



Archdiocese of Baltimore
Soccer Program (ABSP)
Handbook

Contents

ABSP Bylaws 3

- A. Name & Organization 3
- B. Philosophy 3
- C. Officers 4
- D. Nomination/Election of Officers 4
- E. ABSP Membership 4
- F. Board Meetings 4
- G. Funds/Finances 5
- H. Amendments 5

ABSP Eligibility and Guidelines 6

- A. Parish Affiliation 6
- B. Valid Parish Program 6
- C. Player Eligibility 6
- D. General Eligibility Rules 7
- E. Coaches Under the Age of 21 8
- F. Team Registration 8
- G. Player Registration (Rosters) 9
- H. Code of Conduct 9
- I. Complaint/Compliment Procedures 12
- J. Disciplinary Action 12

ABSP Soccer Rules 13

- A. International Football Association Board (IFAB) 13
- B. Special Rules 13
- C. Playing Time 13
- D. Coach / Referee Communication 13
- E. Referee Abuse 14
- F. Referee No-Show 14
- G. Referee Evaluation 14
- H. Safety Requirements 14
- I. Player Yellow and Red Cards / Verbal Warnings and Ejections / Conduct Complaints 17
- J. Scheduling 19
- K. General 23
- L. Player Age Verification 25
- M. Referee Fees 25

N.	Score Reporting	25
O.	Mercy Rule	25
P.	Determination of Division Winner	26
Q.	Trophies	27
R.	Protest	27
S.	Penalty Fee Schedule	28
	Under-8 Clinic League	29
A.	Mission	29
B.	Coaches	29
C.	Game Time	29
D.	Inclement Weather	29
E.	Playing Time	30
F.	Referees	30
G.	Rules	30
H.	Standings	31
I.	Substitutions	31

ABSP Bylaws

A. Name & Organization

1. This organization shall be known as “Archdiocese of Baltimore Soccer Program,” hereafter referred to in the bylaws as “ABSP.”
2. The Archdiocese of Baltimore Soccer Program (ABSP) is administered on behalf of the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministries (OYYAM) by the ABSP Board of Directors (“Board”).

B. Philosophy

1. The OYYAM’s basic philosophy promotes active participation in organized sports and the sharing of responsibility to keep the competition in the proper perspective. This can be accomplished by helping to direct the athletic program toward the formation of strong Christian values in all participants. Parish coordinators and coaches must be the direct implementers of such a philosophy.
2. The purpose of the ABSP is to provide and promote an interparochial activity for boys and girls of the archdiocese which, if properly organized, will lead to the development of Christian ideals in youth regardless of religious denomination.
3. The ABSP promotes the following:
 - a. Teaching and learning the value of getting along with people.
 - b. Teaching and learning to respect the rights of other people.
 - c. Teaching and learning to develop and exercise leadership skills.
 - d. Teaching and learning to make decisions and accept responsibility.
 - e. Teaching and learning to cooperate with others in effective teamwork.
 - f. Teaching and learning to develop self-reliance and emotional stability.
 - g. Teaching and learning to be fair and honest. Teaching and learning to accept defeat graciously and victory modestly.
 - h. Teaching and learning to develop a healthy body through physical activity in competitive athletics.
 - i. Teaching and learning to abide by established and accepted rules which apply uniformly to all participants.

4. Responsible adult coaching and management is essential. The enormous influence which a coach can exercise upon the players in the program cannot be sufficiently emphasized. It is the responsibility of the Parish Coordinators to properly screen and monitor coaches. A coach must, therefore, know the players on his/her team and thoroughly understand and adhere to current player eligibility rules. Eligibility rules will be closely monitored and strictly enforced.

C. Officers

1. The Board consists of the President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer and the Chairperson of each Standing Committee.
2. The Board, with majority vote, reserves the right to add, delete or change the rules at its discretion.

D. Nomination/Election of Officers

1. The Board is elected by the participating parish members and operates with the delegated authority of the OYYAM in all matters pertaining to the Archdiocese of Baltimore Soccer Program (ABSP).

E. ABSP Membership

1. Any soccer program sponsored by an Archdiocese of Baltimore (AOB) school and/or Parish with the approval of a lead administrator.

F. Board Meetings

1. The Board generally holds its monthly Board meeting on the fourth (4th) Tuesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. The meeting is open to all parishes. Since space is limited, the Board prefers that only one person from any member parish come to the meeting. Anyone wishing to attend should check with a Board member prior to the meeting to ensure time and location. When a meeting is held at a location with limited space, attendance by non-Board members may be limited by the President.
2. Attendance at a meeting by a representative of a member parish is highly encouraged. If a representative of a member parish wishes to make a presentation, approval must be obtained from the President at

least two days in advance of the next Board meeting. The President, in his sole discretion, may allow the presentation to be made at the next meeting, a future meeting or not at all. Presentations will generally be for the purpose of proposing changes to the ABSP Bylaws or Rules. Attendance by representatives of member parishes will under no circumstances delay the Board from acting on motions at meetings.

3. The Board publishes no agenda prior to the meeting and all meetings are held in accordance with the Bylaws.

G. Funds/Finances

1. The board generates revenue via the collection of fees for the purpose of paying referee fees, game assignment fees, overhead costs associated with board meetings, monthly and pre/post-season coordinator meetings, stationary and all other costs deemed appropriate by the Board.
2. These fees are assessed and collected prior to the start of the season.

H. Amendments

1. Amendments are added when necessary.

ABSP Eligibility and Guidelines

A. Parish Affiliation

1. Any parish in the Archdiocese of Baltimore may enter teams in the ABSP. A team bearing a parish name must be under the auspices of that parish. The OYYAM will be responsible for verifying the parish affiliation of all teams entered in the program. Uniforms must bear the name of the parish or school. Uniforms may not only bear the name of a recreation center, recreation council, club or sponsor.

B. Valid Parish Program

1. A valid parish program must be designed to provide all members of the parish (or parish school if a school-based program) the opportunity to participate in a youth soccer program. A parish program which gives preference to Catholics from other parishes or to non-Catholics will be considered to be in violation of the rules of the ABSP.
2. With respect to all new parish programs and, in certain circumstances, existing parish programs, the Board will have the responsibility for evaluating their status as “valid parish programs”.^[2]
3. Coordinators, coaches, and volunteers must meet the requirements of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, the Archdiocese of Baltimore Division of Youth and Young Adult Ministry, and the specific affiliated parish especially as it relates to those requirements associated with volunteering with youth and coaches training. As these requirements may change from time to time, please contact the applicable youth minister, the Division of Youth and Young Adult Ministry, or a Board member for further information. Generally, coordinators, coaches and volunteers may not participate in soccer activities involving youth until these requirements are met.

C. Player Eligibility

1. A parish soccer program which recruits players from other parishes will be considered in violation of the rules of the ABSP. A parish will also be considered to be recruiting if it accepts players from other parishes who are “shopping” for the best program in which to play.

2. In order to be considered a “Parish Member” in your parish, a player must satisfy at least one of the following conditions:
 - a. Anyone who is an officially registered member of your parish and participates regularly in the parish’s worship and social life. A player’s family must be registered for one full year prior to the beginning of a season. This one year requirement will not apply if the family has also changed its residence.
 - b. Anyone who lives within the geographical boundaries of your parish.
 - c. Anyone who attends or has graduated from your parish school.
3. Anyone who is a member (as defined in C.2. above) of an adjoining parish or a non-adjoining parish which does not have a parish soccer program may play in your parish soccer program.

D. General Eligibility Rules

1. The cutoff date to determine a player’s age is the July 31st preceding the beginning of the regular season for all age groups except 14 & Under.
2. With respect to the 14 & Under age group only, any player turning age 15 on or after December 1 of the current calendar year is eligible to play in the 14 & Under age group.
3. A player may be registered to play on more than one ABSP team. Players must be properly registered and accounted for each team they would like to play with during the season. Players may not play down an age group or a lower division, ie. a player who is only eligible for U12 by age is ineligible to compete on a U10 team. Additionally, girls are permitted to play on a boys team, at or up an age level, but boys are never permitted to play on a girls team.
4. A player who meets the age eligibility requirements (see F. 2. above) and who is not playing soccer for his/her high school soccer team (Varsity, Junior Varsity or Freshman team) is permitted to play in the ABSP.
5. If a team is found guilty of using an ineligible player, all games played by that team will be forfeited. Additional penalties may be assessed by the Board against the team, the coach, the coordinator or the entire parish program.
6. The ABSP does not set a limit on the number of players that may be included on the roster for a team. In order to allow for reasonable playing time for each player, however, it is strongly recommended that no more than fourteen (14) to sixteen (16) players be registered to play on any single team.

7. Any questions concerning parish affiliation, player eligibility or player waivers should be addressed to the chairperson for the Registration Committee.

E. Coaches Under the Age of 21

1. The ABSP has adopted the policy of the Archdiocese of Baltimore relating to soccer coaches under the age of 21. This policy is mandatory and it is the responsibility of the parish soccer coordinator to insure compliance with this policy.
2. Coaches under the age of 21 must have an adult, any person over the age of 21, present who is willing to be responsible for supervision of that activity. This is easily handled if the young person is assigned as an assistant coach. If the young person is appointed as the head coach, this might require assigning a parent or someone else over the age of 21 to serve as an assistant coach. In those situations where the young person is the head coach, it is important that it be clear that an adult over 21 years of age be responsible for monitoring the safety of the event.
3. Any coach should not develop dating relationships with players.

F. Team Registration

1. To register a team in the ABSP, the following forms must be completed and submitted to the Scheduling Committee prior to the deadline:
 - ✓ Team Registration Receipt with check for team registration fees
 - ✓ Contact Information Form
 - ✓ Field Information Form
 - ✓ Team Registration FormsForms will be sent out by the Board at a time that is deemed appropriate within which to collect the requisite information.
2. The deadline for submitting the team registration materials to the Scheduling Committee will be announced at the pre-season coordinators' meeting. A late fee of \$50.00 per team will be charged for each team that does not turn in the required forms by due date. Please do not delay the submission of your program's forms because you are uncertain about the status of one or more of your teams. Please note on the Team Registration Form if a team is questionable.

3. Coach's information must be provided on each Team Registration Form. If a coach has not been named, leave these sections blank and supply the information as soon as possible. The parish coordinator will receive a copy of the schedules for all parish teams.
4. Although there are no guarantees, the Scheduling Committee tries to comply with all special scheduling requests that are submitted by the deadline for submitting the registration materials. Any requests from the previous year must be submitted again during the current year in order to be considered.

G. Player Registration (Rosters)

1. Player registration forms (rosters) must be submitted by the Sunday before the first game of the season. The rosters for each parish must be submitted to the Registration Committee. Failure to submit properly completed rosters by the deadline may result in the forfeiture of one or more games by your team in addition to late fees.
2. The deadline for making roster changes is October 1st. All roster changes must be submitted in writing to the Registration Committee. The player is not eligible to play until the Registration Committee has received the change.
3. Parishes participating in the Under-8 Clinic Program are required to submit player registration forms in accordance with the established deadline.

H. Code of Conduct

1. The ABSP has a high expectation for the proper conduct of all parish coordinators, coaches, players, parents and spectators participating in the program.
2. As a Catholic parish-oriented youth soccer program, the ABSP shares common goals:
 - To promote the physical, moral, spiritual, mental, social and emotional well-being of our youth participants
 - To stress the highest ideals of ethical conduct, sportsmanship and fair play
 - To show courtesy and respect to all visiting teams and referees
 - To encourage the development of leadership, initiative and good judgment in all team members
 - To be gracious in defeat and modest in victory

3. Coordinators shall:

- Know, follow, and enforce all ABSP rules
- Choose coaches wisely and provide appropriate training to ensure their knowledge of the game and ability to coach youth
- Obtain volunteer applications
- Communicate the ABSP Code of Conduct to all coaches, players and parents

4. Coaches shall:

- Complete and return volunteer applications as required by Office of Family, Youth, and Young Adult Ministry (OFYYAM)
- Know and abide by all ABSP rules as well as IFAB soccer rules
- Be ever mindful of the responsibility for the impact he/she has on each youthful player before, during and after each practice and game
- Place the diverse emotional and physical well-being of each player ahead of any personal desire to win
- Be a positive influence and demonstrate by example fair play and good sportsmanship to players, other coaches, parents and referees
- Balance fun and discipline according to age and ability level of players
- Provide each player with the opportunity to reach his/her maximum potential
- Be a representative of the Archdiocese of Baltimore and act accordingly by not engaging in any conduct that is prejudicial to or that reflects discredit on the Archdiocese of Baltimore
- Establish a friendly and cordial relationship between host and visiting teams
- Show respect for the integrity and judgment calls of referees
- Not, under any circumstances verbally abuse or harass referees or enter the field of play without the referee's permission.
- Control the actions of players and spectators to ensure that they do not, under any circumstances verbally abuse or harass referees or other players and shall take immediate steps to remedy any actual or perceived infraction
- Remain calm at all times and shall not use any foul, abusive or loud language and shall not approach the referees, players or other coaches in a threatening manner

- Ensure, under all circumstances, that the pregame handshake is done with good sportsmanship and shall take immediate steps to remedy (e.g., player apology) any actual or perceived poor sportsmanship
- Inform the coordinator and use online conduct form to report conduct or other issues.[\[5\]](#)
- No coach shall engage in any inappropriate activities or behavior with any player
- Be respectful of calls and decisions made by the Referee
- Participate in mandatory OYYAM coach training sessions

5. Players shall:

- Have fun and enjoy the game
- Attend practices, listen and learn
- Treat all teammates, coaches, opponents, parents and referees with respect and shall not be critical of referees, players or coaches
- Know and adhere to the rules of the game
- Be a positive support to teammates
- Display self-control at all times and shall not use profanity or approach any player, coach or referee in a threatening manner
- Exhibit good sportsmanship, be gracious in defeat and modest in victory!

6. Parents and spectators shall:

- Be respectful of the emotional and physical well-being and development of all youth participants
- Allow the coach to coach the game and refrain from directing players in the field
- Maintain a positive sideline demeanor and provide encouragement to all of the players
- Control emotions and provide only positive comments to players, referees, parents and coaches of either team
- Address concerns in the proper venue and time in a respectful and controlled manner
- Be mindful that referees have been trained in soccer rules and often make “objective” judgment calls; shall show respect for the integrity and judgment calls of referees
- Not, under any circumstance verbally abuse or harass referees or players or enter the field of play without the referee’s permission
- Remain calm at all times; shall not use any foul, abusive or loud language; and shall not approach referees, players, coaches or other spectators in a threatening manner
- Not dispute referee calls

- Immediately adhere to any direction given by a coach or referee to cease any “poor conduct” or to remove oneself as a spectator
7. Coordinators and coaches will vigorously enforce the Code of Conduct and take swift and appropriate action (e.g., suspension/termination of participation) for any infractions. The Board reserves the right to impose sanctions if, in the judgment of the Board, a parish soccer program’s remedial action is deemed inadequate.
 8. Team coaches will be responsible for the conduct of their players and spectators.
 9. Coordinators, coaches, players and parents/spectators are responsible for conducting themselves in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

I. Complaint/Compliment Procedures

1. Please utilize online forms and tools as provided by ABSP Board.
2. All Complaint/Compliment reports are reviewed by the appropriate ABSP Board Committee.

J. Disciplinary Action

1. ABSP has authority to suspend or terminate players/teams for conduct or actions that are deemed to be offensive or unbecoming of a participant in a Catholic organization.

ABSP Soccer Rules

A. International Football Association Board (IFAB)

1. Unless otherwise stated, IFAB rules apply for all ABSP games.

B. Special Rules

1. Slide tackling is not allowed.
2. Substitutions are allowed by both teams on all throw-ins regardless of possession. Coaches must not abuse this special rule by using substitutions to delay the game. Referees have the authority to refuse substitutions.
3. No head balls allowed U12 and younger.
4. Teams including all coaches, players and fans are to stay on opposite sides of the field.

C. Playing Time

1. The ABSP does not have guidelines for minimum playing time for each player. All parish soccer programs are encouraged to ensure adequate playing time for all players.

D. Coach / Referee Communication

1. Before each game, a coach from each team should meet briefly with the referee(s) to accomplish the following:
 - a. Each coach should obtain the referee's name(s). This is the only logical time to do this – do not wait until halftime or the end of the game.
 - b. Politely remind the referee of the age group and time for each half (for example, Under-12, 25-minute halves) and of the fact that the game should be played under special ABSP rules.
2. Use this opportunity to introduce yourself to the coach of the other team and wish him/her “good luck” in the game.

E. Referee Abuse

1. Referee abuse of any sort will not be tolerated. Disagreements with referee judgment calls are no excuse for referee abuse from the coaches, the players, or spectators.

F. Referee No-Show

1. If the referees do not show up within fifteen minutes after the scheduled game time, the game should still be played using volunteer referees who are deemed to be capable of doing so by both teams' coaches.
 - a. Under no circumstances should any abuse be directed towards volunteer referees.
2. If the game is not played, it will be the responsibility of the coaches to reschedule the game and to notify the Scheduling Committee of the rescheduled date and time.

G. Referee Evaluation

1. Referee evaluations can be made via the Score Reporting Form. When appropriate, comments will be forwarded by the Referee Committee to the Referee Association for further review and disciplinary action.

H. Safety Requirements

1. IFABIFAB Laws of the Game – Law 4 – The Players' Equipment
 - a. IFAB Law 4 – the Players' Equipment – Safety indicates that a player must not use equipment or wear anything that is dangerous to himself or another player (including any kind of jewelry).
 - b. The referee(s) officiating ABSP games are solely responsible for interpretation and enforcement of this IFAB Law.
 - c. The items noted in Section 2 below are illustrative of historical interpretations by referees, the Referee Association, or the ABSP. They are not intended to be all inclusive.
 - d. Referee decisions concerning safety, specifically Law 4 interpretations, are final and are not subject to review.

2. Specific Safety Guidelines

a. Shin Guards

Each player must wear shin guards at all games. The shin guard must be large enough to protect the entire shin and must be worn inside the sock. The sock must cover the entire shin guard so that there are no hard exposed edges.

b. Jewelry

Players may not wear any jewelry, including but not limited to earrings, bracelets, necklaces, rings, watches and any form of hard adornments in the hair, etc. There is no exception for a player wearing pierced earrings because the ears have recently been pierced.

c. Bandanas

Players may not wear bandanas.

d. Glasses

Players who wear glasses must have a safety strap for the glasses.

e. Uniform Shirts

A tank-top uniform shirt will only be allowed to be worn if a shirt with a sleeve is worn underneath.

f. Casts/Orthopedic Devices

Casts or orthopedic devices (both hard and soft) will not be allowed if considered dangerous or unsafe to the wearer or other players by the referee(s). Generally, the casts and orthopedic devices are considered unsafe by referees and, therefore, are not allowed to be worn by players even if padded.

g. Bleeding Players

If a referee notices that a player is bleeding, the referee will stop the game and have the player removed from the game as would be done for any injury. A substitute player may be sent into the game to take the place of the bleeding player. After the injury has been properly treated, the player may return to the game at any normal substitution point. A player who is bleeding may alert the referee to the fact so that he/she may be removed from the game for treatment.

h. If a player is suspected of having a head injury the game will be stopped immediately.

3. Players with Medical Conditions

a. It is the responsibility of individual parish/school soccer programs, coordinators and coaches to ascertain from parents/guardians during the registration process if any child participant (A) has any medical condition that could be potentially limiting to a child's normal participation, (B) has

circumstances that should be known to ensure that coaches are fully knowledgeable of any expectations of himself/herself relative to player medical conditions, or (C) has a need to wear any type of medical device (for example, insulin pump) during participation.

- b. Player registration forms used by parish/school soccer programs to register participants should include provisions for parental approval for their child to participate as well as a release of liability for allowing participation for any children with medical conditions.
- c. Each parish/school soccer program should determine if and when it may be necessary or appropriate to require parents/guardians to provide a medical release from a child's medical provider to participate under any specific conditions (for example, wearing or not wearing an insulin pump during participation) or to be able to return to participation after an injury (for example, concussion, broken wrist, arm or leg, etc...). Parish/school soccer programs, coordinators, and coaches are strongly encouraged to require a medical release to play under any and all circumstances where there is any degree of doubt by a reasonable person as to the safety of a child's participation. For example, a concussion-related injury should always require a medical release to resume participation.
- d. If it is anticipated that referees may question a child's participation based on IFAB Law 4 noted above, parish/school soccer programs are encouraged to bring the matter to the attention of the ABSP Executive Board sufficiently in advance of anticipated game participation to allow for adequate time to assess any complex situations and communicate with the Referee Association. Generally, the Referee Association has taken the position that it as an organization cannot dictate safety interpretations to referees who are independent contractors charged with interpreting and enforcing IFAB Law 4 as it relates to safety issues. Thus you may anticipate the possibility of differing interpretations by multiple referees and you should bring this matter to the ABSP Executive Board if or whenever it should occur.
- e. Wearing any type of medical device (for example, insulin pump) during participation must be worn in a manner protective to the child wearing the device and to other players. The manner and location in which a device is worn and cushioned could be a determining factor in a referee's judgment on its safety aspects. Again, be reminded that when it comes to safety interpretations under IFAB Law 4, it is the referee(s) who have the final say concerning game participation.
- f. Referees should be notified of any worn medical devices.
- g. Coordinators and coaches must exercise reasonable judgment concerning these same safety factors during practices.

4. Goals

Goals must be anchored into the ground or adequately weighed down to prevent them from tipping over and injuring participants and others. If, in the sole judgment of the referee(s) assigned to your game, the goals are not sufficiently secure to the ground and safe for play, the game will be forfeited by the home team. Portable goal posts must be adequately secured and safe at all times including games, practices, and when not in use.

5. Volunteer Referees

Those games (clinic and referee no-shows) officiated by volunteers are subject to the same safety standards and enforcement as detailed above. Coordinators must ensure that volunteer referees and coaches are instructed to enforce these safety standards.

I. **Player Yellow and Red Cards / Verbal Warnings and Ejections / Conduct Complaints**

1. Yellow Card / Warning

- a. The player must immediately leave the field for a “cool down” period of time. The player may be replaced. The offending player can return to the game at the next normal substitution opportunity for their team, with the permission of the referee.
- b. If a coach receives a verbal warning, this should be a clear signal that he/she must change his/her behavior/reaction/temperament immediately.

2. Second Yellow Card

- a. A player receiving a second yellow card during the same game automatically receives a red card (two yellows equal a red). Refer to the red card portion below.

3. Red Card / Ejection

- a. If a red card is issued to a player on the field of play, he/she must immediately leave the game. The offending team plays with one less player. If a coach is ejected from a game, the coach must leave the field far enough so as not to influence players, referees, remaining coaches, and fans. Keep in mind that the actual distance is ultimately up to the referee’s discretion based on the circumstances. There are no appeals on issued red cards or coach ejections. Players are not required to leave the bench area.

- b. The team's coach or manager must promptly (within no more than two days) report all red card incidents and coach ejections to the team's parish coordinator.
 - c. The team's parish coordinator must promptly (within no more than four days) report red card incidents and coach ejections to the Chairperson of the Conduct Review Committee. The parish coordinator must provide the date, time, location, age group, teams involved, offending player or coach's name, referee's name (if available), a brief description of the incident, and assurances that the parish program will enforce the penalty(s) imposed for the red card or ejection infraction.
 - d. A player issued a red card or a coach ejected from a game must also sit out the next scheduled ABSP game.
 - e. The ABSP Board and or the Chairperson of the Conduct Review Committee reserves the right to impose additional penalties (including suspension from participation in the ABSP) based on the severity of the circumstances of each red card or ejection.
4. Spectator ejection
- a. If a spectator is directed by the referee to leave the field due to disruptive or unsportsmanlike behavior, or other reasons, the coach or manager must promptly (within no more than two days) report the incident to the team's parish coordinator. The team's parish coordinator must promptly (within no more than four days) report the incident to the Chairperson of the Conduct Review Committee. The information must include the date, time, location, teams involved, spectator's name, brief description of the incident and the referee's name (if available).
 - b. It is the responsibility of the coach of the ejected spectator(s) to ensure the spectator(s) is/are removed from the field of play. The spectator(s) must leave the field far enough so as not to influence players, referees, coaches, and fans. Keep in mind that the actual distance is ultimately up to the referee's discretion based on the circumstances.
 - c. Primary responsibility for handling the incident with the spectator lies with each parish coordinator. It is the recommendation of the ABSP Board that any ejection results in a minimum one (1) game suspension.
 - d. Each parish coordinator must cooperate with the Chairperson of the Conduct Review Committee prior to that team's next scheduled game to inform the Committee of the parish's resolution of the matter and any action taken towards the offending spectator.

- e. The ABSP Board and/or Chairperson of the Conduct Review Committee reserves the right to impose additional penalties (including suspension of attending ABSP games) based on the severity of the circumstances of each case.
- 5. Conduct Complaints
 - a. The Chairperson of the Conduct Review Committee will review or investigate reports of conduct by coaches, players, spectators, and other participants in ABSP activities which are inconsistent with the ABSP Code of Conduct. Parish coordinators must fully cooperate towards identifying the factual matter of each reported incident and towards an appropriate resolution. Upon completion of each review, the chairperson of the Conduct Review Committee and or the Board may impose any disciplinary action it deems appropriate under each reported incidents' circumstances. Each parish coordinator must cooperate in ensuring that the imposed disciplinary action is enforced.
 - 6. Additional Disciplinary Action
 - a. The Board reserves the right to impose additional sanctions on players, coaches, spectators, and parish soccer programs depending on the severity and circumstances related to any relevant issues brought to the attention of the Board. The Board also reserves the right to impose sanctions involving situations in other games in other leagues for teams participating in those leagues under the name of an ABSP participating parish or for teams participating in those leagues wearing uniforms indicative of an ABSP participating parish.
 - 7. Each Parish Soccer Program, Coach and Coordinator Required Cooperation
 - a. Each Parish Soccer Program, Coach, and Coordinator is required to fully cooperate in handling all red cards, ejections, and other reported conduct concerns, and resolution and enforcement of these matters. Failure to do so will result in additional sanctions on those not providing the necessary cooperation towards enforcing the ABSP Code of Conduct.

J. Scheduling

- 1. Team Strength Ratings
 - a. In addition to the Strength Rating (see below), each coordinator (after consulting with the team's coach) is strongly encouraged to provide comments on the bottom of the Team Registration Form in order to indicate the primary factor(s) that influenced the Strength Rating assigned. These comments

will be used by the Scheduling Committee (where necessary) to distinguish between teams with the same Strength Rating.

- b. On the Team Registration Form for each non-clinic team, the Parish Soccer Coordinator (after consulting with the team's coach) must provide a Strength Rating (from "1" to "4") to reflect the relative strength of the team. Essentially, the Coordinator is being asked to indicate the division into which the team should be placed, assuming that there are four divisions in the age group.
 - i. Indicates a team that should be placed in the strongest division available or a team that would be willing to play in the strongest division in order to compete against a stronger level of competition.
 - ii. Indicates a team that is somewhat stronger than average but is not ready to compete fairly in the strongest division. (2-3 Club players allowed)
 - iii. Indicates a team that is somewhat weaker than average but is not so weak that it needs to compete in the weakest division. (0-2 club players allowed)
 - iv. Indicates a team that must be placed in the weakest division available. (0 Club Players allowed)
- c. The Strength Rating should always be based upon the desire to obtain the best competition rather than upon the desire to just win soccer games.
- d. In determining the Strength Rating to be assigned to a team, the following factors should be considered:
 - i. What are the ages of the players on the team? In particular, does the team include players who are eligible for a younger age group but were moved up in order to have enough players to field the team?
 - ii. What is the playing experience of the players on the team?
 - iii. What is the skill level of the players on the team?
 - iv. How long have the players played together as a team?
 - v. Does the team play in other leagues during the fall soccer season?
 - vi. Do any of the players on the team play soccer at other times during the year other than just during the fall season, for example, indoor or spring soccer leagues?
 - vii. Do any of the players on the team play on other teams during the fall soccer season, especially "select" or "club" soccer teams?

- viii. What are the qualifications of the coach(es) for the team? Is the coach a parent who has been drafted to avoid dropping the team? Has the coach had prior playing and/or coaching experience in soccer or in other sports?
 - ix. If most or all the players on the team played on the same team in the ABSP last year, what league did they play in and what was their record?
2. Fees
- a. Each team is to submit a fee along with the required team registration materials. Fees are payable to “Archdiocese of Baltimore Soccer Program”.
3. Game Schedules
- a. The season begins on the first weekend following Labor Day and ends no later than the weekend prior to Thanksgiving. The regular season runs for ten weekends. In the event of game cancellations due to inclement weather or poor field conditions, the weekend(s) following the end of the regular season and prior to Thanksgiving will be used for the rescheduling of these games.
 - b. All clinic games and all non-clinic boys’ games are played on Saturday and all non-clinic girls’ games are played on Sunday.
 - c. Game schedules will be e-mailed to coaches and coordinators prior to the first scheduled game and will be displayed on the ABSP website.
 - d. The first team listed on the schedule is the home team.
 - e. If two teams have similar colors, the home team must be prepared to provide and wear an optional color.
4. Game Start Times & Length
- a. Start Times
 - i. The starting time for games may be as early as 8:00 a.m. on Saturdays and 12:00 PM Sundays unless given special permission. If one or more of a parish’s teams, for any reason, including Religious Education cannot play this early, please note this on the Scheduling Information Form. The OYYAM requires that games scheduled at parish facilities on Sundays may not be scheduled earlier than noon. Games scheduled at facilities which are not on parish property are not subject to this policy.

b. Game Lengths

i. U10 and U12

Game length will consist of two (2) 25-minute halves. All games will start and end at the discretion of the referee(s). Any game that has completed the first half, but then is terminated by the referee(s) for any reason will be considered a completed game.

ii. 14 & Under (14U)

Game length will consist of two (2) 30-minute halves. All games will start and end at the discretion of the referee(s). Any game that has completed the first half, but then is terminated by the referee(s) for any reason will be considered a completed game.

5. Postponements and Schedule Changes

a. With respect to non-clinic league games, no changes are allowed to the game schedule unless there is a conflict with a parish Religious Education program. For this purpose, "Religious Education" will include either of the two religious Jewish holidays of Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur on the day of the holiday. A coach should not contact another coach to reschedule a game – all questions and requests must be addressed only to the Scheduling Committee. For conflicts with Religious Education programs, changes should be requested at least one full week in advance of the game. The following items are not considered to be religious education, and, therefore, do not justify game rescheduling:

- ✓ AOB parish/school sponsored trips
- ✓ Similar events

b. Any scheduling changes or related requests must be submitted within two (2) weeks of the scheduled release date.

THERE ARE NO EXCEPTIONS TO THIS POLICY

6. Inclement Weather

- a. Teams will be notified via a team message and/or mass email notification from the ABSP Board.
- b. It is the responsibility of the home team to determine playability of the fields and to notify the ABSP Board within thirty (30) minutes of gametime.

K. General

1. Fields
 - a. All fields must be regulation size for 14 & Under and older leagues. Regulation size is according to the IFAB rules.
 - b. For the 8 v 8 leagues, all field dimensions, including the size of the goals, should be scaled down proportionately to reflect the size of the age group.
 - c. For the 7 v 7 clinic leagues, all field dimensions, including the size of the goals, should be scaled down proportionately. For example, a field size of 50 yards by 30 yards and a goal size of 6 feet high by 18 feet wide would be acceptable.
 - d. Each Home Team will be expected to provide Corner Flags on its fields for all games.
 - e. Goal Nets must be provided on all fields for all games.
 - f. The Goal Nets must be properly hung so that there are no gaps between the nets and the Goal Posts and there must not be any holes in the Goal Nets.
2. Build Out Line
 - a. The use of a Build Out Line for the U10 levels is now required.
 - b. The installation and use of the build out lines will be used to promote playing the ball out of the back (defensive) area in an unpressured situation.
 - c. The Build Out Line is to be installed halfway between the top of the penalty box line and the Center Line, straight across the field from sideline to sideline. If a line cannot be drawn, the use of cones should be used approximately 1 yd. off the sideline.
 - d. The guidelines as adopted by US Club, USYSA, AYSO and SAY regarding the use of the line during game play are as follows:
 - i. When the goalkeeper has the ball in his or her hands during play from the opponent, the opposing team must move behind the build out line until the ball is put into play.
 - ii. Goalkeepers cannot punt or drop kick the ball at any time; they must throw, roll, or placekick the ball. If the goalkeeper does punt or drop kick the ball, the restart will result in an indirect free kick from where the offense occurred.
 - iii. If the punt or drop kick occurs within the goal area, the indirect free kick should be taken on the goal area line parallel to the goal line at the nearest point to where the infringement occurred.

- iv. After the ball is put into play by the goalkeeper, the opposing team can cross the build out line and play resumes as normal.
- v. The opposing team must also move behind the build out line during a goal kick until the ball is put into play.
- vi. On goal kicks the opposing team should be outside of the build out line before the kick can be taken. However, the kicking team does not have to wait until the other team is over the line to take the kick. If the kicking team puts the ball in play before the opposing team has crossed the line, the ball is immediately in play no matter where the opposing players are at that time. The ball is in play when it moves, and players can immediately cross the build out line. The referees should encourage the opposing team to retreat past this line.
- vii. On all free kicks inside the penalty area, the opposing team must be making an effort to retreat past the build out line, However, if the kicking team decides to quick kick the restart, then it is fair play for the opposing team to play the ball as long as they were making a clear effort to retreat to the Build Out Line when the ball was put into play (clearly moves).
- viii. Players can only be penalized for an offside offense between the build out line and the opponent's goal line

3. Equipment

- a. Age groups Under-8, Under-10 and Under-12, a size # 4 ball is required
- b. Age group 14 & Under, a size # 5 ball is required.
- c. The home team should supply the game ball.

4. Leagues

- Boys Under-8 (7 v 7)
- Girls Under-8 (7 v 7)
- Boys Under-10 (8 v 8)
- Girls Under-10 (8 v 8)
- Boys Under-12 (8 v 8) or (9 v 9) if agreed upon by both coaches.
- Girls Under-12 (8 v 8) or (9 v 9) if agreed upon by both coaches.
- Boys Under-14 (11 v 11)
- Girls Under-14 (11 v 11)

L. Player Age Verification

1. Players are not required to have ID cards to play in the ABSP. Coaches and/or parish coordinators must verify each player's date of birth. Severe penalties will be applied to any violation of the age rules.

M. Referee Fees

1. Referee fees are set by the Referee Association.
2. Each Parish Soccer Program shall pay in advance the estimated referee fees for the entire season to the ABSP using the form provided by the Scheduling Committee. The ABSP will use these referee fees to pay the Referee Association for referee fees incurred during the season.
3. Referee fees are paid when a game is forfeited, and referee fees may occur in weather conditions and other circumstances where a game is not cancelled in sufficient time to prevent the referee(s) from showing to do the game.
4. At the end of each season, a Reconciliation will be performed for each Parish Soccer Program between the Program's actual referee fees incurred during the season and the referee fees paid in advance by the Program. If the referee fees paid by a Program exceed the Program's actual referee fees for the season, a Credit will be issued to the Program and this Credit can be applied against the fees for the following soccer season. If the actual referee fees exceed the referee fees paid by a Program, the Program will be notified of the amount that must be submitted in order to eliminate the deficit.

N. Score Reporting

1. Each parish must report the score of each non-clinic game (and the number of referees) to the Scheduling Committee on the Score Reporting Sheet within one week of each game.

O. Mercy Rule

1. If a team wins by ten (10) or more goals, the game will be considered no contest and no points will be awarded to either team.

P. Determination of Division Winner

1. The Division Winner will be decided via a one-off game between the top two teams from each division starting at the U10 age level. These two teams will compete against one another on the weekend following the conclusion of the regular season.
2. There will be no playoff for U8 age groups.
3. Team rankings within their respective divisions will be determined based upon the traditional point structure of soccer where a win yields a team three (3) points, a tie yields one (1) point, and a loss yields zero (0) points.

Q. Trophies

1. The ABSP awards a team trophy to all league or division champions except clinic. No individual player trophies are awarded by the ABSP. Additional awards and/or recognitions will be distributed at the discretion of the ABSP Board.

R. Protest

1. All protests must be filed in writing via email or other electronic reporting capability used by the ABSP., This procedure can also be used to report any violations of the eligibility rules.
2. If a program or coach wishes to question the eligibility of a player in a particular game, it is essential that the coach notify the referee and have the referee obtain the name of the player at the game. Please note that a team found to be using an illegal player (or to have an ineligible player on its roster) will be subject to the forfeiture of all games played in addition to any monetary penalties.
3. No protest will be considered on judgment calls. The protesting team must clearly establish that the outcome of the game was affected except in cases of player eligibility. All protests must be in writing via email or other electronic reporting capability used by the ABSP within 72 hours of completion of the game in question.
4. Whenever a matter of protest arises during a game, the coach of the team making the protest should immediately notify the game officials that the game is being continued under protest.
5. Protests and rules violations are to be submitted to the Protest Committee in the following manner:
 - a. A protest must be completed with all the required information and sent to the Protest Committee with a payment to the ABSP in the amount of \$50. This form must be received by the Protest Committee no later than 4:30 p.m. on the Thursday following games played on Saturday and no later than 4:30 p.m. on the Friday following games played on Sunday.
 - b. NO protests will be accepted by telephone.
 - c. All facts, substantiated by evidence, must be clearly stated, as well as the first and last names of players and others involved.
 - d. The signatures of the parish coordinator and the coach are required.
 - e. All protests must be specific in nature and must state which rule was violated as the basis for the protest.

- f. Each player protested for eligibility is considered to be a separate protest.
6. Coaches and coordinators who have knowledge of any infraction of ABSP rules, particularly player eligibility, have a responsibility to inform the Board so that the infraction can be remedied.

S. Penalty Fee Schedule

1. For no representation at mandatory parish coordinator meetings (\$100).
2. For missing deadline for submitting team registration materials to the Scheduling Committee (\$25 per day for each day beyond the published deadline).
3. For missing deadline for submitting player registration materials (rosters, waivers, etc.) to the Registration Committee (\$25 per roster per week for each week or part of a week beyond the published deadline).
4. For failing to submit scores via TeamSnap or the online Score Reporting form. by the following Wednesday after games (\$10 per game).
5. For adding or deleting a team after the actual scheduling process has started (\$50 per team).

Under-8 Clinic League

A. Mission

1. The Under-8 league is specifically designed as an instructional league. In a low-key mildly competitive atmosphere, the boys and girls are given the opportunity to learn the basics of soccer and to have fun.
2. In order to avoid conflicts during the game, the coaches and the referees should meet before the game to ensure that there is mutual agreement as to how the game will be run and how the rules will be enforced.

B. Coaches

1. It is not recommended that coaches be on the field during a game. If a coach intends to coach on the field, however, the coach (1) should stay away from the action at all times, (2) should never interfere with the movement of the ball or the players, (3) should not be in a position to block the movement or the view of the referee(s) and (4) should stay within five yards of the sidelines at all times.

C. Game Time

1. Each game will be divided into four ten-minute quarters. There will be a five-minute halftime and there will be a one-minute break following the first and third quarters for substitution purposes. As with any non-clinic game, the clock will run continuously and will only stop for the normally recognized reasons, for example, injuries.

D. Inclement Weather

1. In the event of inclement weather, please refer to the ABSP Handbook, Section IV (Scheduling), Sub-Section F (Inclement Weather) for information concerning the cancellation of games by the Scheduling Committee.

E. Playing Time

1. It is strongly recommended there be equal playing time for each player.

F. Referees

1. Each team must supply a referee for each game.
2. The referee should have a reasonable knowledge of the rules of soccer.
3. The referee should be someone other than the person who has the primary responsibility for coaching the team, making substitutions, setting positions, etc. An assistant coach or knowledgeable spectator is the ideal choice.
4. The function of the referee on the field is to referee the game fairly and to provide instruction as needed to both teams evenly with respect to the rules of the game.
5. The referee should not provide instructions to only his/her team. The referee's performance of his/her duties should not give the impression that he/she is actually "coaching" one of the teams.
6. When a player does something wrong, the referee will stop the game and briefly instruct the player as to how to do it correctly. In certain situations (for example, a throw-in) the player may be given a second chance to do it correctly.
7. If a foul occurs, a brief explanation should be given to all players as to why the whistle was blown.
8. The referees should keep their explanations as brief as possible. The players would rather play the game than listen to lengthy explanations of the rules. In the excitement of playing the game, they are probably not listening anyway.

G. Rules

1. All soccer rules will be enforced in the clinic leagues. Given the age and experience of the players, the referees are expected to use reasonable discretion in applying the rules. Certain rules (for example, the offside rule) should be applied only for flagrant violations.
2. It is recommended U8 fields incorporate the Build Out Line used at the U10 age group as best as possible.

H. Standings

1. There are no league standings.

I. Substitutions

1. Substitutions should be allowed on all stoppages of play. To avoid long delays, however, a coach must have the substitutions ready before the stoppage occurs and should make them as quickly as possible. The clock will normally continue to run.