



Referee Mentor/Advisor Handbook

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The Program

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

Referee development is a major responsibility of the AYSO Referee Assessment Program. The Point of Contact (POC) for Referee Assessment who is a member of the National Referee Advisory Commission oversees this program.

The AYSO Assessment Program Consists of:

- Referee Mentor/Advisors who are qualified AYSO referees. These individuals act in an advisory capacity to U8-Officials, Assistant Referees and Regional Referees. In the absence of a Referee Assessor, Mentor/Advisors may conduct observations for upgrade to Intermediate Referee. They also continue to provide support and assistance to other AYSO referees.
- Referee Assessors are certified by completing the training and prerequisites prescribed by the AYSO National Referee Program, and may conduct observations and assessments for upgrade to Intermediate and Advanced Referee. They are also encouraged to act as Referee Mentor/Advisors.
- National Referee Assessors are certified by completing the training and prerequisites prescribed by the AYSO National Referee Program and may conduct observations and assessments for upgrade to Intermediate, Advanced or National Referee. They are also encouraged to act as Referee Mentor/Advisors.
- Referee Assessors and National Referee Assessors also conduct the physical fitness tests prescribed by the AYSO National Referee Program.

The Mentor/Advisor

As a Referee Mentor/Advisor you act as A HELPING HAND FOR NEW AND DEVELOPING OFFICIALS. You play many important roles in the development of referees. These roles include:

- As Friend, the Mentor/Advisor must be persuasive in his or her comments to the officials. The official must trust the motives as well as the judgment of the Mentor/Advisor and believe that the Mentor/Advisor gives freely of time and effort.
- As Observer, the Mentor/Advisor must provide sound, simple advice and assistance that leads the trainee on the shortest path to success. The official must believe in the sincerity and credibility of the assistance given.
- As Supporter, the Mentor/Advisor offers encouragement in unlimited supply. In this view the official can do no wrong, but can always be encouraged to do better. This is unconditional support for the person, not for everything the person does.
- As Advocate, the Mentor/Advisor is obligated to take the part of the official in all encounters. No criticism or dissent can go unchecked; no party can challenge without the proactive, positive involvement of the Mentor/Advisor.
- As Choreographer, the Mentor/Advisor helps the new and developing official to stage the officiating process. From the opening (arrival and inspection of the field) to closing (post game ceremony and bookkeeping), the Mentor/Advisor helps the official to move with purpose and direction from one part of the process to the next. The Mentor/Advisor also encourages and assists the official in moving through upgrades in certification to the highest level desired by the official.

- As Advisor, the Mentor/Advisor provides accurate, factual information that gives the official additional insight and understanding.
- As Coach, the Mentor/Advisor offers tactical instructions that help the official to operate at the top of their game, and provides the official with practical suggestions to improve performance.
- As Role Model, the Mentor/Advisor gives the developing official a real person to emulate. The Mentor/Advisor's attitudes, values, and behaviors set the example that the official is likely to follow on the field.
- The Mentor/Advisor Program can be a great tool for any AYSO Region's retention and upgrade efforts. If successful, the program also aids the recruiting effort and potential volunteers realize the safety net that surrounds each new official.

The program is simple, effective and free. And, best of all, it works.

Mentor/Advisor Qualifications

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

1. Regional Referee certification-Intermediate Referee Certification is recommended.
2. Completed Referee Course class "The AYSO National Referee Program" from the Intermediate Referee Course.

You should:

- Be committed to AYSO and the AYSO philosophies
- Be willing to devote time and energy to the Mentor/Advisor program

- Have clear and concise verbal communication skills
- Learn to properly observe official's performance
- Have a positive attitude when presenting information
- Develop an aptitude for listening and responding to official's questions and concerns
- Encourage officials and understanding an official's shortcomings
- Serve as a role model to other volunteers
- Know the Laws of the Game and referee mechanics

Mentor/Advisors are appointed by the Regional Referee Administrator (RRA) or Regional Director of Assessment (RDA)

Making the Program Work

Regional, Area and Section Referee Staff

The Regional Commissioner should ensure that qualified personnel fill the positions of Regional Referee Administrator (RRA) and Regional Director of Assessment (RDA) and that the Mentor/Advisor Program has a high priority in the Region.

The Regional Referee Administrator (RRA) supports and encourages the Regional Director of Assessment (RDA) to develop and administer the program. Support must include ensuring that scheduling is done in such a manner as to support the Mentor/Advisors and officials being assisted.

Regional Director of Assessment (RDA) develops and administers the program including:

- Recruiting and training Mentor/Advisors. It is recommended that sufficient Mentor/Advisors be assigned to provide a Mentor/Advisor to each U-8 Official, Assistant Referee and Regional Referee. Mentor/Advisors should be assigned no more than three (3) officials at any one time.
- Develop a specific program that will ensure assignment of an Assessor to each new U-8 Official, Assistant Referee and Regional Referee during at least the first season of the official's assignment of games in the Region.
- Encourage Mentor/Advisors to continue their education to become Referee Assessors and National Referee Assessors.

Making the Program Work

Components of a Successful Mentor/Advisor Program

The Area Referee Administrator (ARA) and Area Director of Assessment (ADA) should provide support and encouragement to the RRA's and RDA's in their Area and should provide inter-Region support for the program.

Section Directors and Section Referee Staff should place the Mentor/Advisor Program at a high priority in the Section and provide support to the Area and Regional programs.

Components of a Successful Mentor/Advisor Program

- Identify and appoint sufficient Mentor/Advisors to meet Region requirements
- Provide Mentor/Advisors with adequate training and material including:
 - Briefing on duties and responsibilities of Mentor/Advisors
 - Consider conducting training consisting of role playing for new Mentor/Advisors before working with officials
 - A copy of this handbook
 - A copy of AYSO National Referee Program Manual
- Assign Mentor/Advisors to officials immediately upon the official receiving training and certification
- Avoid scheduling Mentor/Advisors as referees in games prior to or immediately after games the official they are watching is officiating.
- Awards or other recognition programs for Mentor/Advisors is encouraged

Alternative Administration of Mentor/Advisor Program

While a one-on-one ongoing Mentor/Advisor program is most effective, there are times when resources are not available or where conditions exist that prohibit this structure. In these rare cases, the following are offered as interim steps that can be taken to support a Mentor/Advisor program until circumstances permit a one-on-one organization.

- **Assign fields and times to Mentor/Advisors:** Under this alternative a Mentor/Advisor will observe and support all officials on the fields during the times assigned. Officials should be informed, in advance, of the Mentor/Advisor's role. If necessary, a Mentor/Advisor may be expected to cover two fields at a time.
- **Form teams of officials:** A Mentor/Advisor should be assigned to a team of officials who will rotate duties during a series of games. The Mentor/Advisor should give feedback at the conclusion of the series of games.
- **Assign in groups:** Mentor/Advisors should be assigned refereeing duties in close proximity to an official who is to be mentored. Before or after a game the Mentor/Advisor should be available to assist the official and respond to questions.
- **Recruit retired or injured referees to act as Mentor/Advisors.** Some of these referees may not initially meet all of the prerequisites of a Mentor/Advisor. They should be carefully selected and thoroughly briefed on their duties. They should be encouraged to complete the necessary requirements as soon as possible.

Guide to Mentor/Advisors

Initial Contact:

- Contact the official you are assigned to mentor as soon as possible. Initial contact may be by telephone or e-mail. Personal contact should be made as soon as possible. Do not expect the official to make the initial contact with you.
 - The initial meeting should
 - Introduce yourself and explain your referee experience
 - Describe the Mentor/Advisor program
 - Make sure that the official understands that the Mentor/Advisory program is intended to be a positive experience
 - Learn as much about the official as possible
 - Understand the official's goals, objectives, experience and concerns.
 - Answer any questions or doubts
 - Arrange for a next meeting, including attending the official's next game.
- Develop your objectives that meet the needs of the official and AYSO

As a Mentor/Advisor you:

- Act as a Mentor/Advisor in all of the roles outlined above
- Always present a positive attitude toward officiating and AYSO

Components of a Successful Mentor/Advisor Program

- Create a safe, positive environment for improvement
- Should be available as often as needed to provide support and answer questions
- Observe the official as often as needed
- Encourage the official to continue certification to higher levels of officiating
- Ask the official to be an Assistant Referee for one of your games
- Participate with the official in continuing training and social activities offered by the Region
- Seek help from others to insure that the needs of the official are met
- Report to the Regional referee staff any special needs or problems that should be addressed for the official
- Actively recruit other volunteers to become officials and Mentor/Advisors
- Support the official at any game you observe. This includes positive support to coaches, spectators and players.
- Provide positive feed back to the official after all observations including:
 - At least two or three positive comments
 - Not more than two areas for improvement by the official
 - Be specific in all comments made to the official using game experience or specific examples of performance.
 - Give small, attainable, immediately improvable goals for the official

Check List for Mentor/Advisors Observing an Official

- Use positive language such as:
 - “Your might consider trying...”
 - “Other referees often find that...”
 - “From my experience...”
 - “It may be easier for you if you...”
 - Avoid phrases such as:
 - “Your should...”
 - “I always...”
 - “Never...”
 - “Always...”
 - End discussions of observations with a positive comment
- Encourage the official at all times.

Check List for Mentor/Advisors Observing an Official

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

1. Pre Game: Did the official-

- a. Arrive early for the game?
- b. Dress properly and have all necessary equipment?
- c. Check the field?

Check List for Mentor/Advisors Observing an Official

- d. Check the players?
 - e. Perform administrative duties such as game cards?
 - f. Check the ball?
 - g. Give pre-game talk to players?
 - h. Count the number of players?
 - i. Conduct a coin toss and kick off?
 - j. Begin the game on time?
- 2. Communications with Linespersons or Assistant Referees: Did the official –**
- a. Give clear instructions?
 - b. Use the person well?
 - c. Treat the person with respect?
- 3. Positioning: Did the official –**
- a. Keep play between the referee and Linesperson/Assistant Referee?
 - b. Remain close to play (15-20 yards)?
 - c. Maintain proper position on restarts?
- 4. Signals: Did the official –**
- a. Whistle with authority?
 - b. Use proper hand signals?
 - c. Communicate with players and coaches by effectively using voice and positive body language?
- 5. Law Knowledge and Mechanics: Did the official demonstrate –**
- a. Correct applications of Laws?
 - b. Consistent application of the Laws?
 - c. Recognition of proper restarts?
 - d. Proper administration of restarts?
 - e. Good foul recognition?
- 6. Interaction with players and coaches: Did the official display –**
- a. An attitude of helpfulness and tolerance?
 - b. Respect?
 - c. Friendliness without familiarity?
 - d. Credibility in responses and decisiveness?
 - e. Positive action even in discipline

7. Post Game: Did the official –

- a. End the game on time?
- b. Participate in the post-game handshake?
- c. Thank the Linesperson/Assistant Referee?
- d. Complete administrative duties such as game cards?

A HELPING HAND FOR NEW AND DEVELOPING