

SSA: Grievance & Complaint Policy

The Sartell Soccer Association (SSA) includes children, parents, coaches, team staff, contractors, board members and other individuals who serve the club and/or participate in programs or travel soccer teams. The SSA community has historically achieved success in the resolution of disputes by the parents, players and coaches without the intervention of the SSA board members. The SSA Board encourages the resolution of issues (conflicts, grievances and discipline) to occur within each team. It is important to remember that the SSA is an organization staffed with volunteers from the community who have made an extraordinary commitment for the benefit of the children in our community. Without these volunteers the SSA would not be possible. Most of the volunteers, including board members, are parents/caretakers themselves. It is assumed that when an individual steps forward to volunteer their time, that they have the best interest of the club in mind. It is also assumed that because the SSA is so heavily driven by volunteers, that a certain level of "human error" will be inherently tolerated by all SSA members.

We expect that if individuals have questions or concerns with SSA processes that they first address them directly with the coach if possible, or if not possible, the Director of Coaching (DOC) and/or the Age-Level Contact (see SSA website <Travel <Age-Level Board Contacts). If the individual and DOC or Age-Level Contact cannot resolve the issue(s), the individual can reach out to the SSA President to discuss filing a formal grievance relating to administrative matters, including but not limited to: policies, procedures, registration requirements, membership duties, board decisions, etc... The following outlines SSA's policies and procedures relating to the reporting and handling of grievances:

A. DESCRIPTION OF GRIEVANCE:

Grievances most often concern an incident that occurs during a game or practice. A grievance may include inappropriate behavior by a coach, player, parent or other individual affiliated with or attending an SSA event. Concerns relating to coaching style are often answered by speaking directly with the coach in a nonjudgmental and respectful manner.

*Please note that mandatory reporting related to abuse is covered in the Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policy and must follow all required state and federal laws. This policy is meant to address grievances and complaints that fall outside of mandatory reporting requirements and laws.

B. GRIEVANCE PROTOCOL:

The SSA encourages parents not to approach coaches immediately after a game. It is well recognized in youth sports that a "cooling off" period is in everyone's best interest after a game has ended. These types of grievances may be presented only after a 24-hour cooling off period except where mandated reporting policies apply. The objective of this cooling off period is to deter any person from acting in haste and enables the person or persons filing the grievance the opportunity to rethink and review the circumstances and details of the grievance before final submission to the SSA. Patience, understanding and respect go a long way in cultivating a productive and positive relationship between players, coaches and parents.

C. GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES:

- Step 1: Report the grievance directly to the head coach or team manager after the appropriate 24 hour cooling off period except where mandated reporting policies apply. Remember that most coaches are volunteers with busy lives. The vast majority of complaints can be resolved by simply expressing them. This can be done, in person, via phone, or email. If this fails to resolve the issue, or if you are uncomfortable reporting directly to the head coach or team manager, then proceed to Step 2.
- Step 2: Report the grievance to the Director of Coaching and/or the Age-Level Contact. This can be accomplished in person, via phone, or email. If this fails to resolve the issue, or is not feasible, then proceed to Step 3.
- Step 3: If necessary, and/or if you are uncomfortable with reporting to the contacts outlined in Steps 1 and 2, contact the President of the SSA who will bring the issue to the SSA Board of Directors (BOD) to address the issue if discussion with the President does not resolve the issue. This requires putting a formal grievance complaint in writing that includes the date, time and location and a summary of the incident/issue, including noting others who may have witnessed the incident/issue where applicable. Please note that the formal grievance may also be shared with all involved where necessary to the review and investigation of the grievance. The coach or coaches involved may be asked to respond to the issues. The SSA BOD will pass final judgment on the case and determine what action will be taken. All decisions made by the SSA BOD are final.

D. DISPUTE RESOLUTION:

In order to resolve disputes, the SSA BOD may conduct investigations as deemed appropriate to resolve the issue(s) involving its players, coaches, volunteers, staff, contractors, parents and officials (or others). Investigations may include and without limitation, convening meetings involving the parties indicated by the grievance and any other interested parties. The SSA BOD may interview other players, parents or SSA members that may have witnessed the grievance. The SSA BOD reserves the right to take any action it may deem appropriate in response to the grievance including and without limitation, suspending or expelling players, coaches, parents or others from future SSA events. The President may bring disputes or concerns requiring immediate action to the Evaluation & Review Committee or, if members are unavailable, an emergency review committee made up of board members may be established. This committee will make an interim decision that can be enacted until a full board review can take place.

E. CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

In cases where there may be a conflict of interest for an SSA board member, said board member will recuse himself/herself from the grievance procedures. Board members, however, may be interviewed as part of the investigation.

F. CONFIDENTIALITY:

The SSA recognizes the sensitive nature of certain grievances and will take all reasonable steps to ensure that the information reported and gathered through the investigation be kept confidential and only shared with those individuals necessary to resolve the grievance.

G. MINNESOTA YOUTH SOCCER ASSOCIATION INFORMATION:

The SSA is a member of the Minnesota Youth Soccer Association (MYSA). MYSA Complaints & Appeals Information can be found at: <https://www.mnyouthsoccer.org/complaints-and-appeals/>