

VSA Zero Tolerance Policy

Vermont Soccer Association is committed to providing a safe environment for its members and participants, and to preventing abusive conduct in any form. Every member of this organization is responsible for protecting our participants and insuring their safety and well-being while involved in sponsored activities.

To this end, we have established the following guidelines of behavior and procedures for our staff, volunteers and participants. All members of this organization, as well as parents, spectators and other invitees are expected to observe and adhere to these guidelines.

1. Abuse of any kind is not permitted within our organization. This means we do not tolerate physical, sexual, emotional or verbal abuse, or misconduct from our players, coaches, referees, officials, volunteers, parents or spectators.
2. Physical and sexual abuse, including, but not limited to, striking, hitting, kicking, biting, indecent or wanton gesturing, lewd remarks, indecent exposure, unwanted physical contact, any form of sexual contact or inappropriate touching, are strictly prohibited within our organization.
3. Emotional abuse or verbal abuse is also prohibited. These include, but are not limited to such forms of abuse as: yelling, insulting, threatening, mocking, demeaning behavior, or making abusive statements in regard to a person's race, gender, religion, nationality/ethnicity, sex or age.
4. We are committed to providing a safe environment for our players, participants and staff. We do so by appointing all coaches, officials and volunteers – and anyone else affiliated with our organization – as protection advocates. Every member of this organization is responsible for reporting to the Club Risk Management Director any cases of questionable conduct or alleged mistreatment toward our members by any coach, referee, official, volunteer, player, parent, sibling or spectator. If a club has no Risk Management Director, then complaints should be reported directly to the Vermont Soccer Association Risk Management Coordinator.
5. Buddy System: We recommend that every activity sponsored by our program put a Buddy System in place. Each youth participant should be assigned a buddy during sponsored activities. No child should go anywhere – to the bathrooms, locker rooms or other location – without his or her buddy.
6. To further protect our youth participants, as well as our coaches and volunteers, we strongly advise that no adult person allow him/herself to be alone with a child (other than their own) or with any group of children during sponsored activities. In particular, we recommend that coaches or other adult members of this organization:

- a. Do not drive alone with a child participant in the car.
 - b. Do not take a child alone to the locker room, bathrooms or any other private room.
 - c. Provide one-on-one training or individual coaching with the assistance of another adult or the child's Buddy.
 - d. If you must have a private conversation with a youth participant, do it within view of others, in the gym or on the field, instead of in a private office.
 - e. Coaches and other adult members of this organization should not socialize individually with the participants outside of sponsored activities.
7. When traveling overnight with youth participants, children should be paired up with other children of same gender and similar age group or with their own parents, with chaperones in separate, but nearby rooms.
 8. Supervision/Chaperone ratio: We recommend that for any sponsored activity, the ratio of adults to youth participants be 1:8 – one (or more) adults for every eight children, with a minimum of two adults for every activity.
 9. We want to empower our children to trust their feelings and let them know that their concerns, fears and hopes are important by listening to them. Open communication between children and parents, or between children and other adults in the organization, may help early warning signs of abuse to surface.
 10. We encourage parents to be present at sponsored activities, games, practices and other events. The more the parents are involved, the less likely it is for abusive situations to develop.
 11. We will respond quickly to any and all allegations of abuse within this organization. This information will be communicated to the authorities for investigation and will be reviewed by the organization's Risk Management Director and/or President. The alleged offender will be notified of such allegations promptly. Vermont Soccer Association will be copied on all correspondence.
 12. Any person accused of sexual, physical, or emotional abuse may be asked to resign voluntarily or may be suspended by the board until the matter is resolved. Regardless of criminal or civil guilt in the alleged abuse, the continued presence of the person could be detrimental to the reputation of the organization and could be harmful to the participants. A person who is accused but later cleared of charges, may apply to be reinstated within the organization. Reinstatement is not a right, and no guarantee is made that he or she will be reinstated to his/her former position.
 13. We promote good sportsmanship throughout the organization and encourage qualities of mutual respect, courtesy and tolerance in all participants, coaches, officials, volunteers and spectators. We advocate building strong self-images among the youth participants. Children with a strong self-image may be less likely targets for abuse; similarly, they may be less likely to abuse or bully others around them.