

**Florida Club Leagues**  
**Code of Ethics and Guidelines**



A US Club Soccer Sanctioned League

FCL's purpose is to set the highest standards for soccer clubs to develop youth players to their fullest potential – physically, emotionally, and ethically. As such, participants must conduct themselves to the highest standard. At all times, adult participants are expected to be role models for the youth involved in this league - exhibiting good sporting behavior in both victory and defeat.

Entering any Florida Club Leagues ("FCL") or other FCL competition is considered to be an automatic acceptance of the FCL's rules, policies, and procedures including this Ethics Code and Guidelines.

All teams within a FCL Member Club will be held to the standards set forth in this Code of Ethics and Guidelines, as well as the rules and guidelines established by US Soccer, US Club, and National Premier League, when applicable (collectively, "FCL Rules"), regardless of which specific competition they play in. If these Code of Ethics and Guidelines are in direct conflict with the rules of either US Soccer, US Club Soccer, or NPL, the rules of US Soccer, US Club Soccer and NPL, shall govern, and FCL may be restricted from implementing certain rules related to teams not participating in FCL competitions.

All participants in FCL events must be members of US Club Soccer and therefore must adhere faithfully to the letter and spirit of its bylaws, rules, and policies, as well as the FCL Handbook, FCL Rules, the guidelines for new club admittance, and the following FCL Ethics Policy:

## **Section 1 - Definitions**

As used herein, the following terms shall have the following definitions:

**Adult Member:** Any coach, director of coach, trainer, manager, official or other individual 18 years of age or older affiliated with a Club and having access to a Player, the Player's parents or the Player's contact information that is not available publicly.

**Certified Referee Assignor:** Any individual certified by the United States Soccer Federation to serve as a referee assignor.

**Club:** Any club or academy admitted to FCL and that is a member of US Club Soccer.

**Coach:** Any coach, assistant coach, or trainer employed, contracted by or volunteering for a Club.

**Director of Coaching:** Any individual employed, contracted by or volunteering for a Club as a Director of Coaching, Executive Director, Technical Director, General Manager or as an assistant to any of the above-listed roles and all adults filling similar roles regardless of title.

**Field:** Any field used by a club to conduct Tryouts, Training Sessions or Games (other than tournament games).

**Game:** Any FCL sanctioned game, including all-league, play date, State Cup games and tournament games sanctioned only by US Club Soccer.

**Manager:** Any individual employed, contracted or volunteering to serve as a team manager, team parent or similar role regardless of title.

**Official:** Any individual serving as a Coach, Director of Coaching, Referee, board member, director or similar role for a Club.

**Player:** Any player holding a valid player pass from US Club Soccer and currently playing for an FCL or US Club Soccer Club.

**Recruiting:** Contact or communication with a Player who is registered to another FCL Club and asking or allowing them to attend a tryout outside of the FCL Tryout Window, attend a club Training Session, play or guest play for any other Team, without first receiving written permission from the Director of Coaching of the Player's Club.

**Referee:** Any referee licensed for the then-current year by the United States Soccer Federation.

**Trainer:** Any adult employed, contracted by or volunteering for a Club as a trainer regardless of title. An individual will also be deemed a Trainer if they are privately training Players who play for another Club.

**Training Session:** Any Club sanctioned, or private, training session or practice. Training Sessions are limited to Players carded to play for the Club holding the Training Session.

**Tryouts:** Any Club advertised try-out session, including regularly scheduled tryouts and supplemental tryouts. Tryouts are open to all Players and all youth who are not Players but are interested in becoming Players.

## **Section 2 - Basic Rules**

1. No Adult Member will have in his/ her possession or consume alcoholic beverages or illegal drugs while attending an event sanctioned or sponsored by FCL.
2. All adults, including Adult Members, attending an event sponsored or sanctioned by FCL will exhibit and demonstrate good sportsmanship at all times, including, refraining from coaching from the sidelines, harassing Referees, Coaches, Players or Club affiliated spectators, or behaving in a manner disruptive to the enjoyment of any other spectator.
3. Adult Members shall not attempt to entice a team or player to leave a Club to come to another Club.

## **Section 3 – Clubs**

1. No Adult Member working for a Club shall recruit players currently registered with that Club away to another Club, and then go work for the other Club within 12 months. Any adult member doing so may incur sanctions from the league.
2. All Clubs will have a US Soccer Certified Referee Assignor to assign all games.
3. Clubs will release Players who request their release from the Club in accordance with US Club Soccer policy.
4. Clubs will not accept any Player from any other Club if that Player has “outstanding fees” with another Club until such fees are paid. “Outstanding Fee” shall include fees for services already rendered and shall not include by way of illustration, fees for services not rendered, reimbursement for scholarships given or penalties.
5. Clubs are responsible for the conduct of their parents and any spectators on the sidelines of any FCL games.

## **Section 4 - Code of Ethics**

This code of ethics has been developed to clarify and distinguish approved and accepted professional, ethical and moral behavior from behavior detrimental to the development of soccer within the FCL and US Club Soccer. This Code of Ethics is applicable to all Adult Members, Players, and their parents though in many cases the Coach will be primarily responsible for ensuring compliance. Punishments for violations of this code of ethics may be imposed upon a Club if committed by an Adult Member or another individual present at a Game or Training Session.

### **Responsibility to Players**

1. The Adult Member shall never place the value of winning over the safety, welfare and development of players.
2. Adult Members shall instruct players to play within the laws and spirit of the game at all times.
3. Adult Members shall not seek unfair advantage by teaching or encouraging deliberate unsportsmanlike behavior to players.

4. Adult Members should not tolerate inappropriate or unsportsmanlike behavior at Games or Training Sessions from players or adults regardless of the situation.
5. The demands Adult Members place on Players' time should never be so extensive as to interfere with academic goals or progress.
6. Adult Members must never encourage Players or other adults to violate FCL recruitment, eligibility or other rules and policies.
7. Adult Members should direct Players to seek proper medical attention for injuries and to follow the physician's instructions regarding treatment and recovery.
8. Adult Members should take an active role in educating their Players about sports nutrition, fitness and about prevention of tobacco and alcohol use.
9. Adult Members should educate themselves on a constant basis to provide their Players with the highest-level of instruction possible.
10. Adult Members should always place the Player's development first and team success second.

#### **Responsibility to FCL and Member Clubs**

1. All Adult Members will adhere at all times to all FCL Rules. In particular, Adult Members must follow all rules and policies regarding eligibility, team formation and Recruiting as those rules are mandatory and should never be violated. It is the responsibility of each Adult Member to know and understand these rules.
2. Any issues between Clubs should be addressed between the Clubs first. If the issue cannot be resolved between the Clubs, the involved Clubs should refer the issue to its FCL Director, or the FCL PDE Committee. Adult Members should be thoroughly acquainted with and demonstrate a working knowledge of the Laws of the Game and are responsible to assure their Players understand the intent as well as the application of the Laws of the Game.
3. Adult Members must adhere to the letter and spirit of the Laws of the Game.
4. Adult Members are responsible for their players' actions on the field and must not permit them to perform with the intent of causing injury to opposing players.
5. Adult Members must constantly strive to teach good sporting behavior.

#### **Responsibility to Referees**

1. Referees must have the support of Adult Members, Players, and spectators. Adult Members must always refrain from criticizing Referees in the presence of Players or spectators.
2. Professional respect, before, during and after the Game, should be mutual. There should be no demeaning or threatening dialogue or gestures between Referee, Adult Members or Players.
3. Adult Members must not incite Players or spectators or attempt to disrupt the flow of any Game.
4. Comments regarding a Referee should be made in writing to the appropriate organization assigning the Referee. For purposes of making such comments, the comments should be directed in writing to the Regional Referee Coordinator and the Certified Referee Assigner for the Club hosting the Game leading to the comments.

5. Referee game decisions (including yellow and red cards) may not be appealed to either the PDE Committee nor the Appeals Committee.

### **Responsibility Regarding Scouting and Recruiting**

1. All FCL rules pertaining to recruiting shall be strictly observed by all Adult Members as well as all official and unofficial team representatives. Unofficial team representatives include all parents of Players.
2. It is inappropriate to Recruit Player(s) unless the Director of Coaching of the Player's current Club provides written permission in advance prior to initial approach of Player. If a player or parent of a player initiates contact with any Adult Member of another club expressing intent to move to that Adult Member's club, it is the responsibility of that Adult Member or the Adult Member's Director of Coaching to inform the Director of Coaching of the Player's current club.
3. Inviting a player to guest play without first submitting the proper US Club Guest Player Form shall be considered Recruiting.
4. It is unethical for a player to be recruited from any outside program including but not limited to PDP, ID2, ODP, High School or the US Soccer Training Center, either by a coach working for such a program or any other Adult Member, Player, parent or Official present at said event.
5. When discussing the advantages of his/her Club with a Player or a Player's parent, the Adult Member has an obligation to be forthright and refrain from making derogatory remarks regarding other Adult Members, Teams and Clubs.
6. It is unethical for an Adult Member to make a statement to a prospective Player which cannot be fulfilled; a promise of compensation or inducement for play; or to deliver the same.
7. It is unethical for Adult Members to attend Tryouts of other Clubs to promote or recruit unless invited by the Club conducting the Tryout in writing or to have Players attend Tryouts at other Clubs to Recruit Players from the Club conducting the Tryout.
8. It is unethical for a Team or groups of Players to be Recruited from one Club to another Club by an Adult Member working in the Team's present Club, an Adult Member from another Club, or any Adult Member or representative from inside or outside the Club.

### **Responsibility of Public Relations**

Adult Members have the responsibility to assist their players in conducting themselves properly when in public and representing their team, their Club, US Club Soccer and/ or the FCL.

### **Other Responsibilities**

1. An Adult Member's behavior must be such as to bring credit to himself, or herself his or her Club and the sport of soccer.
2. While the concept of rivalry is wholly embraced, it cannot take precedence over exemplary professional conduct.

3. The attitude and conduct of the Adult Member towards Officials, Players, spectators, and other Adult Members should be controlled and undemonstrative.
4. It is unacceptable for an Adult Member to have any verbal altercation with an opposing Adult Member or Player before, during or after the Game.
5. Adult Members must use their influence on his/her teams' spectators to prevent intimidating and/or unacceptable behavior towards Officials including Referees, Player(s) and opposing team spectators.

### **Section 5 - Referee Code of Ethics**

1. Referees will maintain the utmost respect for the game of soccer, conduct themselves honorably, and maintain the dignity of their position at all times.
2. Referees will always honor an assignment or any other contractual obligation.
3. Referees should educate themselves on a constant basis to know the Laws of the Game, their proper interpretation, and their application.
4. Referees will be loyal to their fellow Referees and never knowingly promote criticism of them.
5. Referees will maintain good physical condition to be able to discharge their on-field responsibilities.
6. Referees will control the Players and Coaches effectively by being courteous and considerate without sacrificing fairness.
7. Referees will not make statements about any games except to clarify an interpretation of the Laws of the Game.
8. Referees will communicate with players, coaches, and spectators in a clear and professional manner.
9. Referees will arrive timely for all Games.
10. Referees will have appropriate attire, including badges at all Games.
11. Referees are not required to provide their name, badge number or other personal information to any Adult Member or Official other than as required on FCL game cards.

### **Section 6 - Procedure for Filing and Appealing a PDE Report**

Before an issue or complaint is forwarded to the FCL Protest, Discipline & Ethics Committee ("PDE Committee"), every attempt should be made to resolve the issue between the involved Clubs. If the issue cannot be resolved by the involved Clubs, the issue should be forwarded to the applicable Board Director. If the issue involves two clubs from different regions or the issue is time-sensitive an Incident Report may be forwarded to the PDE Committee at [admin@floridaclubleague.com](mailto:admin@floridaclubleague.com), only by the Director of Coaching or President of the Board of Directors of the protesting Club. Reports forwarded by other individuals will be dismissed.

All issues forwarded to the PDE Committee will be dealt with first by the PDE Committee, and if necessary, on appeal, by the FCL Board of Directors ("BOD"). Members alleged to be in violation of any provision herein will be required to stand before the PDE Committee. To hear an issue, the PDE Committee will be made up of at least three individuals who will act as the FCL Ethics Committee. Allegations of ethics violations will be made in accordance with United States Soccer Federation, US Club

Soccer and FCL bylaws and operating procedures, with a copy sent to the Chairman of the PDE Committee.

1. If a Club wishes to allege a violation of the FCL Rules, their Director of Coaching or Club President must file an Incident Report ("Report") through the FCL website.
2. Only Reports referring to specific violations of the FCL Rules will be heard by the PDE committee. Event-specific protests such as scheduling, or communication issues should be forwarded to the appropriate Event Coordinator. Club issues not covered in this Code of Ethics should be forwarded to the applicable FCL Director.
3. The Club making the report should electronically forward to the PDE Committee all evidence, including, but not limited to, contact information, emails, photographs, statements, and other written evidence they wish to have considered.
4. The Club and individual against whom a report has been filed will then have 72 hours to respond in writing to the allegations.
5. The reporting Club will have 48 hours to submit a rebuttal.
6. The failure of any Club or individual to respond at any point in this process will result in the PDE Committee ruling on the information provided to it.
7. The PDE Committee will then make a decision regarding the report, pending any additional investigation and inquiry, the PDE Committee determines necessary or desirable.
8. The party against whom the PDE Committee ruled will have 5 days after the PDE Committee publishes its ruling to appeal the ruling in writing to the FCL Board ("Appeal Committee"). Appeals must be accompanied by an appeal fee of \$250 and include the specific grounds for making the appeal with specific reference to the FCL Rule(s) that were inappropriately applied by the PDE Committee in making its decision. The fee for the appeal must be received by FCL within 3 calendar days of being filed and shall be sent to FCL at 6526 Old Brick Road Suite 120-280, Windermere, FL 34786.
9. The Appeal Committee will review the decision of the PDE Committee and determine if the PDE Committee misapplied the FCL Rules, Codes, Bylaws or other governing documents , and whether the decision of the PDE Committee is in accordance with the FCL Rules.
10. The Appeal Committee can decide to uphold the decision of the PDE Committee, overturn the decision of the PDE Committee or return the protest to the PDE Committee for a rehearing based upon the submission of new evidence that was not available to the PDE Committee when the PDE Committee made its decision. A failure by a party to timely submit information to the PDE Committee shall not be a reason to order a rehearing.
11. Decisions of the Appeal Committee are final.

## **Section 7 - Penalties for Violations**

Penalties for violations of the FCL Rules include, but not be limited to the following:

1. Probation for the violating Club, Player, Adult Member or violating individual.
2. Suspension of the violating Club, Player, Adult Member or violating individual.
3. Expulsion of the violating Club, Player, Adult Member or violating individual.

4. Required education of the violating Club, Player or Adult Member.
5. Other penalties deemed appropriate by the PDE Committee.
6. Repeated violations by an Adult Member, Club or Player or violating individual may result in stricter penalties up to and including expulsion from FCL.
7. Violating decisions of the PDE Committee will result in a stricter penalty.