



APPEALS & DISCIPLINARY MANUAL



Dear North Texas Soccer Member:

This manual has been compiled for your reference. It is intended to be utilized as a guide, and assist you in your Appeal and Disciplinary activities. This is a guide only and should not be perceived as a mandate. Hopefully you will find some valuable tips inside, and answers to questions you may have.

Because this is a reference manual, it is considered uncontrolled and shall not be included in updates made to controlled policies and procedures referenced within. It is the responsibility of each holder of the manual to ensure applicable reference documents are properly maintained.

Above all, it is the responsibility of each individual to **BE FAIR!** Remember, we are all neighbors and friends. Should you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, please feel free to contact the North Texas Soccer office.

Best regards,

Carlos Quinones, Vice President
Chairman, Appeals and Disciplinary Committee

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Fair Hearings

While conducting Appeals and Disciplinary activities, the autonomy of the Member association, along with the concerns of the State association is underscored in this excerpt:

“Member association... may set the rules of hearings... so long as fair hearings are held...” (Rule 3.11.9 #2 “Rules and Regulations, North Texas State Soccer Association Constitution, Bylaws and Rules)

The operative phrase is “fair hearings”. A task seemingly simple enough, but a concept requiring continuous involvement and participation.

In this manual you will find helpful guides conducting a fair hearing. We will lay out each step along the process of the hearing and include notes for what can and cannot be done to ensure all parties receive a fair hearing.

The applicable definition of hearing as prescribed by Webster: *A listening to facts and evidence, for the sake of adjudication; a session of a court for considering proofs and determining issues.* While certainly we are not in a legal court, we would do well to enter a hearing with the same approach. A hearing should be a place where facts come out and determinations are made to bring closure to acts or behaviors.

Discipline

According to the American Heritage Dictionary discipline is defined as: *To punish in order to gain control or enforce obedience.* Using this definition in our approach of conducting fair hearings will serve to remind us that the punishment must fit the offense.

If we approach hearings as an attempt to resolve conflicts we will be better fit to be fair to all parties involved. This includes the punishment phase as well as the hearing itself. The State committee exists to assist where needed and serve as a higher authority in the appeals and disciplinary process when needed. Neither discipline nor appeals should be taken lightly. Judicious use of the system as well as prudent exercise of authority will guarantee what is important comes first:

The Game of Soccer

Member Association Responsibilities

All Member Associations are charged with the responsibility of ensuring NTSSA Rule 3.11 – Discipline is distributed to every youth and senior player, coach, team manager, league administrator, and referee. It is intended that each player will share the contents of this rule with his or her parents and spectators.

All Member Associations are directed to form their own Appeals and Disciplinary Committees and to hold hearings **with the parties having the right to be present** on every player/coach/assistant coach/spectators and/or parents as required for card or point accumulation or serious misconduct. All Member Associations are required to furnish NTSSA with a maintained and up-to-date list of their A&D Chairman and Committee Members and to include their addresses and phone numbers.

All adult Member Associations are directed to operate and keep records on a twelve (12) point “caution system” for all players, coaches, and assistant coaches. Report of these disciplinary suspensions must be sent immediately to the NTSSA A&D Committee. Any misconduct by a coach justifying a report by a referee or any other person shall be directed to the NTSSA A&D Committee as well as to the Member Association with which the coach is affiliated. The Member Association shall promptly (within five days after receipt of the report) rule on the report and send its decision to the NTSSA A&D Committee. All game suspensions must be reported to the State. When a send off or game suspension under the caution point system is issued to a player, the Member Association or league to which the player is affiliated will forward to the NTSSA A&D Committee a copy of the referee’s misconduct report of the send off or a copy of the league’s disciplinary committee report on the suspension due to the excessive caution points, along with the action taken by the Member Association. Each additional caution and/or send off of said player during the remainder of the soccer year will also be forwarded to the NTSSA A&D Committee for review and possible further action. The same process is in effect for youth Associations with the difference being the accumulation of cards rather than points.

The Member Association’s Appeals and Disciplinary Committees are directed to extend severe punishment to those players, coaches, assistant coaches who are guilty of extreme violent conduct while participating in a match and for violence toward any person or property after being ejected, while on the touch line or approaching or leaving the game site.

If the coach, assistant coach, or manager is unable to control his or her spectators, the Member Association is directed to take appropriate actions toward the identifiable, unruly spectator, or if unidentifiable; towards the team itself. The misconduct report shall be sent to the NTSSA A&D Committee for review and further action if it feels it is warranted. When the players, coaches, or spectators of a given adult team have accumulated a total of 50 misconduct points, the Member Association will notify the NTSSA A&D Committee, who will notify the coach and team when to appear before NTSSA A&D Committee for a hearing.

Any report of assault or abuse by any person towards a game official must be submitted immediately to NTSSA for review and handling.

Any report alleging misconduct by a referee must be submitted to NTSSA for review and handling.

When any Member Association or a member thereof, fails to send in reports as required by Rule 3.11, NTSSA will take any action it considers proper, including a fine not to exceed five hundred dollars (\$500). Repeated violation by the Member Association can result in said Association being declared not in good standing.

Receipt of Misconduct Report

Referees and game officials are instructed to turn in written misconduct reports within 48 hours of game time. Under certain circumstances this may not be possible, but the Member Association should always require this of their referees, assistant referees, and game day officials. In the event the referee's report comes in after the allotted time period, it should not be considered invalid, but rather given its full weight. Instances where the referee has failed to turn in a misconduct report in a timely manner may necessitate a reminder by the assignor, league official, or Member Association. Continued failure to report misconducts may be forwarded to the NTSSA A&D Committee for appropriate action.

The referee's misconduct report is required to implement league rules with regards to suspensions. A written record is required to enable the Member Association A&D Committee to issue additional punishment beyond that required by the rules. Member Association A&D Committees may issue more severe disciplinary action than required by NTSSA rules, but may not reduce disciplinary action below what is required by the rules (i.e. 12 caution points = 1 game suspension; 18 caution points = 2 game suspension).

Member Associations must conduct a hearing for any caution or send off issued to a coach.

No disciplinary action beyond what is required by the rules may be issued without the individual being given the opportunity to appear before the A&D Committee. A suspension must never be handed down before a hearing to an individual without the person having the right to a hearing with the exception where there is concern for the safety of the participants at stake, or the issue is in regards to referee assault.

A red card (send off) **may not** be overturned or thrown out. In certain circumstances it may be reduced to a yellow card but solely under the following conditions:

The offense is one clearly not an ejectionable one under the Laws of the Game; or

The referee has recanted his testimony or changed his report

Judgment calls, opinions, and outside testimony do not validate reducing a red card to a yellow card. In the event a red card has been reduced to a yellow card, notification must be sent to NTSSA A&D Committee along with written justification within five days.

Any report of assault or abuse by any person towards a game official must be submitted immediately to NTSSA for review and handling. These are heard strictly by the NTSSA Executive Committee.

Any written report alleging misconduct by a referee must be submitted to NTSSA for review and handling. All matters involving apparent misconduct by a referee or game official will be the responsibility of the NTSSA A&D Committee and must have a referee consultant (as a non-voting participant) on the panel.

No further disciplinary action beyond what is required by the rules shall be taken without a written report.

Member Associations have responsibility to maintain and update accurate records on all individual and team misconduct points or card accumulations (as appropriate). When the players, coaches, or spectators of a given team have accumulated the maximum allowable cards or points, the Member Association will notify the NTSSA A&D Committee, who will notify the coach and team when to appear before NTSSA A&D Committee for a hearing. When an individual player or coach has accumulated maximum allowable cards or points, he or she is immediately suspended pending a hearing with the NTSSA A&D Committee. It is the responsibility of the Member Association to notify the NTSSA A&D Committee. Please refer to the appropriate chapter **Keeping Totals** for specific documentation.

Receipt of Complaint

From time to time members of the local Member Association have complaints they believe merit a hearing. Parents, park and city officials, coaches, and others may provide reasons to set up a hearing. All complaints must be put in writing and contain the name of the complainant. Should the party alleging the complaint not wish to put it in writing, no further action of the Member Association A&D Committee is required. The Member Association A&D Chairman may be the sole party to determine the validity of a requested hearing. Some examples of reports possibly justifying a hearing would be:

Lack of 50% playing time by a recreational coach

Practice methods employed by a coach alleging possible misconduct

Behavior of a coach, parent, or spectator during a game

Questionable draft procedures or illegal recruiting

Naturally there are many other valid reasons to conduct a hearing. There are also reports given to the Member Association A&D Chairman which should not be valid reasons to conducting a hearing. Some examples are:

Ability or judgment of referee

Personality conflict between coaches

Reports without a specific or tangible occurrence of misconduct

Oral or anonymous reports

Once the Member Association A&D Chairman has received the letter of complaint, he or she should determine the validity of the request and may require contacting the complainant for clarification. Remember, the main goal in setting up a hearing is to present a fair and impartial forum where you may bring closure to an event or complaint. In an attempt to stay as unbiased as possible, only the Member Association A&D Chairman should have advanced notification of the subject matter to be heard. The correlation between an A&D hearing as a courtroom setting would be the A&D Chairman would preside as the hearing authority much like a judge. The Committee would be representative of the jury, the complainant would be the accuser, and the defendant would be the party for whom the hearing was requested. For this purpose, the A&D Chairman should validate the reason for the hearing without doing investigative work. It is not the responsibility of the A&D Chairman to prove or disprove the allegation, only to decide whether the complaint has enough merit to be heard.

In cases where the A&D Chairman believes there is not enough material to convene a hearing or the complainant believes it could be settled in a friendly manner, he or she may do so after consulting with the Member Association A&D Committee.

It is a requirement for the A&D Chairman to have enough knowledge of the situation at hand in order to select a fair and unbiased panel. The panel convened will be covered later in this manual, but the intent is for the A&D Chairman to proceed based on limited knowledge he or she is afforded at the time.

In matters where the A&D Chairman is unsure what the rights of the complainant or the accused are as to whether this should or should not justify a hearing, the NTSSA A&D Chairman may be consulted.

Keeping Point Totals

Adults Only: (For youth players, please see **Keeping Card Totals**)

All adult Member Associations are directed to operate and keep records on a twelve (12) point caution system for all players, coaches, and assistant coaches. The points assessed for yellow cards are calculated according to the seriousness ranging from one to four points minimum. These point values are listed in the NTSSA Administrative Rule Book 3.11.2 and 3.11.3. All red cards are assessed a minimum of twelve (12) points. For send offs from a game due to having received a continued misconduct after caution (2nd yellow) points will be awarded as two cautions.

Points are accumulated during the entire soccer year (September 1 through August 31). Records on each team, coach, and player should be kept as a running total for both seasons of the soccer year. (A suggested form for keeping such records is included.) All points are assessed against the team as well as against the individual receiving the card. If a player or coach accumulates a total of 24 points during a soccer year, they are to be immediately suspended pending a hearing with the NTSSA A&D Committee.

All cards (yellow or red) received by a coach require a Member Association A&D Committee hearing. A report of this hearing must be sent to NTSSA. The NTSSA A&D Committee may assess additional punishment if it deems necessary.

Team Totals:

When a team has accumulated 50 misconduct points (combination of red or yellow cards) the Member Association will immediately notify the NTSSA A&D Committee who will require the coach and at least 2/3 of the members of the team appear before the NTSSA A&D Committee for a hearing and investigation into continued misconduct. These guidelines are minimum. It is perfectly permissible for a Member Association to adopt rules requiring a team and/or coach to appear before the Member A&D Committee at any point they deem appropriate.

When a team reaches the above point total requiring a NTSSA A&D Committee hearing, the Member Association should forward a packet to NTSSA which includes:

An explanatory letter requesting the hearing

A copy of the Member Association's record keeping documents showing calculation of the points totals

A copy of all misconduct reports pertaining to the team, including any disciplinary action taken by the Member association

A copy of the team roster and all appropriate add/delete sheets

It is very important the NTSSA A&D Committee be furnished all pertinent information so a fair and equitable investigation and hearing can be held.

Individual Totals:

In addition to keeping a running points total for teams, it is strongly recommended the Member A&D Committee keep a cross reference for each player's and coach's point totals.

The Member A&D Chairman should receive a copy of all add/transfer/delete sheets from the Association registrar during the soccer year because penalty points are transferred with the player to the team he or she is transferring. Therefore, if a player transfers teams, the player's old team loses those accumulated points, but the new team has those penalty points added. However, if a player drops off a team and does not transfer to another team, the penalty points remain with the old team.

Caution Points (points assessed for yellow and/or red cards):

The following penalties are minimums and are enforceable during the entire soccer year for a player, coach, or assistant coach who receives:

Twelve (12) caution points = one (1) game suspension

Eighteen (18) caution points = two (2) game suspension

Twenty-four (24) caution points = suspension pending a hearing with the NTSSA A&D Committee

NOTE: The Member Association A&D Committee Chairman should carefully review each referee misconduct report to determine the number of points to be assessed for each cautionable infraction. There have been many occasions where a referee has marked the wrong box on the form regarding the offense and an incorrect point total is assessed against the player and team. The Chairman should review the referee's description of the incident to determine the "point value" of the card in accordance with NTSSA rules.

Send offs:

The following penalties are minimums and are enforceable during the entire soccer year for a player, coach, or assistant coach who receives:

First send off = one game suspension

Second send off = an additional two game suspension (if one or both send offs were after receipt of two yellow cards)

Third send off = suspension pending a hearing with the NTSSA A&D Committee (could be suspended upon second send off if both send offs were for receipt of red cards)

NOTE: In the event the Member A&D Committee determines a red card was issued for an infraction which is not an ejectionable offense in accordance with the FIFA Laws of the Game, the Member Association can reduce the red card to a yellow card and assess points for the yellow card. The Member A&D Committee may not, however, do away with the card altogether. A full report of this action including written justification must be sent to NTSSA within five days.

Reports on all players, coaches, and assistant coaches who reach any of the above totals must be sent to NTSSA along with a statement of any disciplinary action taken. Appeals of the above minimum punishments are not allowed and will not be heard.

Keeping Card Totals

Youth Only: (For adult players, please see **Keeping Point Totals**)

All youth Member Associations are directed to operate and keep records on a card counting caution system for all players, coaches, and assistant coaches. The total accumulation of cards is listed in the NTSSA Administrative Rule Book 3.11.2 and 3.11.3. All red and yellow cards are counted for individual players, coaches, and teams. For send offs from a game due to having received a continued misconduct after caution (2nd yellow) cards will be awarded as two cautions.

As cards are accumulated during the entire soccer year (September 1 through August 31), records on each team, coach, and player should be kept as a running total for both seasons of the soccer year. (A suggested form for keeping such records is included.) All cards are assessed against the team as well as against the individual receiving the card. If a player or coach accumulates a total of 7 cards (any combination of red or yellow cards), during a soccer year, they are to be immediately suspended pending a hearing with the NTSSA A&D Committee.

All cards (yellow or red) received by a coach require a Member Association A&D Committee hearing. A report of this hearing must be sent to NTSSA. The NTSSA A&D Committee may assess additional punishment if it deems necessary.

Team Totals:

When, during the current soccer year, the players/coaches/assistant coaches of a given team have accumulated a total of 7 send-offs in league play (*including* red cards issued as a result of an individual receiving 2 yellow cards in a single game) or any combination of cards totaling 25, the Member Association will immediately notify the NTSSA A&D Committee who will require the coach and at least 2/3 of the members of the team to appear before the NTSSA A&D Committee for a hearing and investigation into continued misconduct. The team will be fined \$100 payable to NTSSA within 30 days of receiving notice of the 7th send-off or any combination of cards totaling 25. These guidelines are minimum. It is perfectly permissible for a Member Association to adopt rules requiring a team and/or coach to appear before the Member A&D Committee at any point they deem appropriate.

When a team reaches the above point total requiring a NTSSA A&D Committee hearing, the Member Association should forward a packet to NTSSA, which includes:

An explanatory letter requesting the hearing

A copy of the Member Association's record keeping documents showing accumulation of the card totals

A copy of all misconduct reports pertaining to the team, including any disciplinary action taken by the Member association

A copy of the team roster and all appropriate add/delete sheets

It is very important the NTSSA A&D Committee be furnished with all pertinent information so a fair and equitable investigation and hearing can be held.

Individual Totals:

In addition to keeping a running points total for teams, it is strongly recommended the Member A&D Committee keep a cross reference for each player's and coach's card totals.

The Member A&D Chairman should receive a copy of all add/transfer/delete sheets from the Association registrar during the soccer year, because card totals are transferred with the player to the team he or she is transferring. Therefore, if a player transfers teams, the player's old team loses those accumulated cards, but the new team has those card totals added. However, if a player drops off a team and does not transfer to another team, the card totals remain with the old team.

Cautions: (cards given for yellow card offenses)

The following penalties are minimums and are enforceable during the entire soccer year for a player, coach, or assistant coach who receives:

Three yellow cards = one (1) game suspension

Five yellow cards = two (2) game suspension

Seven yellow cards = suspension pending a hearing with the NTSSA A&D Committee

NOTE: The Member Association A&D Committee Chairman should carefully review each referee misconduct report to keep an accurate record of each cautionable infraction. There have been many occasions where a referee has marked the wrong box on the form regarding the offense and the Chairman should review the referee's description of the incident to determine the card in accordance with NTSSA rules.

Send offs: (cards given for red card offenses)

The following penalties are minimums and are enforceable during the entire soccer year for a player, coach, or assistant coach who receives:

First send off = one game suspension

Second send off = an additional two game suspension (if one or both send offs were after receipt of two yellow cards)

Third send off = suspension pending a hearing with the NTSSA A&D Committee (Could be suspended upon second send off if both send offs were for receipt of red cards)

NOTE: In the event the Member A&D Committee determines a red card was issued for an infraction which is not an ejectionable offense in accordance with the FIFA Laws of the Game, the Member Association can reduce the red card to a yellow card and assess points for the yellow card. The Member A&D Committee may not, however, do away with the card altogether. A full report of this action including written justification must be sent to NTSSA within five days.

Reports on all players, coaches, and assistant coaches who reach any of the above totals must be sent to NTSSA along with a statement of any disciplinary action taken. Appeals of the above minimum punishments are not allowed and will not be heard.

Rights of the Parties

This chapter defines due process and is the largest single reason for appeals in both NTSSA and the USSF. Of all chapters in this book, this is probably the most important! Everyone involved in the discipline process should familiarize themselves with this section and ensure hearings are run accordingly. The eleven rights of the parties are listed and are guaranteed by both the U.S. Soccer By-Law 701 and NTSSA By-Law 2.1.3.5 Good Standing of Member Association:

Member Associations will provide equitable and prompt hearing and appeal procedures to guarantee the rights of individuals to participate and compete and ensure due process to the accused. In all hearings conducted, the parties shall be accorded the following:

1. Notice of all specific charges or alleged violations in writing and possible consequences if the charges are to be found true;
2. Reasonable time between receipt of the notice of charges and the hearing within which to prepare a defense;
3. The right to have the hearing conducted at a time and place so as to make it practicable for the person charged to attend;
4. A hearing before a disinterested and impartial body of fact finders;
5. The right to be assisted in the preparation of one's case at the hearing;
6. The right to call witnesses and present oral and written evidence and argument;
7. The right to confront witnesses, including the right to be provided the identity of witnesses in advance of the hearing if requested;
8. The right to have a record made of the hearing if requested in advance, with all costs to be paid by the requestor;
9. A written decision, with the reasons for the decision, based solely on the evidence of record issued in a timely fashion and including appeal rights and procedures;
10. Notice of any substantive and material action of the hearing panel in the course of the proceedings;
11. Equality concerning communications and no ex parte communication is permitted between a party and any person involved in making a decision or procedural determination except to provide explanations involving procedures to be followed.

Notification of Hearing

Following an issuance of red or yellow cards, accumulation of points, or a request for hearing, the next step in the process is for the Member Association A&D Chairman to verify whether there is sufficient reason to merit a hearing. Assuming the request has been validated, the Chairman would then set up a hearing. He or she needs to define a date, time, and place for the hearing to be held and notify the parties involved. Notification of the hearing may be done by telephone (with a written follow-up), by mail, by e-mail, by Mailgram, or by telegram. Whatever method is used, follow-up notification should always be in writing with proof of delivery. This provides you with proof that notification was provided, and when it was received. Notification should be provided to all involved parties at the same time. Unless competition dictates otherwise, a minimum of seven (7) days and a maximum of 14 days should be allowed for the accused to adequately prepare his defense. In the event it becomes necessary to hold a hearing on very short notice, a follow-up notification should be sent via certified mail noting the time and place of the hearing and also noting the current letter is a reconfirmation of a previous oral notification.

The notification should contain:

A statement of the reason for the hearing with all specific charges or alleged violations in writing and possible consequences if the charges are to be found true

A copy of the primary complaint against the accused

The time, date, and place of the hearing

An outline of the procedures to be followed such as who will be allowed to testify and any time limits to be imposed

A date by which any written testimony is to be received

The notification for these hearings is **extremely important** so as to provide appropriate due process. The Member Association A&D Chairman will need to review the complaint in its entirety, and the letter written citing all possible charges which may be included, and what the range of punishment could be if those charges are found to be true. Keep in mind due process is not a luxury, it is a requirement.

Hearings should not be held at the same time as board meetings. The two types of meetings are not complementary, and might involve unnecessary participation of the higher authority should either party wish to appeal the decision made at the hearing. The next level of appeal is typically the Member Association Board of Directors but must be consistent with the Bylaws of the Member Association. The next level of appeal should remain uninvolved to ensure impartiality.

Selecting A Committee

It is the responsibility of the Member Association to maintain and provide to NTSSA the name of the A&D Chairman and also to provide a list of the Committee Members with their addresses and phone numbers.

There are some common sense rules to remember when selecting your panel from your Association's A&D Committee Members. The overall purpose is to provide a fair and impartial hearing. No one can be impartial when his or her child or team is involved. No one can reach a fair decision when he or she is affected by the outcome. Friendships should be set aside, and every effort must be made to be as unbiased as possible.

It is highly recommended to have Committee Members who have varying degrees of experience and cover different ages, teams, or leagues inside your organization. This provides the Chairman the opportunity to select panel members who are as far removed from the case as possible. In no case, however, should minors be a part of an A&D Committee.

The hearing Committee **MUST** be impartial. It is recommended three to five persons constitute the Committee (inclusive of the Chairman). **NO** member should be involved in the circumstances being heard; nor in any way, closely associated with any of the involved parties. If necessary, alternate members should be available should such an involvement or affiliation exist. It is suggested you have an odd number of voting panel members, so as to reduce the possibilities of having a tie during the deliberations.

In the event the Chairman feels strongly he or she cannot provide a fair and impartial panel, they may contact the NTSSA A&D Chairman for guidance and available options.

Hearing Preparation

Once notification has been sent out to all parties detailing the specific charges to be addressed at the hearing, the A&D Chairman must prepare for the hearing itself. Copies should be made of all information relative to the charges or testimony and presented to each participant and panel member so they may look at their own copy. Included in the packet of information should be an outline of the procedures to be followed during the hearing. Details should be included as to the Participants, date, time, and place along with Committee Members names. (A sample form is included)

The room for the hearing should afford reasonable comfort. There should be adequate seating for all participants, equipped with the basic amenities for the benefit of those in attendance. The room should be laid out so each participant is equidistant from the hearing Committee. The layout of the room should be one conveying fairness and impartiality.

The time chosen for a hearing should be one which provides the minimum inconvenience for the parties concerned. In the event either party is unable to attend the hearing with sufficient reason, the A&D Chairman should re-schedule if possible. The hearing should not be un-duly delayed by constant re-schedules. If the participant is continually unable to attend, he or she should submit their testimony in writing prior to the hearing so the hearing may go forward.

The Member Association Bylaws and the NTSSA Administrative Rule Book should be on hand for reference should any Committee Member deem reference to be in order.

Hearing Procedures

The following are the procedures to be followed during the hearing:

1. The A&D Chairman shall call the meeting to order
2. Introductions should be made detailing what everyone's role will be
3. Chairman will call for the name and position relative for all participants
4. Chairman will note that proper decorum will be maintained throughout the proceedings
5. The charges will be stated and procedures for the hearing itemized inclusive of time restrictions
6. The party alleging the complaint will be allowed time for testimony from him/her self and witnesses
7. Opposing party (or alleged violator) will be allowed equal time and opportunity
8. Committee members will be allowed time for questions and cross-examination
9. Both parties allowed equal time for closing statements and arguments
10. Chairman will detail the time and place for the Committee to reach its final decision
11. Chairman notifies all participants of the manner in which they will be notified of the decision
12. Chairman adjourns the hearing

Guidelines and Recommendations

During the hearing, proper notes should be taken by the Chairman or designate for reference should the Committee request during deliberation. It is also advisable for the Chairman to have these notes as a reference should either party appeal the decision of this Committee. These notes need not be all encompassing, and are most often personal notes of the hearing but may be a record of validating or implicating statements made during the course of the hearing.

Testimony of witnesses of both parties should be allowed, but caution used as to how many may speak. The time given should be sufficient to hear testimony from these witnesses, but equal time and opportunity must be given to the opposing party. Keep in mind you do not wish to have repetitive statements, but if the accused feels as though the testimony is vital he or she may wish for it to be incorporated. Another way to approach this would be to request all testimony in writing prior to the hearing if there may be multiple witnesses. A benefit to stipulating a time constraint in advance will help you to limit repetitive testimony.

The accused party should be present at all times during testimony. The rights of the accused stipulate they have the right to face their accusers and confront their testimony. It should be apparent at all times throughout the procedure that everything is totally beyond reproach. It may be a good idea to ask both parties if they have questions of the other. Proper decorum needs to be maintained throughout the hearing, and if this is strictly adhered to, in most cases the parties will be able to ask questions without risking disruption.

Hearsay and verbal testimony other than what has occurred during the hearing should not be included in the Committee's decision.

Make sure the hearing progresses along the lines of its intent. Keep in mind what the specific charges are for which the accused is present, and of what he or she has been notified. If additional items surface during the hearing which could be cause for other charges levied against the accused your options are:

1. Disregard the new items and stay the course for which they are present
2. Continue with the hearing, and schedule another hearing for the new charges (decisions made should only involve the charges for which they are present)
3. Suspend the hearing and re-send notification of a new hearing time and date with the additional charges
4. Allowing the accused the option of continuing with the new charges for which he or she may not be adequately prepared (not suggested without documenting their agreement).

The A&D Chairman must advise both parties of the next step of their appeal rights.

Determining the Result

Following the hearing and in accordance with the time, date, and place for the decision to be made as stipulated by the A&D Chairman, begin the deliberations. The Committee should be advised to consider the evidence brought before them and not to allow outside factors to impact their decision.

Not all hearings will result in the accused being found to have committed the offense, but whenever found so; a good rule of thumb to keep in mind is **“The punishment must fit the offense”**.

Far too often Committee Members fail to carry out responsibilities for various reasons. These reasons may range from the inability to issue harsh punishment to being overzealous in doing the same. From the “bleeding heart” to the “hanging judge”. Obviously, a comfortable middle ground for the conscientious Committee Member is desirable.

After hearing all the facts related to the offense and before entering the discipline phase of the hearing, each Committee Member should mentally “check off” the following questions before assessing punishment:

1. How serious is the offense for which punishment is prescribed?
2. Is the punishment assessed in the best interest of all involved? (Home association, NTSSA, and soccer in general)
3. How will other people be affected by the discipline?
4. How deeply, if at all, are personal feelings involved in the decision?
5. Does the punishment fit the offense?
6. Is it intended to “suspend from all soccer activities” or only certain soccer activities (such as coaching) or “place on probation”?

Basically, the key to remember is fairness to all involved. Remember, the intent is to “correct or train”. As stated earlier, the major concern here is the resolution of conflicts. Those involved in conflict resolution must realize the importance of what the job entails. It is not an activity to be taken lightly. Many individuals are affected by the decisions made.

The determination should be made and specifically stipulated as to the intent of the findings. If the violator is to be suspended, he or she needs to know from what (which activities). In other words, are they to be placed on suspension from coaching recreational, or from all soccer related activities? The time period involved also needs to be stipulated. For those placed on probation, the violator needs to know what the terms of that probation are. What constitutes non-compliance with the probation?

Specific rules should be referenced in the decision whether from the Member Association Bylaws or the NTSSA Administrative Rule Book.

Notification of Findings

Written notification of all Committee decisions **must** be provided to all parties involved. This written notification should include:

1. Decision of Committee
2. Rules applied to reach the decision
3. Appeal rights including fee, time frame for filing, and method of appeal
4. Copy sent to NTSSA A&D Chairman

It is highly suggested written notification be sent to the involved parties via certified mail with return receipt requested so you may know when the recipient was officially notified of the hearing results.

All appeals to the NTSSA A&D Committee must be submitted in writing and received within five days of receipt of the appealed decision. The appropriate fee in the form of cash, cashier's check, certified check, or money order shall accompany all appeals. Personal checks are not accepted.

The NTSSA A&D Committee, at its discretion, may, when requested in writing to do so, waive the time limit for filing appeals, but in no case shall an extension of more than ten (10) days be granted.

Once the written appeal is received the NTSSA A&D Committee Chairman will then notify the involved Member Association and all members of the Committee. In cases of controversy as to timely receipt of appeals, the postmark date will govern.

Upon receipt of an appeal, properly submitted, the Chairman of the NTSSA A&D Committee shall set a time and place for a hearing and will advise all appropriate parties. Such hearing settings are solely the responsibility of the Committee, but all such hearings must be scheduled within ten (10) days of receipt of the appeal and the appealing party is bound to present all information and evidence relative to the appealing parties case at the hearing.

The Right to Appeal

Appeals are a very important part of the A&D process. On average, they will comprise one-fourth to one-third of the activities of an A&D Committee. Appeals fall into two categories: appeals of a decision of a league officer, typically an age coordinator; or to decisions of a committee, typically the A&D Committee. Protests are related to the actual competition on the field and involve misapplication of the rules or laws. Although they involve vastly different types of matters, the method of handling them is very similar.

The same steps apply here as were comprised in the request for hearing:

1. The request must be made in writing
2. Determination of the merit or validity of request
3. Chairman sets the time, date, and place for the appeal hearing
4. The Appeal hearing follows the same guidelines and procedures as the initial hearing

The difference between the initial request for a hearing and a request for an appeal hearing is typically the grounds for the appeal. Typical grounds are:

1. Failure to comply with appropriate bylaws, rule, or regulations
2. Bylaw, rule, or regulation fails to conform with the rules of US Youth, USSF, or FIFA or the rule has been applied arbitrarily under the facts of the appeal
3. Disagreement as to the facts as determined by the entity whose decision is being appealed
4. Failure of the entity whose decision is being appealed to provide the party with due process

Some of the most common reasons appeal hearings are granted and could otherwise be avoided are involving lack of due process. The two most common of those are not having a hearing before a fair and impartial committee; and lack of proper notification of their appeal rights. By following this guide, hopefully we can avoid unnecessary appeals.

Grounds for game protest are; the Laws of the Game have been misapplied and the referee admits it and the misapplication affects the outcome of the game. (These are subject to the Member Association bylaws.)

Sometimes the request for appeal is really only a grievance and is more appropriately handled through correspondence.

Should the protest not be accepted, or a hearing not be held for some reason, the appeal or protest fee should be returned.

Role of NTSSA A&D Committee

The role of the NTSSA A&D Chairman and the NTSSA A&D Committee is to serve as a higher authority in the appeals and disciplinary process when needed. The State Committee does not hover like a giant vulture ready to swoop down on the Association whenever a mistake is made. The NTSSA A&D Committee is comprised of Member Association Members and we exist to offer a hand when requested as needed. Through cooperation we will continue to grow and improve.

Feel free to contact the NTSSA office whenever you have questions or need input. We are there to help.

Carlos Quinones, Vice President
Chairman, Appeals and Disciplinary Committee
972-323-1323 ext 203
cquinones@ntxsoccer.org

(Sample Hearing Notification Letter)

Date

<<Name>>
<<Team Name>>
<<Address>>
<<City, TX << Zip>>

ORIGINAL SENT
CERTIFIED MAIL
Certified Receipt Number

Dear. <<Name>>:

The <<association>> Appeals & Disciplinary Committee has received a report of alleged violations that potentially violate some or all of the following: <<applicable association and/or NTSSA rules>> **NTSSA Code of Ethics for Coaches 11.1** in the following area: **Article 1. Responsibility to Players** and the seven paragraphs immediately following; **Article IV Responsibility to Officials** and the four paragraphs immediately following. These rules are available for download from the NTSSA web site at www.ntxsoccer.org or a copy may be provided to you if requested. <<ASSOCIATION WEB SITE ADDRESS, IF APPLICABLE>>

These are the specific charges rendered against you by, <<complainant's name(s)>> and will be argued as applicable in relation to the incident which occurred on <<game date>> while the <<team name>> was playing at <<location>>

All decisions will be made based on the specific charges listed above and any corresponding rule, bylaw, and policy that is found to have been violated.

Should you be found to have violated any of the aforementioned rules, your punishment could consist of as little as probation, or as much as suspension from all soccer activities for several years. If suspended from all soccer activities you would not be allowed to coach, play, referee or participate in any manner until the term of your suspension has been served or modified through the proper appeals process.

The <<association name>> Appeals & Disciplinary hearing has been **scheduled for** <<day and date>> **at** <<time>> at the <<location of hearing>>, <<address of location>>.

It is important that you be in attendance at this hearing to defend your position in this serious matter. It is imperative that you bring any witnesses with their written statements and/or other documentation pertinent to these charges to this hearing. In the event either party should appeal this committee's decision, consideration of appeal will be limited to the specific facts and issues contained in the documents presented at the initial hearing and only the appellant, appellee and two representatives for each side may give testimony at the appeal hearing. A copy of this letter is also being forwarded to you by regular mail. If you have any questions, please call the NTSSA office.

A copy of this letter is also being forwarded to you by regular mail. If you have any questions, please call the <<association >> office.

Regards,

<<Name of Chairman, Association Name>>
Chairman, <<Association>> A& D Committee

Cc: <<team coach>>
<<team manager>>
Enc: Letters of Complaint/Emails/Misconduct Repots

(Send copies of all documentation to be used in hearing to all parties involved—Be certain to delete all personal information such as address, phone number, email address, date of birth)

(Sample Decision Letter)

Date

<<Name>>
<<Team Name>>
<<Address>>
<<City, TX <Zip>>

ORIGINAL SENT-CERTIFIED MAIL
Certified mail receipt #

Dear << name>>:

The <<association name>> Appeals & Disciplinary Committee met on <<date of hearing>> to conduct a hearing regarding a report of allegations including <<rules: association and/or NTSSA rules which apply & must be the same rule(s) included in the hearing notification letter >> occurred on <<date>>at <<location of game.>>

After consideration of the testimony given and evidence presented, it is the decision of this committee, << name>>, that you are found to be in violation of << rule(s) found violated>> in the following manner:

<< rule & details if how decision was reached>> **EXAMPLE:** The committee took into account all testimony, reports, emails, and correspondence entered into evidence. It is the opinion of this committee, based on the testimony and evidence presented, that the coach's conduct was called into question when he had a confrontation with this player and may have been physical in nature. <<Coaches name>> should have conducted himself more appropriately. The committee finds there was not enough evidence to suggest acts of coach misconduct. This committee however feels that though the decision was not in violation, <<Coaches name>> hopefully will learn from this experience and in the future not be compelled to touch an opposing player.

It is the decision of this committee, that you be placed on suspension for << length of suspension>> ending on <<date>>. You are suspended from (list the all activities individual cannot participate until suspension has been satisfied) (EXAMPLE: You are suspended from all << association>> soccer related activities including playing indoor or outdoor; coaching or assisting; and administrating in any capacity.) –OR–You are placed on probation << date>> and if during the probation period, you commit any further acts of misconduct, you will be required to attend another hearing which may result in placing you on suspension for the remainder of the probationary period.)

This decision may be appealed to the <<association>> Executive Committee. In the event that either party should appeal this decision, consideration of appeals will be limited to the specific facts and issues contained in the documents presented at the <<association name>> Appeals & Disciplinary Committee hearing and only the appellant, appellee and two representatives for each side may give testimony at the appeal hearing. This appeal must be in writing, within five (5) days from receipt of this letter. The appeal must be accompanied by a <<\$ amount>> appeal fee, payable to NTSSA, in the form of cash, cashier's check, or money order. A copy of this letter is also being forwarded to you by regular mail. If you need additional information regarding the appeal process, please contact the NTSSA office.

Regards,

<<Name of Chairman, Association Name>>
Chairman, <<association name>> A&D Committee

Cc: <<All involved parties names/position>>
Carlos Quinones, NTSSA Appeals & Disciplinary Chairman
Enc: Appeal Form

(Sample Appeal Hearing Notification)

Date

<<Name>>
<<Address>>
<<City, TX << Zip Code>>

ORIGINAL SENT-CERTIFIED MAIL
Certified Receipt Number

Dear << Name>>:

The <<association name>> Soccer Association Executive Committee has received your request to appeal the decision of the <<association name>> Appeals & Disciplinary Committee regarding the sanctions rendered against you.

The <<association name>> Executive Committee hearing has been **scheduled for** <<day, date>> **at** <<time>> at the <<location of hearing including address>> Texas.

It is imperative that you bring any witnesses with their written statement and/or other documentation pertinent to these charges to this hearing. In the event either party should appeal this committee's decision, consideration of appeal will be limited to the specific facts and issues contained in the documents presented at the initial hearing and only the appellant, appellee and two representatives for each side may give testimony at the appeal hearing.

A copy of this letter is also being forwarded to you by regular mail. If you have any questions, please call the NTSSA office.

Regards,

<<A&D Chairperson's Name, Title>>
Chairman, <<local association>> A&D Committee

Cc: <<all parties and association affected>>
Carlos Quinones, NTSSA Appeals & Disciplinary Chairman

(Sample Member Association Card Accumulation /Point Assessment Letter)

Date

<<Team Name, Age Group>>

<<Player's Name>>

<<Address>>

<<City, TX <<Zip Code>>

ORIGINAL SENT
CERTIFIED MAIL
CERTIFIED RECEIPT NUMBER

Re: A&D Hearing – Player:<< Player's Name>>

Dear <<Player's Name>>:

The <<Association Name>> Appeals and Disciplinary Committee met on <<date>> to review the matter of red cards(s) issued on <<game date>>.

<<Player's Name>>, we the committee issued a decision/penalty, <<reason for, location, and date.>> If you have any questions, please contact the <<association name>> office.

Regards,

<< Name & title>>

Chairperson, Appeals and Disciplinary Committee

cc: <<name of NTSSA A & D Chairman>> NTSSA A & D Chairman

<<Team Coach>>

<<Team manger>>

(Sample Local Association Suspension Letter)

Date

<<Team Name, Age Group>>

<<Player's Name>>

<<Address>>

<<City, TX <<Zip Code>>

ORIGINAL SENT
CERTIFIED MAIL
CERTIFIED RECEIPT NUMBER

Re: A & D Hearing – Player: <<Player's Name>>

Dear <<Player's Name>>:

According to North Texas Soccer rule 3.11.2-3, you are hereby suspended effective immediately because of <<reason of the offense>>.

You will be notified of a hearing by the North Texas Soccer Appeals & Disciplinary Committee. Should you have any questions, please contact Ms. Chris Kotschi at the NTSSA office at 972-323-1323 ext. 108.

Regards,

<< Name, Title>>

Chairperson, Appeals and Disciplinary Committee

cc: <<Name of NTSSA A & D Chairman>> NTSSA A & D Chairman

<<Team Coach >>

<<Team Manager>>

(Sample Point Accumulation Letter)

Date

<<Team Name>>
<<Coach's Name>>
<<Address>>
<<City, TX <<Zip Code>>

ORIGINAL SENT
CERTIFIED MAIL
Certified Receipt Number

Dear <<Coach's Name>>:

The North Texas State Soccer Association Appeals & Disciplinary Committee met on <<day, date>> to conduct a hearing regarding the <<team name, age>> soccer team's accumulation of more than 50 caution/send off points for the current soccer year.

After consideration of the testimony given and evidence presented, the <<association name>> Appeals and Disciplinary Committee rendered the following decision:

The <<Team Name>> soccer team is on probation until <<date>>. If the team accumulates twelve (12) points for dissent in the fall season, they must appear before the NTSSA Appeals & Disciplinary Committee for a hearing. The following sanctions are to be enforced for the team:

1st yellow card received for dissent
2nd yellow card received for dissent
3rd yellow card received for dissent

One (1) game suspension
Two (2) game suspension
Player is suspended pending a hearing before the NTSSA A&D Committee

This decision may be appealed to the North Texas State Soccer Executive Committee. In the event that either party should appeal this decision, consideration of appeals will be limited to the specific facts and issues contained in the documents presented at the NTSSA Appeals & Disciplinary Committee hearing and only the appellant, appellee and two representatives for each side may give testimony at the appeal hearing. This appeal must be in writing, within five (5) days from receipt of this letter. The appeal must be accompanied by a \$100.00 appeal fee, payable to North Texas State Soccer Association, in the form of cash, cashier's check, or money order.

A copy of this letter is also being forwarded to you by regular mail. If you have any questions, please call the NTSSA office.

Regards,

A&D Chairperson's Name, Title
Chairman, NTSSA A&D Committee

Cc: <<Team Coach>>
<<Team Manager>>

(Sample Hearing Cover Page)

<< Association Name >>

Disciplinary Hearing

I. Player/Team/Coach: _____

II. Date: _____ **Time:** _____

III. Place: _____

IV. Participants:	Name:	Affiliation:
Chair	_____	_____
Committee Member	_____	_____
Committee Member	_____	_____
Committee Member	_____	_____
Team	_____	_____
Players	_____	_____
Coach	_____	_____

V. Procedure

- A. Chairman will call hearing to order
 - 1. Chairman will determine by statement:
 - a. The Team/ Player/ Coach/ Others to be heard
 - b. Noting the date, time, and place of the hearing
 - c. Introduces him/herself and the Committee members
 - 2. Chairman will call for the name and position relative to the hearing for:
 - a. Team
 - b. Player
 - c. Coach
 - d. Other
 - 3. Chairman will note to the participants that decorum will be maintained. Only one properly designated speaker will be allowed to speak when called for by the chairman and the procedure.
- B. Chairman will call for argument by the team/ player/ coach/ other. (Limited to _____ minutes presentation).
- C. Chairman will allow cross-examination by the Committee of the team/ player/ coach/ other. (Limited to _____ minutes).
- D. Chairman will allow team/ player/ coach/ other final argument. (Limited to 5 minutes).

- E. Chairman will allow Committee members final questions. (Limited to 5 minutes).
- F. Chairman will set a place, time, and date for Committee to deliberate and reach a final decision on the hearing.
- G. Chairman will notify the team/ player/ coach/ other the manner in which they will be notified of the decision of the Committee inclusive of appeal rights.
- H. Chairman adjourns the hearing.

VI. Committee's Actions:

VII. Committee's Decision:

(Sample Appeal Form)

Notice of Appeal

Check only one: NTSSA Appeals Committee NTSSA Executive Committee

A. Individual / Organization Filing Appeal: (“Appellant”)

Name: _____
Address: _____ City: _____ Zip _____
Telephone: h _____ w _____ fax _____
Email: _____

B. Opposing Party: (“Appellee”)

Name: _____
Address: _____ City: _____ Zip _____
Telephone: h _____ w _____ fax _____
Email: _____

C. Committee Whose Decision is Being Appealed: (Last Heard By)

Name: _____
Chairman: _____
Decision Date: _____

Appellant: Please be sure to attach a copy of the decision to this notice of appeal

D. Date Decision was Received by Appellant: _____

E. Briefly List the Reasons You are Appealing this Decision:

F. I hereby certify that I have sent a copy of this notice to the persons or organizations named in paragraphs B and C. I further certify that I have included the appropriate appeal fee of \$100.00 as provided in the decision letter (in the form of cashier’s check, certified check, or money order; payable to NTSSA) within the time frame allowable in the decision letter and conforming to the NTSSA guidelines.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

NTSSA Rule 3.11 Discipline

3.11 DISCIPLINE

All Member Associations are directed to distribute this rule to every youth and amateur player, every coach, team manager, league administrator and referee. It is intended that the player and/or coach will make known the contents of this rule to his or her parents and spectators.

3.11.1 Authority

1. All members and participants in youth and adult soccer within the jurisdiction of the North Texas State Soccer Association have requested to participate in our programs. Therefore, these participants have agreed to abide by the Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, Rules and Regulations of **NTSSA**, their local playing association, as well as those of the United States Soccer Federation and its National Associations of which North Texas State Soccer Association is a member. The **NTSSA** Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws provide that it has jurisdiction over all Member Playing Associations, players, coaches, team managers, administrators, team representatives and referees who choose to affiliate. Any member or participant in youth and adult soccer within the jurisdiction of **NTSSA** found in violation of the Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, Rules and Regulations of **NTSSA**, their local member association, as well as those of the United States Soccer Federation and its National Associations of which North Texas State Soccer Association is a member, may be subject to publication in the monthly newsletter or **NTSSA** President's Newsletter of this association of their name, the type of violation, and the disciplinary action taken. Publication will be limited to individuals receiving disciplinary actions of three months or greater.
2. All Member Associations and /or Playing Leagues are directed to form their own Appeals and Disciplinary Committees and to hold hearings--**WITH THE PARTIES HAVING THE RIGHT TO BE PRESENT**--on every player/coach/assistant coach/spectators and/or parents as required for serious misconduct. All Member Associations are required to furnish the State Office with a maintained up-to-date list of their A&D Chairman and Committee members and to include their addresses and phone numbers.
3. Should a recreational Playing League cover multiple Associations, the members of the Appeals and Discipline Committee for this league should be comprised of representatives from each available association represented. The **NTSSA** A&D Committee shall serve as the first level of appeal involving complaints from participants of differing Associations. If a Playing League is hosted by a primary Association, the Appeals and Discipline Committee may be comprised of members of that Association.

As guidance, if the issue at hand was as a result of play, the Playing League will handle the disciplinary matter. All other matters shall be directed to coach/individual/teams home Association.

3.11.2 Misconduct of Youth Players/Coaches/Assistant Coaches

1. All Member Associations, Playing Leagues and Tournament Officials are directed to operate and keep records on a "CUMULATIVE CARD SYSTEM" for all players/coaches/assistant coaches. Appeals of cards are not allowed except when the referee admits he made an error in the issuance of the card. Cards issued in league play are cumulative during the entire soccer year. When a player transfers to another team his or her accumulated league play cards count against the cumulative card totals for both his or her old and new teams. Player suspensions mentioned in this section, including automatic suspensions "from all **NTSSA**-sanctioned activities," include all games (including indoor), organized scrimmages, friendly games, and the like, but do not include team practices.
2. A "CUMULATIVE CARD SYSTEM" in league play will be operated as follows:
 - a. **Yellow Cards** One game automatic suspension for the game following an individual's third league play yellow card. Two game automatic suspension for the game following such individual's fifth league play yellow card. One game automatic suspension for the game following such individual's sixth league play yellow card.

NOTE: A player/coach/assistant coach receiving a second yellow card in a single game is suspended for the balance of that game, and those two yellow cards are then added to such individual's previous total of league play yellow cards to determine whether additional game suspensions, if any, are required. Red cards issued solely as a result of a second yellow in a single game will not be added to such individual's league play red card total.

- b. **Red Cards** One game automatic suspension for the game following an individual's first league play red card. Automatic suspension, pending a hearing, from all NTSSA-sanctioned activities following such individual's second league play red card. Red cards issued *solely* as a result of a second yellow card in a single game will not be added to such individual's league play red card total.

NOTE: *In cases where, during a single game, an individual receives a yellow card followed by a "straight red card" (as opposed to a red card issued solely as a result of a second yellow) both cards will be added to such individual's respective total of league play red and yellow cards and punished accordingly. If a Member Association's and/or Playing League's A & D Committee determines that a red card was issued for an infraction that was not an "expulsion" offense in accordance with the FIFA Laws of the Game, such A & D Committee may reduce the red card to a yellow card and assess sanctions accordingly. The Member Association or Playing League may not, however, do away with the card altogether. A full report of this action must be sent to NTSSA.*

- c. **Seventh Card** Any individual obtaining a seventh card in league play shall be immediately suspended pending a hearing with NTSSA A&D Committee (meaning any combination of yellow and red cards totaling seven).

3. A "**CUMULATIVE CARD SYSTEM**" for each tournament will be operated as follows:

- a. **Yellow Cards** One game automatic suspension for the game following an individual's third league play yellow card. Two game automatic suspension for the game following such individual's fifth league play yellow card. One game automatic suspension for the game following such individual's sixth league play yellow card.

NOTE: *A player/coach/assistant coach receiving a second yellow card in a single game is suspended for the balance of that game, and those two yellow cards are then added to such individual's previous total of league play yellow cards to determine whether additional game suspensions, if any, are required. Red cards issued solely as a result of a second yellow in a single game will not be added to such individual's league play red card total.*

- b. **Red Cards** One game automatic suspension for the game following an individual's first league play red card. Automatic suspension, pending a hearing, from all NTSSA-sanctioned activities following such individual's second league play red card. Red cards issued solely as a result of a second yellow card in a single game will not be added to such individual's league play red card total.

NOTE: *In cases where, during a single game, an individual receives a yellow card followed by a "straight red card" (as opposed to a red card issued solely as a result of a second yellow) both cards will be added to such individual's respective total of league play red and yellow cards and punished accordingly. If a Member Association's and/or Playing League's A & D Committee determines that a red card was issued for an infraction that was not an "expulsion" offense in accordance with the FIFA Laws of the Game, such A & D Committee may reduce the red card to a yellow card and assess sanctions accordingly. The Member Association or Playing League may not, however, do away with the card altogether. A full report of this action must be sent to NTSSA.*

- c. **Seventh Card** Any individual obtaining a seventh card in league play shall be immediately suspended pending a hearing with NTSSA A&D Committee (meaning any combination of yellow and red cards totaling seven)

d. **Exceptions**

For misconduct cards issued during State Cup, Regionals, or National competitions (US Youth Soccer), the misconduct will be handled within that competition.

4. The "**CUMULATIVE CARD SYSTEM**" prescribed by these rules defines the minimum disciplinary punishment to be taken by all Member Associations, Playing Leagues and Tournament Officials. Nothing herein prevents Member Associations, Playing Leagues or Tournament Officials from enacting more severe sanctions. Each case should be judged on its own set of circumstances and degree of misconduct or violence, the latter of which must be dealt with swiftly and severely.
5. Any misconduct by a Coach justifying a report by a referee or any other person shall be directed to the State Appeals and Disciplinary Committee as well as to the Member Association and/or Playing League with which the coach is affiliated. The Member Association and/or Playing League shall promptly (within seven (7) days after receipt of the report) rule on the report and send its decision to the State A&D Committee. The State A&D Committee will determine the extent of the punishment, if any, in addition to that taken by the Member Association
6. The State A&D Committee will make its decision based entirely upon the written reports before it, including that of the affected coach, should he or she submit a report. Hearings will not be held by the Committee unless it chooses to call one of its own volition.

7. A coach whose conduct is less than exemplary to his or her players, parents and spectators will be firmly dealt with by the Member Association or Playing League involved and the State A & D Committee.
8. Game suspensions for Yellow and Red cards (as set forth above) are to be served by the player/coach/assistant coach at the next scheduled game (including league, playoff, championship, cup, and local or state tournament games) that such individual's team is involved in. A suspension imposed by these rules shall be recognized by all affiliated organizations after proper notification. The lack of a hearing or referee report on the offense shall not affect such individual's suspension.
9. All game suspensions must be reported immediately to the State A&D Committee. The Member Association, Playing League or Tournament Officials making the report will forward a copy of any referee's Misconduct Report(s) which underlie the suspension. The State A&D Committee will determine the extent of punishment, if any, in addition to that prescribed by the Member Association, Playing League or Tournament Officials, taking into consideration the severity of the misconduct.
10. The State A&D Committee will issue its decision based entirely upon the officials' reports and any other written reports before it, including that of the affected individual, should he or she submit a report. A hearing will not be held by the State A&D Committee unless it, of its own volition, chooses to call one because of the nature of the case.
11. Extreme Violent Conduct
 - a. Member Associations, Playing Leagues and/or Tournament Officials are directed to extend severe punishment to those players, coaches, and assistant coaches guilty of extreme violent conduct while participating in a match and for violence toward any person or property after being ejected, while on the touchline, or approaching or leaving the game site.

3.11.3 Misconduct of Amateur Players/Coaches/Assistant Coaches

1. All Member Associations are directed to operate and keep records on a twelve (12) point "**CUMULATIVE TWELVE (12) POINT SYSTEM**" for all player/coaches/assistant coaches. Offenses resulting in the cautioning of a player/coach/assistant coach by the referee (yellow card) are allowed points according to their seriousness ranging from one (1) to four (4) points. Appeals of cautions (yellow cards) are not allowed except when the referee admits he made an error in the issuance of the caution. Points are cumulative during each soccer season. When a given player/coach/assistant coach accumulates twelve (12) points sanctions are applied as described in Rule 3.11.3 (3). A player transferring to another team will carry over his or her accumulated points to his or her new team. Reports of these disciplinary actions are to be sent to the State Appeals and Disciplinary Committee at North Texas State Soccer Association Office.
2. The points of the "**CUMULATIVE TWELVE (12) POINT SYSTEM**" will be allocated as follows:
 - a. **12 points** Sent off from game due to Serious Foul Play, Violent Conduct, Spitting at Opponent/Person, Denies Goal Scoring Opportunity or Offensive, Insulting or Abusive Language

For ejection from a game due to misconduct after receiving a caution, except for twelve (12) point offenses as stated above, points will be based on two (2) cautions.

NOTE: *If the Member Association A&D Committee determines that a red card was issued for an infraction that was not an "expulsion" offense in accordance with the FIFA Laws of the Game, the Member Association may reduce the red card to a yellow card and assess points for the yellow card. The Member Association may not, however, do away with the card altogether. A full report of this action must be sent to NTSSA.*

The **CAUTION** points are to be allocated as follows:

- a. **FOUR POINTS**
 - 1) Deliberate tripping, tripping and other "tactical", deliberate, physical fouls.
 - 2) Foul tackle from behind.
 - 3) Interference by other players when the referee is speaking to a player after an offense has been committed.
 - 4) Continued dissent of a decision in an attempt to unsettle the referee.
- b. **THREE POINTS**
 - 1) Deliberate, tactical obstruction.
 - 2) Persistent infringement of the Laws of the Game.

- 3) Shirt pulling and other similar tactics.
- 4) Deliberate encroachment at free-kicks.

c. TWO POINTS

- 1) Deliberate handball designed to break up attack.
- 2) Time wasting, including that by the goalkeeper.
- 3) Moving arms up and down to obstruct an opponent.
- 4) Gesticulating in front of a player taking a free-kick or thrown-in.
- 5) Fails to respect required distance or unsporting behavior at a penalty kick.
- 6) Other unsporting behavior.

d. ONE POINT

- 1) Entering or leaving the field without the referee's permission.
- 2) Player leaning on a teammate to gain an extra height.
- 3) Pulling oneself up by the goal post or crossbar to gain an advantage.

3. ACCUMULATED CAUTION POINTS SANCTIONS

- a. Twelve (12) Accumulated Caution Points - One Game Suspension
- b. Six (6) More Points - Two Game Suspension
- c. Six (6) More Points - Suspension pending A&D - Committee Inquiry

4. SEND-OFF

- a. One Send-off - One Game Suspension
- b. Second Send-off - Two Game Suspension
- c. Third Send-off - Suspension pending A&D - Committee Inquiry

5. FINES

- a. Teams Exceeding The Accumulated Point Limit - \$50
- b. Teams Exceeding The Accumulated Point Limit Second Time in Soccer Year - \$100

NOTE: All fines must be paid within thirty (30) days of infraction to the North Texas State Soccer Association.

NOTE: This is the **minimum** disciplinary punishment taken by all Member Associations on ejections. Nothing herein prevents a Member Association from enacting more severe sanctions. Each case should be judged on its own set of circumstances and degree of misconduct or violence, the latter of which must be dealt with swiftly and severely.

6. Any misconduct by a Coach justifying a report by a referee or any other person shall be directed to the State Appeals and Disciplinary Committee as well as the Member Association with which the coach is affiliated. The Member Association shall promptly (within five (5) days after receipt of the report) rule on the report and send its decision to the State A&D Committee. The Committee will determine the extent of the punishment, if any, in addition to that taken by the Member Association.
7. The State A&D Committee will make its decision based entirely upon the written reports before it, including that of the affected coach, should he or she submit a report. Hearings will not be held by the Committee unless it, of its own volition, chooses to call one.
8. A coach whose conduct is not considered to be exemplary to his or her players, parents and spectators will be firmly dealt with by the A&D Committee of both the Member Association involved and the NTSSA.
9. Game suspensions for caution points and/or expulsions:

The suspension is to be served by the player/coach/assistant coach/manager/or team representative at the next scheduled game (regular league games, makeup league game, playoff, championship, cup games, local or state tournament game) that the player's team is involved in. A suspension imposed by NTSSA shall be recognized

by all affiliated organizations after proper notification. The lack of a hearing or referee report on the suspension/expulsion of the offender shall not nullify his suspension (to sit out) the next game.

10. All game suspensions must be reported to the State. When an ejection or game suspension under the caution point system is issued to a player, the Member Association or league to which the player is affiliated will forward a copy of the referee's Misconduct Report of the ejection or a copy of the league's Disciplinary Committee report on suspension due to the excessive Caution Points directly to the **NTSSA State Appeals and Disciplinary Committee**, together with the action taken by the Member Association. The State A&D Committee will determine the extent of punishment, if any, in addition to that prescribed by the Member Association, taking into consideration the severity of the misconduct. Each additional caution and/or ejection of said player during the remainder of the soccer year will also be forwarded to the Committee for review and possible further action.
11. The **NTSSA Appeals and Disciplinary Committee** will issue its decision based entirely upon the officials' reports and any other written reports before it, including that of the affected player, should he or she submit a report. A hearing will not be held by the Committee unless it, of its own volition, chooses to call one because of the nature of the case.
12. Extreme Violent Conduct:
The State Member Association's Appeals and Disciplinary Committees are directed to extend severe punishment to those players, coaches, and assistant coaches guilty of extreme violent conduct while participating in a match and for violence toward any person or property after being ejected, while on the touchline, or approaching or leaving the game site.

3.11.4 Misconduct of Spectators

1. Each team (youth and adult) in **NTSSA** is responsible for the conduct of its spectators. The referee shall have the authority to caution and/or send off the coach or acting coach from the field for the misconduct of the spectators associated with the team. Therefore, the coach/assistant coach/team manager is expected to control his spectators, especially on non-enclosed fields. If he is unable to do so, Member Associations, Playing Leagues and/or Tournament Officials are directed to take appropriate actions toward the identifiable, unruly spectator, or if unidentifiable, towards the team itself. Member Associations, Playing Leagues and Tournament Officials shall report spectator misconduct to the State A&D Committee for review and further action if warranted.
2. Suggested action for misconduct of spectators is:
 - a. Suspend the spectator from attending future matches.
 - b. Report spectator to the local Park & Recreation Department.
 - c. Require team to forfeit any games at which spectator is present on the touchline (cannot keep them off public street or out of parking lot.)
 - d. Require offending team to pay for presence of police at the game.
 - e. Revoke and/or refuse registration to the offending team.
 - f. Cause the spectator to be placed under a municipal "peace bond".

3.11.5 Misconduct and Punishment of Teams

1. Youth Association Teams

- a. When, during the current soccer year, the players/coaches/assistant coaches of a given team have accumulated a total of seven (7) send-offs in league play (*including* red cards issued as a result of an individual receiving two yellow cards in a single game) or any combination of cards totaling twenty-five (25) the Member Association and/or Playing League shall notify the team and the State A & D Committee. The team will be fined \$100 payable to **NTSSA** within thirty (30) days of receiving notice of the seventh send-off or any combination of cards totaling twenty-five (25). The coach and the players of said team may also be required notified to appear before the committee to explain the team's continued misconduct. Failure of the Member Association or Playing League to notify the State A&D Committee within fourteen (14) calendar days of a team's seventh send-off or any combination of cards totaling twenty-five (25) will result in a fine of \$100 per week for each week such notice is late. Red cards or send-offs assessed against

that team's spectators or against that team during tournament play will be reviewed to ascertain team misconduct tendencies.

- b. When the players/coaches/assistant coaches of a given team have accumulated a total of four (4) send-offs in a tournament (*including* red cards issued as a result of an individual receiving two yellow cards in a single game) Tournament Officials shall notify the team and the State A & D Committee. The team will be fined \$100 payable to NTSSA within thirty (30) days of receiving notice of the fourth send-off. The coach and the players of said team may also be required to appear before the committee to explain the team's continued misconduct. Failure of Tournament Officials to notify the State A&D Committee within fourteen (14) calendar days of a team's fourth will result in a fine of \$100 per week for each week such notice is late. Red Cards or send-offs assessed against that team's spectators or against that team during league play will be reviewed to ascertain team misconduct tendencies.

2. Adult Association Teams

- a. When the players/coaches/team representatives/spectators of a given team have accumulated a combined point limit for that team, based on five (5) points per scheduled league game, per season, as described in the **"CUMULATIVE TWELVE (12) POINT SYSTEM"** in Rule 3.11.3, the Amateur Member Association will notify the North Texas State Soccer Association Appeals & Disciplinary Committee. (Example: For a ten (10) game season, the combined point limit will be fifty (50) points.) The team will be required to appear before the NTSSA Appeals & Disciplinary Committee to explain the team's continued misconduct.
- b. The North Texas State Soccer Association will not hesitate to deny teams, coaches, managers, team representatives or players within its jurisdiction, the privilege of further participation in all or selected soccer activities within its jurisdiction for repeated offenses and for serious offenses considered to bring the game into disrepute. A probation period and/or other sanctions may be rendered to teams, coaches, managers, team representatives or players for violation of this rule.

3. All Association Teams

- a. The NTSSA holds the team and coach jointly responsible for the conduct of his or her players, parents, and spectators.
- b. A coach whose conduct is not considered to be exemplary to his or her players, parents and spectators will be firmly dealt with by the A&D Committee of both the Member Association involved and the NTSSA.

3.11.6 Games Directly Sponsored by NTSSA

Misconduct involving any participant (player, coach, parent/spectator) of State-sponsored games, as opposed to Member Association league play, will be reported directly to the Tournament Officials of the State Cup and Games Committee and will be forwarded to the State Appeals and Disciplinary Committee immediately after the occurrence for appropriate disciplinary action.

3.11.7 Misconduct Toward Referee

1. North Texas State Soccer Association has exclusive jurisdiction over assault or abuse of officials, both referee and assistant referee, in any competition by the State or Member Associations. This jurisdiction includes:
 - a. All USSF registered referees (adult and youth).
 - b. Any non-licensed person serving in any emergency capacity as a game official.
 - c. Any coach, parent or junior assistant referee, serving as a game official.
2. If there is an assault/abuse of any game official by any person, including players, coaches, managers or spectators; a report of the alleged assault/abuse will be submitted immediately to the NTSSA A&D Committee Chairman, the appropriate State Commissioner (Adult Men's, Adult Women's, Youth or Indoor), ~~the~~ the Olympic Development Program Chairman and the Chairman of the State Referee Committee. This subcommittee, chaired by the NTSSA A&D Committee Chairman, shall review and investigate the report(s) as submitted, and upon proper investigation shall determine the seriousness of the alleged assault/abuse report(s) in a timely manner.
3. Should the majority of the members of the subcommittee listed above in Paragraph 3.11.7.2 determine there is sufficient evidence to consider the incident referee assault or referee abuse, a formal hearing will be held within thirty (30) days of verification of the incident. An intentional act upon or towards a game official as defined in

Paragraph 3.11.7.1 above shall be deemed “referee assault” or “referee abuse” in the NTSSA under the terms, references, and conditions of USSF Policy 531-9.

If the subcommittee determines there is sufficient evidence to consider the incident referee assault, the committee, at its discretion, may suspend the individual involved until the hearing on the alleged assault.

Should the subcommittee, as noted in Paragraph 3.11.7-2 above, determine the action committed to be Misconduct Towards a Referee rather than Referee Assault or Referee Abuse, it shall impose an administrative punishment of a three (3) game suspension. A formal hearing will not be held unless it is requested by the suspended party. Should a formal hearing be requested and held, it shall be an NTSSA Executive Committee hearing as described in Paragraph 3.11.7.4.

4. State Executive Committee Hearing

Assault hearings shall be conducted by the State Executive Committee in the following manner:

- a. The alleged offending party should be present at such hearings; however, if he is not present, the State Executive Committee will act upon the matter with the information before it.
- b. The game official(s) are required to be present at the hearings. However, if they are not present, the State Executive Committee will act upon the matter with the information before it.
- c. It is intended that the officials’ reports be clear and that no explanations are required at the hearing. Only the State Executive Committee will question the official(s). If the offending party or any other party or any other person(s) need explanation, such queries will be addressed through the Chair.

5. Terms and References

- a. Referee assault is an intentional act of physical violence at or upon a referee (an act intended to bring about a result that will invade the interests of another in a way that is socially unacceptable. Unintended consequences of the act are irrelevant.). Assault includes but is not limited to the following acts committed upon a referee: hitting, kicking, punching, choking, spitting on, grabbing or bodily running into a referee; head butting; the act of kicking or throwing any object at a referee that could inflict injury; damaging the referee’s uniform or personal property, i.e. car, equipment, etc.
- b. Referee abuse is a verbal statement or physical act not resulting in bodily contact which implies or threatens physical harm to a referee or the referee’s property or equipment. Abuse includes, but is not limited to the following acts committed upon a referee: using foul or abusive language toward a referee; spewing any beverage on a referee’s personal property; spitting at (but not on) the referee; or verbally threatening a referee. Verbal threats are remarks that carry the implied or direct threat of physical harm. Such remarks as, “I’ll get you after the game” or “You won’t get out of here in one piece”, shall be deemed referee abuse.
- c. Misconduct towards a referee means persistent statements or physical acts directed toward a referee during or after a game, that do not constitute referee assault or abuse as provided under Federation Policy 531-9, but that mistreat the referee or are inappropriate or unacceptable statements or acts, and may include the following:
 - i. excessive incidences of foul or abusive language at the referee;
 - ii. statements that diminish the authority of the referee;
 - iii. statements or acts that serve to intimidate without threatening physical harm to the referee.
 - iv. Examples of misconduct that arise under the description above include the following:
 1. confronting the referee without physically threatening the referee;
 2. spitting on the ground or in the air but not at the referee;
 3. throwing or kicking an item as a sign of disrespect or dissent but without the chance of hitting the referee;
 4. re-entering the field.

These are only some of the examples of possible misconduct and are not all-inclusive, but apply only in the following situations:

- i. if a proceeding is brought against an individual for referee assault or abuse, or both, under Federation Policy 531-9; or

- ii. if the individual is ejected from a game and, after the ejection, engages in conduct that is misconduct under this policy.

6. Penalties and Suspensions

a. Referee Assault

The person committing the referee assault is automatically suspended as follows:

1. for a minor or slight touching of the referee or the referee's uniform or personal property, at least three (3) months from the time of the assault;
2. except as provided in clause one (1) or two (2), for any other assault, at least six (6) months from the time of the assault;
3. for an assault committed by an adult and the referee is seventeen (17) years of age or younger, at least three (3) years; or
4. for an assault when serious injuries are inflicted, at least five (5) years.

b. Referee Abuse

The person committing the referee abuse shall be suspended for a minimum of three (3) games.

c. Misconduct Towards a Referee

The person committing the misconduct towards a referee shall be suspended for a minimum of three (3) games.

- d. Any suspension assessed against an individual under this section does not affect any other suspension and/or fine that may be imposed on the individual by an association or league for a violation that is not referee assault or abuse.

7. Any party found to have committed the act of referee assault, referee abuse, or misconduct towards a referee shall have the right to appeal, within ten (10) days of receipt of the decision, to the **USSF Appeals Board**, following **USSF Bylaw 705**.

8. Assault On Officials By An Adult Player

Should a player (male or female) be found guilty of referee assault, the State Executive Committee may, at its discretion, impose upon the team of which the player is a member, the requirement of posting a \$1,000 cash bond to be held in the treasury of **NTSSA** without interest for a period of one (1) year after posting. This cash bond will be required to be posted before the team may engage in any further games within the boundaries of **NTSSA**. Should any other member of said team be found guilty of a referee assault during that one (1) year period, the team shall forfeit the bond, and another similar bond will be required before the team can continue in competition. If no member of the team commits a referee assault during that one (1) year period, the bond will be returned to the person or persons designated to receive such payment. No member of such team which has failed to post such bond will be permitted to register with another team until that member has posted a \$50 bond with **NTSSA**; nor shall any new member be allowed to register on that team until such member has posted a \$50 bond, such bonds to be held under the same terms and conditions as the team bonds.

3.11.8 Misconduct of Referees

When any referee is alleged to have committed misconduct toward any participant, spectator of a match or toward another referee, the State A&D Committee will hear such allegations and assess punishment concerning the Referee in regard to his activities.

3.11.9 Appellate Procedures

1. All those under the jurisdiction of **NTSSA** are reminded that they must exhaust all appellate procedures of the Member Association on all matters not covered by these Rules before the State Association can acquire jurisdiction to hear the appeal under its rules.
2. Member Associations are reminded that they may set the rules of hearings and may restrict the number of witnesses, and the time allotted to each, so long as fair hearings are held. It may also determine whether it wants to allow closed or open hearings.

3. Member Associations and their committees are urged to refuse to hear any appeal when any person is threatening a lawsuit. You should pass the appeal to the next higher forum which would hear it. This is a sport to which we are giving freely of our time, and none of us needs to take the trouble and expense to appear in court.
4. To allow the use of tape recorders, court reporters and the presence of attorneys at hearings is optional with the Member Associations

NTSSA will refuse to allow such recording devices, and the presence of attorneys at hearings is optional with the Member Associations.
5. Should any aggrieved party resort to the courts without exhausting all avenues of appeal including through to the USSF, the State Association may, at its discretion, suspend such person or refuse to accept further registration in soccer activities within its jurisdiction.
6. An appeal of decisions pursuant to Rule 3.11 made by Member Associations, after Member Association's appeal procedures have been exhausted, will be made to the State A&D Committee in accordance with procedures established by this section.
7. An appeal of decisions made by the State A&D Committee will be made to the State Executive Committee in accordance with procedures established in this section.
8. An appeal of decisions presented to the NTSSA will be:
 - a. In writing.
 - b. Made to the General Manager of NTSSA within five (5) days of receipt of written notice of the lower level authority's decision(s).
 - c. Fees, as specified, will be in cash or certified check and will accompany the written notice of appeal.
9. Filing fees for appeals will, under no circumstances, be waived. Fees will be refunded to the appealing party only if the previous decision is overruled. Fees will be:
 - a. All Player Appeals- \$50 - (\$25 paid by the player and \$25 paid by the coach)
 - b. All Coach Appeals & Referee Appeals - \$100
 - c. All Team Appeals - \$100

3.11.10 Records

The Appeals and Disciplinary Committee will maintain a permanent file of all reports sent to it and the action taken. When any one person or a team shows a trend towards numerous misconduct reports, the Committee will contact such person or team for the purpose of warning or may call such person or team before it.

3.11.11 Association to Comply

When any Member Association, or a member thereof, fails to send in reports as required by this Rule, NTSSA will take any action it considers proper, including fine not to exceed Five Hundred Dollars (\$500). Repeated violation by Member Association can result in such association being declared not in good standing.