persons to have USL League Restrictions**

If due to the severity of the claims, potential for continued risk to claimants and/or the total number of claims, the Safeguarding department and league leadership may determine whether

any covered person involved in the investigation should be restricted from their club duties for the duration of the investigation.

## **2. Level of Investigation and Use of a Third-Party Investigator**

Based on the level of severity, number of claims, types of claims, and/or the title of the respondent(s), the Safeguarding department and league leadership authorize which level of investigation will be executed, (1) managed by the USL Safeguarding department or (2) a third-party investigator will be used.

## **3. Official Notification of Receipt of Report**

The USL Safeguarding department sends email notifications to formally acknowledge receipt of claim(s) to all parties involved. Additional notifications, if appropriate, are sent to club leadership and the United Soccer League Players Association (USLPA). If the claimant or respondent is a minor the notification will be addressed to their parent or guardian.

## **4. Interview Expectations**

Interviews are requested through notification letters. Interviews are confidential but there may be circumstances where for the integrity of the investigation, identifying information is made public. Interviews are scheduled by the USL Safeguarding department or their third-party investigator(s). If an interviewee is a minor, a parent or guardian must accompany the minor. The only exception is when the minor's parent/guardian signs a waiver allowing them to be interviewed alone.

Any form of retaliation as a result of covered persons participating in an investigative process is strictly prohibited, see A.15.

### **a. USL Investigation Unit (IU)**

If the USL Safeguarding department is managing the investigation, the Investigation Unit will consist of one Safeguarding Staff member and two additional USL staff members. These staff are trained on all Safeguarding policies and have completed trauma-informed interviews. If the interviewee is a professional player, they have the right to ask for USLPA representation on the interview. The USLPA representative does not have the authority to talk or intervene on behalf of the player unless to ask a clarifying question. If the investigation involves a member of the Pro Referee Organization (PRO), the referee has the right to ask for a member of PRO to observe the interview. The observer does not have the authority to talk or interview on behalf of the referee unless to ask a clarifying question for their member.

### **b. Third-Party Investigation**

Our third party will plan and execute all interviews. In addition to the above stipulations, a member of the USL Safeguarding department or its representative will attend every interview as an observer. The representative shall not ask any question or intervene in the interview process. It is the goal of the USL to provide in-person interviews for third-party investigations. Virtual interviews will also be utilized as needed.

### **c. Confidentiality**

The USL Safeguarding department works to provide confidentiality to all interviewees. 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. It must be noted that without specific details we may be inhibited to execute an investigation.

#### **5. Use of Representative to Observe an Interview – Conflict of Interest test**

The USL Safeguarding department allows one observer to sit on interviews. If Observers are registered agents, no agent may sit on ANY interviews within an investigation if the agent represents a member of the club staff AND a player. Observers may not sit in on a claimant interview AND a respondent interview within the same investigation. Both claimants and respondents may request an alternate observer.

##### **a. Boundaries of Observer**

The Observer may speak only with the respondent. The Observer shall not have any authority to answer questions for the respondent. The role of the observer is to ensure the line of questioning was unbiased, the interviewee had ample opportunity to answer questions and thoroughly provide their perceptions of the incident/behavior under investigation.

##### **b. Club Staff as Observer**

No club staff can be used as an observer/representation for any investigation. It is an inherent conflict of interest.

##### **c. Professional Players**

The use of an interview observer, specifically a representative from the USLPA, must be offered to any USL Professional Player by Weingarten rights.

##### **d. Non-Player Covered Persons (Coaches, Club Staff)**

Staff of a club may request an interview observer.

#### **6. Investigation Interference or Tampering**

The USL works to ensure all investigations meet a high level of integrity. To ensure they are fair and unbiased any type of tampering or interference is prohibited.

- a. Witness Tampering** – is defined as interference to any potential party involved in an investigation in an attempt to coerce, manipulate, threaten the interviewee’s testimony or evidence.
- b. Refusal to follow USSF, USL or club restrictions of duty.**
- c. Potential consequence for such behavior may range from fines to a higher level of discipline during the investigation. And may be considered on any final outcome to include higher discipline or penalties.**

#### **7. Investigation of Tampering Violations**

The following examples of Tampering violations will be subject to the same type of procedure as a filed misconduct claim.

**a. Conflict of Interest Violations**

- 1) If a representative knowingly participates as an observer for a claimant or respondent while also representing an opposing party within the club ecosystem.
- 2) If a representative knowingly participates as an observer of more than one party within the same investigation.

**b. Coercion or Exerting Influence on Interviewees**

- 1) If a representative or witness/interviewee subverts a fair and unbiased investigation by discussing ANY portion of the claim to more than their representative.
- 2) If a representative or witness/interviewee places pressure on any other interviewee/witness to answer questions in a specific manner or knowingly provide false information.
- 3) If any player union subverts a fair or unbiased investigation by discussing specifics of a claim to any player, or places pressure on any player to answer questions in a specific manner or knowingly provide false information.
- 4) Any club leadership, coaching staff, sporting staff or players attempting to coerce an investigation outcome by discussing the claim to any other person.
- 5) Any club leadership, coaching staff, sporting staff or players attempt to manipulate the investigation outcome by pressuring another covered person to knowingly provide false statements.

**c. Confidentiality Breaches**

Any covered person that is involved with an investigation is prohibited from discussing ANY information with any internal staff or covered people and externally with any media.

**d. 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:

- 1) 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
- 2) Providing any coaching-related advice or service to an athlete who has been identified as suspended or otherwise ineligible by Center, the Federation, or USL.
- 3) Allowing any person to violate the terms of their temporary measures or post-investigation discipline.

**8. Findings, Adjudication and Conclusion Process**

Once the interviews are concluded, whether completed internally or by a Third-Party Investigator, the USL Safeguarding department reviews the findings and any relevant evidence.

**a. Findings** (See [USL Safeguarding Misconduct Matrix – Guidelines for Temporary Measures & Discipline](#) for further explanations.)

Third Party Findings will be disseminated to USL Safeguarding Department, USL Leadership, The USLPA (if applicable) and the Franchise who is involved the Third party investigations. Internal USL Safeguarding investigation findings will not be disseminated. The Claimant and Respondent will be provided the Notice of Investigation Conclusion. Such Notice will set forth any violation(s) of USL Policies; and the Sanction(s) imposed against the Respondent (if applicable); and the rationale for any Sanction(s) imposed.

**b. Adjudication**

The department weighs several factors to determine discipline and corresponding corrective actions.

- 1) the severity of the violation
- 2) the total number of substantiated claims
- 3) the duration of the misconduct
- 4) is it a repeat offense
- 5) time separated/restricted from the league (if applicable) when determining if discipline and/or corrective actions are warranted.

Context and details surrounding instances of misconduct are important and may aggravate or mitigate severity of incident; therefore, the USL Safeguarding department will review aggravating and mitigating factors for proper assessment and response.

**c. Conclusion Notifications**

The USL Safeguarding department will send formal investigation results in an individual conclusion letter to the following people:

- 1) All Claimants. If they are minors, the notification letter will be addressed to a parent/guardian. Club leadership may be copied on each notification letter, if appropriate.
- 2) All Respondents. If they are minors, the notification letter will be addressed to a parent/guardian. If respondent(s) are part of a club, club leadership will be copied on each notification letter.
- 3) If the claim is related to a Professional Player(s) the United Soccer League Players Association may either be copied on the player(s) notification letter or may receive a separate notification, if appropriate.
- 4) Any investigation that finds a claimant to be on long term probation or suspension, a copy of the conclusion letter will be forwarded to the USSF Safeguarding Department (depending on severity and types pf claim(s)).
- 5) Any investigation on Head Coaches or Leadership that affects players, the USLPA will also receive notification.

**9. Conditions for Appeals**

The USL implements The Center for SafeSport, US Soccer Federation, and League standards in determining the appeals process for Respondents of substantiated claims.

- a. Appeals are provided for any discipline of “suspension” received as a result of a substantiated Safeguarding claim(s). “Suspension Served” does provide for an appeal.
- b. The Respondent may be afforded the opportunity to defend the substantiated allegations of misconduct as it relates to minimizing the conduct and therefore reducing the discipline. The Respondent has the right to present their appeal before an uninvolved member of the USL Safeguarding, Legal department, or an assigned third-party representative(s).
- c. The Respondent has 72 hours from the date of the Conclusion Letter to formally request an appeal. The request must be in writing to the USL Safeguarding department.

#### **D. Background Screening Basics**

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 who have regular contact with Minors;
- All medical professionals such as massage therapists, physicians, nutritionists, etc. working 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 III.

## 1. Mandatory Self Disclosure

- a. **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.
- b. **Legal Proceedings:** All candidates have a self-disclosure obligation, to inform the prospective club of any arrests or citations for a felony, gross misdemeanor, or alcohol / drug related driving offense (example: Driving Under the Influence, Impaired Driving) even if the criminal charges did not lead to a conviction or plea. Failure to disclose is a basis for discipline/disqualification.
- c. **Mandatory Disclosure All Covered Persons** – All current USL 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. 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 Database<sup>1</sup>.

### 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

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

factor. It's important to remember that a criminal background check is only going to record the convictions not the behaviors an individual may present with.

As noted above the USL uses a third party vendor for criminal background checks. Our vendor will screen for crimes and indictors such as watchlists, aliases, etc., which may raise immediate 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 considering the transferrable risk the individual may have to a Minor in a soccer context.

*Please use this link to the USL's Background Screening Policy for further information.*

[USL 2026 Background Screening Policy 2 .pdf](#)

## **E. Training and Education**

The “**SafeSport Act**” requires amateur sports organizations to offer consistent training to adult members who are in regular contact with minor 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 Policy<sup>2</sup>. 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 Athlete**”(s) must successfully complete the required SafeSport training every year in order 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)

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

- 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 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 a Preventative Harassment and Discrimination web-based training. This will be a mandatory yearly training for members of the USL Ecosystem from 2023 season onward.

## **III. PREVENTION POLICES: 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 hat 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.

<https://maapp.uscenterforsafesport.org/>

## APPENDIX 1: DEFINITIONS

Term	Definition
Adult Participant	Any adult over the age of 18 who is: an athlete, employee or board member within the USL Ecosystem.
Center	As defined in Section I.
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).
Covered Person	All persons in the USL Ecosystem, including but not limited to all Club employees, staff, coaches, volunteers, interns/externs, independent contractors, referees, security, athletic trainers, and health care professionals.
Covered Program	As defined in Section I.C.2.
Federation	As defined in Section I.
Hostile Environment	As defined in Section II.A.4.
MAAPP	<i>See “Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policies”</i>
Mental Injury	As defined in Section II.B.4.
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.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policies	<p>The MAAPP is a collection of proactive prevention and training policies for the U.S. Olympic &amp; Paralympic Movement. It has three primary components:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. An Education &amp; Training Policy that requires training for certain Adult Participants within the Olympic &amp; Paralympic Movement;</li> <li>2. Required Prevention Policies, focused on limiting one-on-one interactions between Adult Participants and Minor Athletes, that Organizations within the Olympic &amp; Paralympic Movement must implement to prevent abuse;</li> <li>3. Recommended Prevention Policies.</li> </ol>
NGB	As defined in Section I.D
Policy	As defined in the preamble.
Position of 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.
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.4.
Sexual Abuse	As defined in Section II.B.4.
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.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
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: <a href="https://uscenterforsafesport.org/response-and-resolution/policies-and-procedures/">https://uscenterforsafesport.org/response-and-resolution/policies-and-procedures/</a> ).
USL	United Soccer Leagues, LLC and its wholly owned subsidiaries, including (without limitation) USL Pro, LLC d/b/a USL Championship, USL Super League, LLC, USL Pro-2, LLC d/b/a USL League One, Premier Development League, LLC d/b/a USL League Two, USL W League, LLC, and Super Y League, LLC d/b/a USL Youth.
USL Ecosystem	All USL HQ, Leagues, Clubs (including employees, contractors, commissioned service providers, and other individuals that are acting on behalf of a league/club), and players that participate in any USL leagues or attend USL events.