



## **Abuse of Officials Statement**

In addition to those set forth by the NFHS, the Indiana Lacrosse Officials Association will make stopping the abuse of officials a point of emphasis for the 2025 season.

For several years, the association has expressed concern about the decreasing number of individuals willing to officiate youth sports. Surveys of officials have shown that the leading cause for quitting is a lack of sportsmanship and verbal abuse from players, fans, and coaches. Almost half of all new officials step away before they reach their third year of officiating.

For bad behavior to stop, we need all involved to buy into a cultural change, and that starts with the adults running the sport. We must hold ourselves and each other accountable for our actions and have the courage to call out bad behavior when necessary.

Abuse of officials has become such an issue within our sport that a no-tolerance policy is now needed to deal with it. Therefore, any reports of hostile behavior towards officials will be delivered to our Liaison Committee, which reviews with league representatives all incidents that potentially merit sanctions on individuals or programs. Consistent with our safe passage policy, we will withhold officials from games and programs if we believe circumstances warrant so.

Also, because retention of new officials is critical to sustain and grow our ranks, we plan to implement the use of unique armbands and/or whistles to identify – and protect - new or junior officials. The triggering threshold of abuse will be lower for individuals wearing these armbands.

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In an effort to combat this official shortage and help increase recruitment and retention, we want to work with participants and spectators to establish behavior expectations for all contests.

For our part, during our preseason training the ILOA will dedicate time to sections of the NFHS rulebook that relate to sportsmanship and the administrative responsibilities of all involved to ensure that good sportsmanship is practiced by all.

We ask that every team/school representative familiarize themselves with these sportsmanship rules and expectations and implement a best practices plan with their programs to ensure responsibilities are known and expectations are met at all contests.

Those sections include:

Rule 2-3 Coaches

Rule 2-4 Home Coach's Responsibility

Rule 2-6 Duties of Game Officials

Rule 5-10 Unsportsmanlike Conduct

Rule 5-12 Ejection

Rule 6-6 Conduct

Rule 7-12 Penalty Enforcement: Ejection

Appendix F: Coaches Code of Ethics

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In addition, all participants should be familiar with the contractual language in our league agreements regarding safe passage for officials:

## Article XII

### Safe Passage

It is the responsibility of the home team to ensure safe passage for officials from the game fields to their vehicles for all games, regardless of the outcome of the game. Teams/schools may hire police officers, school administrators, team parents or assistant coaches but officials must always be ensured safe passage to their vehicles after the conclusion of a game. ILOA reserves the right to evaluate the safety of officials and take necessary action, which may include withholding officials from game sites until appropriate safety measures are taken.

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Lastly, one of our main goals is always consistency. If a team or individual has needs or questions regarding best sportsmanship practices, we encourage them to contact their local assigner or ILOA board representative for further collaboration.

We thank you in advance for your cooperation in making this point of emphasis a priority this season.