

Mason East Side Soccer Club Policy on Abuse

The Mason East Side Soccer Club 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 ensuring 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 and spectators, 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, 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 any cases of questionable conduct or alleged mistreatment toward our members by any coach, official, volunteer, player, parent, sibling or spectator.
5. We recommend that every activity sponsored by our program use a Buddy System: each youth participant should be assigned a buddy and should not 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, officials and volunteers, we strongly advise that no adult person allow him/herself to be alone with a child 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 so 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. We recommend that the ratio of adults to youth participants for any sponsored activity be 1:8 – one (or more) adult for every eight children, with a minimum of two adults for every activity.
 8. When traveling overnight with youth participants, children should be paired up with other children of same gender and similar age group, with chaperones in separate but nearby rooms.
 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 become as active as possible in 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 Board of Directors. The alleged offender will be notified of such allegations promptly.
 12. Any person accused of sexual or physical abuse may be asked to resign voluntarily or may be suspended by the Board of Directors 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 or 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 and volunteers. 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.

MESSC's Policy on Abuse is derived from guidelines in "A Guide to Prevention and Awareness of Abuse for Youth Soccer Associations" (Bollinger, Inc.) and is used with permission.