



AYSO Region 253



Parent Handbook

*General Information
And Responsibilities*



AYSO MISSION STATEMENT

KEY OBJECTIVES

PURPOSE - To operate soccer programs where young people can learn to develop a positive self image, self-confidence and other positive character traits through their interest and participation in soccer based on our philosophy of:

Everyone Plays - Our goal is for kids to play soccer - so we mandate that every player on every team must play at least half of every game.

Balanced Teams - We require every region at the start of each season to set up teams as evenly balanced as possible - because it is more fun where teams of equal ability play.

Positive Coaching - What makes winning kids is being built up, not down! We train and encourage our coaches to make the extra effort to understand and offer positive help to our players, rather than negative criticism.

Open Registration - Our programs are open to all children between 5 and 18 years who want to register and play soccer. Interest and enthusiasm are the only criteria for playing.

Good Sportsmanship - We desire to create a positive environment based on mutual respect, rather than a win at all costs attitude. All programs must be designed to instill good sportsmanship in every facet of AYSO.

To have the capacity to develop, provide and administer quality youth soccer programs throughout the United States.

AYSO CODE OF ETHICS

Trustworthiness

Worthy of trust, honor and confidence.

Honest: Truthful, sincere, non-deceptive, candid.

Integrity: Morally courageous, principled.

Promise-Keeping: Dependable, reliable.

Respect

Regard for the dignity, worth and autonomy of all persons (including self).

Treating others with courtesy, civility, politeness.

Tolerating other people's beliefs.

Accepting individual differences without prejudice.

Refraining from violence, coercion, intimidation.

Responsibility

Acknowledgement and performance of duties to others/self.

Accountability: answerable for consequences of decisions.

Pursuit of Excellence: Diligent, persevering.

Self-discipline: Self-control, restraint.

Caring

Regard for the well-being of others.

Kindness, compassion, consideration

Charity: Altruism, giving.

Fairness

Making decisions on appropriate factors.

Impartiality, avoidance of conflicts of interest.

Commitment to equity and equality.

Openness to information and ideas.

Reasonableness, due process, consistency, fair play.

Citizenship

Recognition of and living up to social obligation.

Participation in democratic process.

Law abidance.

Protection of environment

Community Service

Doing one's share.

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ALERT!

You are entering an



By entering this kids zone, you agree to the following:

- Kids are #1
- Fun - not winning - is everything
- Fans only cheer, and only coaches coach
- No yelling in anger
- Respect the volunteer referees
- No swearing
- No smoking
- Leave no trash behind
- Set a proper example for our children

If you can agree to the above, we welcome you.
IF NOT, WE ASK THAT YOU PLEASE LEAVE NOW.

AYSO – it's for the kids!

Dear Parent,

Thank you for registering your child in Region 253. As a parent, you play a special role in contributing to the needs and development of youngsters. Through your encouragement and good example, you can help assure that all the boys and girls learn good sportsmanship and self-discipline.

In AYSO, young people learn to work together, to sacrifice for the good of the team, to enjoy winning and deal appropriately with defeat - all while becoming physically fit and healthy. Best of all - they have fun!!

It is hoped that the contents of this handbook will help you to understand your role as an AYSO parent as well as show you ways that you can help make YOUR region the best it can possibly be by volunteering to help.

Gill Scott Heron, American Poet, author and songwriter wrote:

*Nobody can do everything, but everybody can do something,
and if everybody does something everything will get done.*

Remember, AYSO is a volunteer organization. We encourage all parents to assist in the various activities.

**Every family should do their FAIR SHARE!
After all, SOCCER is a TEAM sport!
Let's work together and have fun at the same time.**

AYSO PARENT'S CODE



SUPPORT YOUR CHILD

Supporting your child by giving encouragement and showing interest in their team is very important. Help your child work toward skill improvement and good sportsmanship in every game. Teach your child that hard work and an honest effort are often more important than victory - that way your child will always be a winner despite the outcome of the game!

ALWAYS BE POSITIVE

Parents serve as role models for their children. Become aware of this and work to be a positive role model. Applaud good plays by your child's team as well as good plays by the opposing team. Support all efforts to remove verbal and physical abuse from youth sports activities.

REMEMBER: YOUR CHILD WANTS TO HAVE FUN

Remember that your child is the one playing soccer, not you. It's very important to let children establish their own goals - to play the game for themselves. Take care not to impose your own standards and goals on them. Don't put too heavy a burden on your child to win games. Surveys reveal that 72% of children would rather play for a losing team than ride the bench for a winning team. Children play for the fun of playing.

REINFORCE POSITIVE BEHAVIOR

Positive reinforcement is the best way to help your child achieve their goals and overcome their natural fear of failure. Nobody likes to make mistakes. If your child does make one, remember it's all part of learning, so encourage your child's efforts and point out the good things you child accomplished.

DON'T BE A SIDELINE COACH OR REFEREE

Coaches and referees are usually parents just like you. They volunteer their time to help make your child's youth soccer experience a positive one. They need your support too. That means refraining from coaching or refereeing from the sidelines. As a volunteer organization, there's usually always an opportunity for you to take your interest in coaching or refereeing to the next level and become one yourself. Recognize the value and importance of volunteer coaches, referees and officials and give them their due respect. Without them, there would be no AYSO soccer for your child to participate in.

10 THINGS KIDS SAY THEY DON'T WANT THEIR PARENTS TO DO

By: Darrel J. Burnett, Ph.D

Editor's Note: Have a look at Darrel Burnett's qualifications at the conclusion of this article. As parents and coaches we need to really consider the effect our behavior has on our players and our own children.

Don't yell out instructions. During the game I'm trying to concentrate on what the coach says and working on what I've been practicing. It's easier for me to do my best if you save instructions and reminders for practice or just before the game.

Don't put down the officials. This embarrasses me and I sometimes wonder whether the official is going to be tougher on me because my parents yell.

Don't yell at me in public. It will just make things worse because I'll be upset, embarrassed, or worried that you're going to yell at me the next time I do something "wrong".

Don't yell at the coach. When you yell about who gets to play what position, it just stirs things up and takes away from the fun.

Don't put down my teammates. Don't make put-down remarks about any of my teammates who make mistakes. It takes away from our team spirit.

Don't put down the other team. When you do this you're not giving us a very good example of sportsmanship so we get mixed messages about being "good sports."

Don't lose your cool. I love to see you excited about the game, but there's no reason to get so upset that you lose your temper! It's our game and all the attention is supposed to be on us.

Don't lecture me about mistakes after the game. Those rides home in the car after the game are not a good time for lectures about how I messed up - I already feel bad. We can talk later, but please stay calm, and don't forget to mention things I did well during the game!

Don't forget how to laugh and have fun. Sometimes it's hard for me to relax and have fun during the game when I look over and see you so tense and worried.

Don't forget that it's just a game. Odds are, I'm not going to make a career out of playing sports. I know I may get upset if we lose, but I also know that I'm usually feeling better after we go get a pizza. I need to be reminded sometimes that it's just a game.



(From Playbook for Kids: A Parent's Guide to Help Kids Get the Most Out of Sports. The Gatorade Company)

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AYSO PLAYER'S CODE

- Play for the fun of it, not just to please your coach or parents.
- Control your temper most of all. Resist the temptation to retaliate when you feel you have been wronged.
- Concentrate on playing soccer and on affecting the outcome of the game with your best effort. Work equally hard for your team as for yourself.
- Be a good sport by cheering all good plays, whether it is your team's or your opponents.
- Remember that the goals of the game are to have fun, improve your skills and feel good. Don't be a show-off or a ball hog.

TOOLS FOR PARENTS

The following ideas may be helpful for being an AYSO supportive parent.

Conversations before the games

- ✓ Tell your child you love him/her regardless of the outcome.
- ✓ Tell him or her "Go for it, give it your best shot and have fun!"

During the game

- ✓ Understand that kids are over-stimulated during games. The coach may be giving instructions, opponents and teammates are talking, the crowd is cheering, and the referee is blowing the whistle. To a youth sports participant, the atmosphere is much like that of a fighter pilot with enemy jets racing all around. Do not yell instructions to your child during the game because it only adds to the confusion. Sometimes the best thing you can do as a parent is to be quiet.
- ✓ Cheer and acknowledge good plays by BOTH teams.



After the game

- ✓ Thank the officials for doing a difficult job.
- ✓ Thank the coaches for their efforts. Understand that after a difficult loss is not a good time to question the coach.
- ✓ Thank your opponents for a good game.
- ✓ Congratulate your child and his or her teammates for their efforts, regardless of the outcome of the game.
- ✓ Compliment individual players on good plays they made in the game.
- ✓ During the car ride home
- ✓ Point out a good play your child made during the game.
- ✓ Avoid criticizing or correcting mistakes, whether made by your child, another teammate, a coach or an official.
- ✓ Ask open-ended questions about how the game was played rather than how many points were scored.

Here are examples of open-ended questions that might apply:

- *Did you have fun?*
- *Did you give it your best effort?*
- *What did you learn from the game?*
- *What was the best play you made and how did it feel?*
- *Did you bounce back from*

your mistakes?



KNOW THE GAME!



Soccer is a simple game, but you and the players will enjoy it more if you know a few of the Laws (not "rules") that are frequently misunderstood.

- ❖ Soccer is intended to be a continuous action sport. Whenever possible, the referee will let play continue. Thus, when a player falls, and the referee judges that the player is not at immediate risk, (s)he will generally let the game proceed until a natural stoppage. Of course, the referee will stop play if a player needs immediate attention or would be endangered by continuing play.
- ❖ Players cannot deliberately play the ball with their hands or arms, except for the goalkeeper within his/her own penalty-area. However, accidental contact between hands or arms and the ball occurs frequently, especially with younger players, and is not an infringement. In such cases, the referee will not stop play, since no breach of the Laws has occurred. A spectator who yells "Handball!!!" in such circumstances merely reveals his ignorance of the Laws.
- ❖ A throw-in must be taken with part of each foot on or behind the touch-line (side-line) at the moment the ball is released. The ball must be thrown from behind and over the head, using both hands. This motion is sometimes difficult for young players to master, and referees in younger divisions may, at their discretion, allow retakes in order to help the players learn this skill.
- ❖ Unlike basketball and gridiron football, the boundary lines are part of the field of play. The ball is not out of play until it has completely crossed the goal line or touch line. This implies that a goal is not scored unless the ball has wholly crossed the goal line between the goal posts and beneath the crossbar.
- ❖ Soccer is a sport designed to give skill the advantage over force. The Laws permit physical contact, but limit it to non-dangerous forms. Other kinds of contact are illegal and are penalized by the referee. Careless, reckless, or unnecessarily hard contact by a player on his opponent does not become legal simply because the ball was struck in the process. This point is frequently misunderstood by spectators and players, who exhibit their ignorance by yelling "But he got the ball ref!".
- ❖ Referees penalize only clear infringements. In fact, they are specifically instructed not to penalize doubtful or trifling breaches of the Laws. In other words, the game is supposed to "flow", and the referee is expected to interfere only to protect the safety of the players or to ensure equity according to the Laws. The referee is explicitly given broad latitude to judge when his/her interference is needed. This is in sharp contrast with many sports popular in the United States, in which spectators expect the referee to stop play for all sorts of trifling violations. A knowledgeable spectator will understand and appreciate why, for example, a referee ignores inconsequential jostling between opponents and allows the game to proceed uninterrupted.



GENERAL SEASON INFORMATION

PRACTICES AND GAMES

- Practices are normally scheduled by the coach beginning 2 weeks before the first game of the season. Your coach or team parent will notify you of the day, time and location of practices.
- All U5 and U6 games are played at the Wheatland Elementary soccer fields. U8 and older teams will travel to another region's fields to play that region's teams. Your coach will inform you of your game schedules as soon as they are available. Since we have to work with several other regions, it is not uncommon for the schedules to be

available the week before the first games. Please be patient as we work with other regions to get schedules completed.

- Shin guards are mandatory during all games and practices. No exceptions!
- Jewelry, earrings (no taping allowed), watches, bracelets, caps, plastic headbands, barrettes and other dangerous objects which could cause injury to the wearer or other players are prohibited both during practices and games.
- Alcoholic beverages and smoking are not permitted at any AYSO practice or game fields.
- Pets are not allowed at the fields during practices or games.
- Please keep the soccer fields clean. Litter should be disposed of properly.

AT THE GAME FIELD

- Players must be dressed in complete uniform, shirts tucked in and socks worn over the shin guards.
- Parents, spectators and any players sitting out must stay at least 3 feet behind the touch-lines (sidelines) on the opposite side of the field from the teams. All water jugs must also be kept behind this 3-foot line. A 3-foot line is not marked. Parents should use their own judgment in estimating the appropriate space. No one is allowed to remain behind the goal area during a game.
- After the game, teams should leave the immediate playing field area as quickly as possible.
- Refreshments should be provided to the players away from the playing fields.

SPORTSMANSHIP COUNTS

- All parents, spectators, coaches and players should positively encourage and recognize good play from both teams.
- No negative or disparaging remarks to the referees will be allowed. Remember, referees are parents or players who volunteer their time so that your child can be able to play soccer.



FIELD CLOSURES and CANCELLATION OF GAMES

The following procedure will be followed regarding inclement weather:

- Before the first game, the fields will be inspected by the Regional Commissioner and/or the Assistant Regional Commissioner to assess field conditions.
- Coaches will be notified if games will be cancelled, started late, etc. (if you do not receive a phone call, assume games are on). You can also check the website for cancellations (www.ayso253.org). The website will be updated immediately after the decision is made to cancel or continue with games.
- Due to problems associated with rescheduling, games may be played in the rain if the fields are safe to play on and there is no lightning present.
- If games for Region 253 are cancelled, they are automatically rescheduled to the following Sunday (8 days later) with a 4 hour adjustment to the start time. For example, if your team was scheduled to play at VC at 9:00 am on Saturday, May 10, 2008, your game would automatically be rescheduled to Sunday, May 18 2008 at 1:00 pm. If your team is not able to play at this time, it is the coach's responsibility to notify the RC or Coach Administrator and secure a date and time for the rescheduled game. Fields must be reserved through the Coach Administrator, Regional Commissioner, or Assistant Regional Commissioner. We will attempt to provide a referee for rescheduled games as long as sufficient notice is provided and the teams have provided a certified referee for the referee pool for our region.
- Please do not call your coach or board members! They will call you. If we have 300 parents calling us constantly then we are unable to contact the coaches to get the information that they need to them.



STAY INFORMED

Your team parent and/or coach is responsible for distributing information to you from the Region.

You should receive throughout the season:

- Weekly Newsletter
- Fundraising information
- Misc. other information that may be required by the board.

HEALTH AND SAFETY



SOCCER ACCIDENT INSURANCE

All AYSO registered players, coaches, referees and volunteers are covered for accidental bodily injury while participating in scheduled games, tournaments, team practice sessions or other sponsored activities, provided they are under the direct supervision of a team official. Please refer to the SAI brochure included in your welcome packet for more information. All coaches have been advised of the procedures to take in case of an injury on the field or during practice. If your child falls during a game, do not run out onto the field! Parents should only go onto the field when cleared by the Referee to do so.

BLOOD BORNE DISEASES

AYSO has adopted the following guidelines and rules for when there is bleeding on the field:

- Any player or official who is bleeding must leave the field immediately to receive medical treatment, and may not return until the situation is corrected (the bleeding is stopped and the wound is covered).
- If there is blood on the uniform or clothing, the individual may not return until that portion of the uniform or clothing is replaced or the blood has been neutralized with a disinfectant solution.
- If there is blood on the body, the individual may not return until all blood has been removed from skin surfaces and the contaminated skin has been disinfected.

LIGHTNING

Lightning causes over 100 deaths in the US annually - more than hurricanes and tornadoes combined. Nationally, lightning ranks second only to flash floods in weather-related deaths.

Lightening Safety Procedures:

- ✓ If you see lightening, leave the field. Seek shelter immediately inside a sturdy building or hardtop car.
- ✓ Watch the weather during your child's practice. If lightening is present parents should plan to pick up their child early.
- ✓ Coaches must develop a Lightening Safety Plan based on their practice and game field location.
- ✓ It is OK to sit in cars, or stay in a nearby building in hopes of the storm passing. Allow at least ten minutes before re-entering the field.
- ✓ Make sure shelter is available for all players and volunteers.
- ✓ Make sure all players, parents and volunteers are aware of your team's lightening safety plan.

DEHYDRATION

Staying hydrated during the course of exercise is crucial because water helps deliver oxygen to the muscles, fueling them in the course of physical activity. Without adequate fluids, the cardiovascular system is strained, the probability of heat injury increases and performance is impaired. Please provide your player(s) with bottles of water for all practices and games and help the coach make sure that all of the players are drinking their water.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Volunteers

We couldn't do it without them!

Each and every Saturday the all volunteer staff is working at the Wheatland Elementary soccer fields as early as seven o'clock in the morning preparing the fields, getting equipment ready, setting up the information center, and the list goes on.

That just barely scratches the surface of all the work that goes on behind the scenes. All year long Board Members are hard at work getting ready for each season.



The volunteering doesn't stop there. On Saturdays, there are a lot of teams playing. Each team has a volunteer coach, a volunteer assistant coach, and a volunteer team parent. Don't forget the referees on the fields! These men and women put forth the effort to attend either a four hour or eight hour class before they take to the field. Then on game day, they will work anywhere from one to five games.

Why do these people put all this time into AYSO? The easy answer is because it is "for the kids", and it is. However, each of the volunteers also gets something back that you can't see or touch. It is a large measure of satisfaction.

Parents, Please Volunteer!

Region 253 needs help from lots of grown-ups to make its program work. For every game we play, there are at least 14 kids and 11 adults directly participating. On the adult side of the equation there are four adults in coaching roles, three as referee or assistant referees, two team parents and two parents bringing snacks for the teams. Add to this board members and special event coordinators and you'll have to reach the same conclusion we have: We need at least one adult volunteer from every family.

AYSO Kids Zone Parent Pledge

In recent months, the national media has focused on the negative, even violent, behavior of players, coaches and parents involved in youth sports. In a proactive effort to counteract this trend of violence, AYSO has initiated a program called Kids Zone. As part of AYSO's education agenda, Kids Zone is a dynamic program targeted to eliminate negative sideline behavior. It is aimed toward producing a thoroughly positive impact on everyone involved in youth soccer.

Kids Zone Parent Pledge

1. I pledge to be on time or early when arriving for a practice or game. I understand that it is embarrassing for my child to be late to a game or practice and that I am putting him/her at physical risk by not providing adequate time for warm up.

2. I understand that the top three reasons kids play sports are to have fun, make new friends and learn new skills. I understand that the game is for the kids, and that I will encourage my child to have fun and keep sport in its proper perspective. I understand that athletes do their best when they are emotionally healthy, so I will be positive and supportive.

3. I will redefine what it is to be a "winner" in my conversations with my child. A winner is someone who makes maximum effort, continues to learn and improve, and does not let mistakes, or fear of making mistakes, stop them. I understand that mistakes are an inevitable part of any game and that people learn from their mistakes.

I understand that all children are born with different abilities and that the true measure is not how my child compares to others but how he/she is doing in comparison to his/her best self.

4. I will "Honor the Game." I understand the importance of setting a good example of sportsmanship to my child. No matter what others may do, I will show respect for all involved in the game including coaches, players, opponents, opposing fans, and referees. I understand that official, coaches and players make mistakes. If the referee makes a "questionable" call, I will continue to respect the individual and be silent!

5. I understand that games can be exciting times for my child who is trying to deal with the fast-paced action of the game, respond to opponents, referees, teammates and listen to coaches. I will not add confusion by yelling out instructions. During the game, I will limit my comments to encouraging my child and other players for both teams.



6. I will not make negative comments about the game, coaches, referees or teammates in my child's presence. I understand that this plants a seed, which can negatively influence my child's motivation and overall experience.



"Zero Tolerance" Abuse Policy

Purpose of this policy:

Youth development is the central purpose of the AYSO program. This includes development of youth whether they are soccer players, soccer coaches, soccer referees or assistant referees. All the AYSO guidelines and policies on providing a "Safe, Fair and Fun" environment for players also apply to youth volunteers. Only "Positive, Instructive, and Encouraging" comments are allowed to be directed at youth players and volunteers. The purpose of this policy is to make clear that verbal abuse of youth volunteers is as unacceptable as verbal abuse of youth players and to adopt basic standard sanctions for improper conduct.

This policy is not intending to imply that youth volunteers are always "right" and the adult spectator is always "wrong". Just as youth players will make mistakes during play, youth volunteers will make a misinterpretation in officiating, particularly the younger divisions where they are learning how to referee or coach. In addition, sometimes youth volunteers are "in over their head" because of a particularly challenging game, an assignment beyond their experience or comfort level, etc..



Policy on Youth Referee Abuse:

1. It is **NEVER** acceptable to abuse or criticize youth volunteers, verbally or otherwise, in any situation.
2. A coach or spectator should only communicate in a positive way and should not express any disagreement with the performance of a youth referee or coach. A coach or spectator should not, before, during or after a game, discuss with a youth referee or coach their critique of the youth's performance, other than to thank and compliment them.
3. Any criticism or critique of a youth volunteer's performance may only be communicated to the youth via a designated Mentor or Regional Board member. Adult referees or board members present at the game shall, if necessary, intervene if any coach, player, spectator or other adult is criticizing or abusing a youth volunteer, verbally or otherwise, and may take immediate appropriate action. This may include directing the offender to leave the site, and/or suspending or terminating the game.
4. Any AYSO certified volunteer observing behavior not following these guidelines shall report the incident to a regional board member within 24 hours of the incident so that appropriate review can take place.
5. There are appropriate avenues for coaches or spectators to share concerns about the quality of youth volunteers. The regional board welcomes constructive feedback on any youth volunteer. The Region 253 website provides the necessary contact information.

FUNDRAISERS

Fundraisers are required to help keep the registration fees low enough so that everyone can participate in AYSO soccer. Since we know that every other organization and school is also asking families to participate in fundraisers, we have actively sought out fundraisers that are more family-friendly. We hope that through these types of fundraisers we can make enough to offset the operating costs that are not covered in the registration fees. Please encourage your team to actively participate in our fund raisers.



REGIONAL COMMUNICATION

Region Mailbox



The Region Mailbox is new to the region this year and will be used to help better communication within the region. Every coach will have a mailbox located at the information booth. Coaches or Team Parents will pick up the information from the booth before every game to distribute to the players and their families. If you coach does not hand anything out to you, be sure to ask if s/he checked in at the booth. Otherwise, you and your team may miss some information. Weekly newsletters and other information are distributed through the Regional Mailboxes.



Newsletter

Region 253 will publish a weekly newsletter titled *The Kickoff* containing important information and announcements for coaches, referees, parents and other volunteers. These will be distributed via your team's folder in the Region Mailbox.

Region Website (www.ayso253.org)

Region 253 has a website that provides almost instant communication. Information is posted here immediately throughout the week, whereas newsletters are only delivered on Saturdays. Coaches will also find a great deal of information such as coaching manuals, practice games and drills, FIFA Laws of the Game, rule changes and explanations, and much more in the Coach's section of the website.

AYSO Region 253 Mailing List

Want to be notified about registration dates, team pictures and more? Join the AYSO 253 Mailing List! Your e-mail will only be used for AYSO official use only. To join the new AYSO Region 253 Mailing List, visit <http://ayso253.org/mailman/listinfo/ayso253> ayso253.org. There is also a link to the mailing list registration on our main website page, www.ayso253.org. The purpose of this list is to keep the AYSO community informed about the news and upcoming events of AYSO Region 253. Regional newsletters and announcements will distributed through this list, as well as general information about the AYSO kids zone and parenting youth athletes.

Automatic Phone Calling System

General announcements, reminders and game cancellations will also be sent out through our new automated calling system, which will be programmed with the primary contact number you provided at registration. If you would like your announcements to be sent to a different phone number, please contact our Regional Commissioner at rc@ayso253.org.

Field Communication

The Region Commissioner, Assistant Regional Commissioner, Referee Administrator, Coach Administrator and Safety Director will have walkie-talkies on field with them at all times when they are at the Wheatland soccer fields. A walkie-talkie will be available at the information table at all times to reach these volunteers if they are needed. Other volunteers, such as the Fundraising Coordinator and Team Parent Coordinator, will have walkie-talkies at times when they are necessary (such as the date the fundraising information is due to be turned in, picture day, etc.).

