



West Side Soccer League  
Chief Referee Manual  
August 2022

# Welcome

The West Side Soccer League (WSSL) is a member Region of the American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO) and is organized into divisions by age group, and teams of boys and girls, e.g. team G12 comprises girls aged 12 years and under.<sup>1</sup>

Since WSSL serves over 3,000 players and is run entirely by volunteers, those volunteers who manage the individual divisions, as well as the division's referees and coaches, represent a critical component in the operation of our Region. A successful and vibrant WSSL division cannot exist without the efforts of a dedicated Chief Referee. The Region and most importantly, our players, thank you for your volunteer contribution in this key position!

The purpose of this document is to provide you with pointers and suggestions to help you do your job effectively and efficiently. It is simply a road map and not a “must do” or “only do” list of expectations or requirements.

Your input in updating or adding to this document for the benefit of future Chief Referees is always welcome.

## *Key Points*

- **Divisional leadership is critical for the proper operation of WSSL**
- **This document is a series of suggestions, not must-do's**
- **We appreciate your input to improve this document**

<sup>1</sup> For AYSO guidance, please refer to the AYSO National Rules & Regulations at [https://www.ayso1ref.com/lib1/pdf/AYSO-Reference-Book-2022-0402\\_clean.pdf#page=35](https://www.ayso1ref.com/lib1/pdf/AYSO-Reference-Book-2022-0402_clean.pdf#page=35)

## Key Success Factors for the Division Chief Referee

- Ensure coverage of each week's games with properly qualified referees;
- Awareness of, and response to, game events such as cautions, send-offs, and player, volunteer or spectator behavioral issues;
- Provide the referee volunteers in your division with the tools they need to ensure that WSSL games are Safe, Fair and Fun;
- Build camaraderie among the referees and with coaches in the division
- Maintain a steady flow of useful communication between and among referees and coaches;
- Identify candidates who could become referee volunteers;
- Identify existing referees who would benefit from additional training or mentoring;
- Identify referees who would benefit from in-service guidance;
- Be the conduit to the division referees for league communications and reminders, and changes in the Laws of the Game and their interpretations;
- Promote referee volunteer attendance at WSSL referee events;
- Identify exceptional referee volunteers for recognition.

# Recommended Preseason Duties

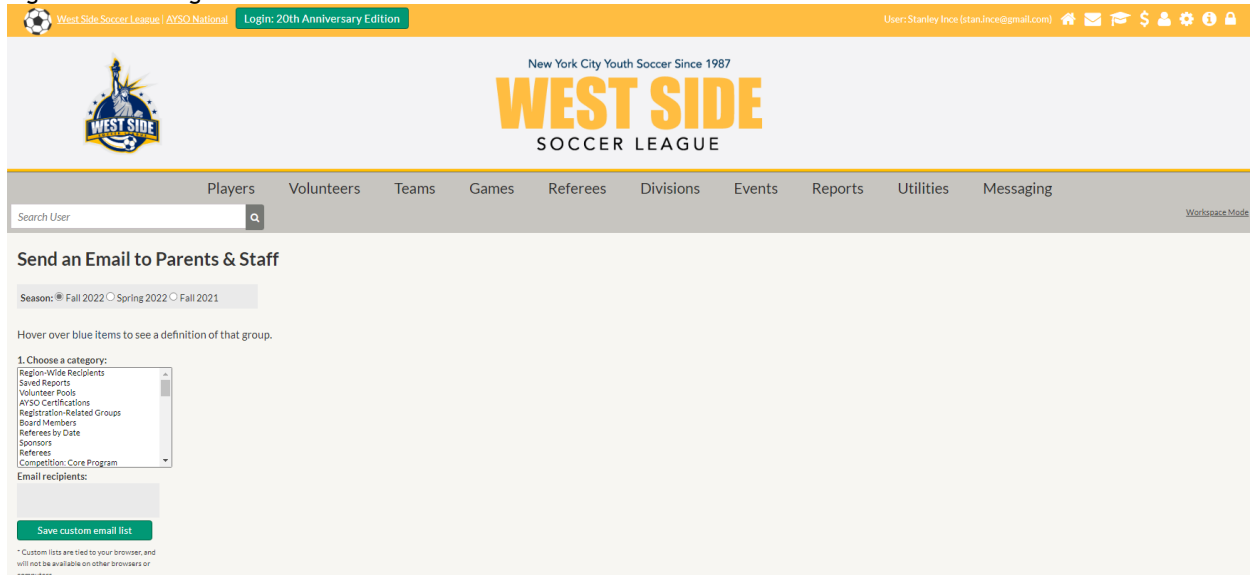
Several weeks before the first game of the season, check in with your Division Head. Review any issues from the previous season, key areas of focus or player development for the upcoming season, referee recruiting from the division parents, and any areas of coordination between the referees and coaches. Note that Referee classes typically take place a week or so prior to the start of the season so advertising and recruitment requires some pre-season planning.

Login to [wssl.org](http://wssl.org) to check your authority levels and access in the InLeague system. Chief Referee access allows you to:

- 1) Run reports of the pool of referee volunteers associated with your division;
- 2) Administer the referee schedule;
- 3) Send emails to your division (using Messaging / Email Manager).

If you have any questions or issues about your system access, email WSSL's Regional Referee Administrator, Stan Ince, at [stan.ince@gmail.com](mailto:stan.ince@gmail.com).

Fig.1 Email Manager screen



Review the upcoming referee class schedule and send recruiting emails (using emailer on [wssl.org](http://wssl.org)) to division parents in advance of classes. This is especially important in the younger divisions. You will probably need to send these messages more than once. It is essential to get as large a pool of referees as possible in these divisions to build a foundation for future seasons. Referee recruiting should be coordinated with the Division Head, as successful recruiting is the first and most important step in building a great division referee team and is a critical part in the development of a vibrant WSSL division.

Build your division referee contact and email database of existing certified referees in your division. You will piece this together from a variety of resources; keep in mind that this is a critical resource for referee management and game coverage during the season.

To build your updated season referee list, you can use many sources:

- 1) The InLeague system (login via WSSL.org). Start with Reports / General Volunteer Pool; if you need more information or a tailored query then use the Reports / Report Center flexible query tool;
- 2) Names of newly-certified referees via emailed to you from the Regional Referee Administrator or Director of Referee Instruction; and,
- 3) Your lists of past seasons' referees; note that you will not be able to go back to the online referee schedule for past seasons however the referee administrator can also provide this information on request.

Make sure to cross reference each referee with the team their child is playing on. This helps to understand adequate game coverage (if too many teams are without a certified referee you will have gaps in referee game coverage). This also helps you understand which referees are likely to referee a particular game (usually before or after their child's game at U-8 and older divisions).

Consider what is the ideal size of the pool of active referees based on your division size, i.e. number of teams or games each week.

Aim for a minimum of two certified referees per team. You will want more than this for divisions that play two teams on adjacent fields, e.g. 6U.

Contact any referees who are new to your division, inquire about their availability (some may be injured and cannot referee this season; some may appear available to referee in multiple divisions but really have a preference to work with a younger sibling, etc.). If your division is U-9 or older, stress the importance of the AR position and ask those who cannot commit to CR to participate as AR at their child's game. Encourage reluctant newly-minted referees to find their feet by participating as AR.

Using either the wssl.org Email Manager or your own database as outlined above, send a pre-season welcome email to the pool of division referees, cc:ing your Division Head. In this email you may want to solicit questions, see if there are any needs (uniforms, referee badges, stopwatches, etc.), point to online resources and references (see below, such as the Referee Survival Guide), remind them to get properly registered on wssl.org (with their division preferences), and use the online referee scheduler to sign up for games.

Check in with your division's Referee Scheduler if there is one, or consider recruiting a parent to this position to make your life easier. Your Division Head may already have a volunteer in mind. This person will work during the weeks of the season to fill games from the pool of referees, freeing you up to provide leadership to the division referees in terms of game assessments, answering questions that come up each week, e.g. how the Laws of the Game are implemented in your division. Note that your Referee Scheduler does not need to be a referee but will need to register as a volunteer with WSSL.

Attend you division's pre-season Coaches' meeting. If such a meeting has not been scheduled, encourage the Division Head to hold one and to invite you. It is valuable to meet the coaches and this provides you an opportunity to quickly run through important items and ensure the coaches are on the same page as the referees.

Here are some items you can touch on:

- Cleats vs turf shoes
- Jewelry
- Time management (start and end on time! 'On time' means 5 minutes before the next game is scheduled to start)
- Substitutions (when, how many, procedures for entering and leaving)
- Players to treating the referees with respect and say Thank You
- Anything else that you have come across in your experiences

Familiarize yourself with the rules for your division, especially if they have changed since the previous season. Send out a separate email to all referee volunteers at the beginning of the season setting out the current rules and discussing any changes.

From your experience in previous seasons with the referees at this level, select one or two points that will become your emphasis for improvement in the current season. This could include proper referee uniform, AR mechanics, pre-game player safety inspection, etc.

## *Key Points*

- **Check in with the Division Head**
- **Familiarize yourself with the WSSL website functions**
- **Know who is in your referee pool and communicate with them**
- **Pick an area for improvement each season**

## Recommended Weekly Duties During the Season

On each Monday, check the previous weekend's games in InLeague and solicit any missing game reports from the referees while the games are still fresh in their mind. Ask about any interesting calls or events where interpreting the Laws of the Game proved tricky. Ask about any problems or successes.

Use this feedback to send a brief recap highlighting or explaining one or two issues or tips from the weekend's feedback.

If there were issues in past weeks with specific teams, check with the referees who worked those teams during the immediate prior weekend. Look for themes or issues that recur week on week. Is there a trend, or a regular "problem child"?

Less experienced referees sometimes project a less than authoritative presence on the field. Authoritative does not mean dictatorial. Presence is the confidence with which a referee manages the game and makes their calls. When that presence is lacking, it can invite dissent or a lack of respect. If you have seen each of your referees in action on the field, you can use your opinion of their authority in determining whether a lack of presence can contribute to repeated incidents. Consider recommending that the referee requests a mentor next weekend to get some tips, help the referee improve their control of the game and build their confidence.

On Wednesday, check the scheduler on [wssl.org](http://wssl.org) for the upcoming weekend's game coverage, coordinating this effort with your Referee Scheduler.

By Friday of the week, coordinate with the Referee Scheduler to fill any remaining gaps in referee game coverage. Use the website's "Weekend Report" feature to communicate open slots to your referees. This automated email tells your referees exactly which games need coverage in CR and AR positions. It has the added advantage of letting them see who is already filling other slots and this may inspire a referee to step in and help out a friend by volunteering to be their AR for instance.

Every game needs a Center Referee, and at U-9 and older divisions, every game should have two Assistant Referees. The AR's primary duty is to monitor the offside position. Stress the point that the players cannot properly learn and implement the correct offside strategy unless there is a full referee team in charge of the game. Remind your referees that they **MUST** sign up in the online schedule so that gaps can be assessed, and they get priority registration for their players next season **ONLY** if their name is recorded in the schedule (minimum 3 games). If they jump in at the last minute, make sure they (or you) put their name in the schedule retrospectively.

Make sure that you or the Referee Scheduler “Approve” referees on the wssl.org referee scheduler. This will tell the referee that their assignment is confirmed and award them a volunteer point in the InLeague system (points are not used in WSSL at this time).

You are NOT expected to fill in gaps in the referee schedule by refereeing those games yourself. Some excellent Chief Referees don’t referee many game at all, but they organize and motivate their referee volunteers to get good coverage each week.

### *Key Points*

- **Be aware of on-field issues and get reports from referees**
- **Ensure coverage for the coming weekend**



## Recommended Game Day Duties

Again, Chief Referees are NOT expected to fill in gaps in the referee schedule by refereeing those games yourself. However, there are some things that you should do each week at the field, as time allows.

Make an attempt to personally meet the division referees. This helps build rapport, improves communication, and develops a feeling that referees are part of a team and have support from you and their colleagues. If you can, spend some extra time on game day at the field, rather than just officiating games or attending your child's game.

As you become more comfortable with your own skills, observe referees, make notes and observations for weekly email. You may have questions of your own as you observe play on the field and may ask others in the league for clarification.

Work with the Regional Referee Administrator, Stan Ince, or the Director of Referee Assessment, Paul Samarel, to provide guidance and mentoring to your division's referees, or contact the Director of Referee Instruction, Michael Titowsky, if your referees need more training. You will find their contact details on the website: [www.wssl.org/about/wssl-leadership/](http://www.wssl.org/about/wssl-leadership/)

Let your division referees know that they can request mentoring at any time. We have a strong group of experienced referees who are willing to provide mentoring. These mentoring sessions are positive experiences which focus on a referee's strengths and how they can broaden those strengths. You should communicate to your referees that not only should they not fear a mentoring session but that they can enjoy it and come away with additional confidence in their abilities.

The Director of the Teen Referee Program, John Drayton, can help you fill gaps in referee coverage, which also provides opportunities for teen referees to earn community service credits. He uses two email addresses, [john.drayton@citi.com](mailto:john.drayton@citi.com) and [drayts@aol.com](mailto:drayts@aol.com). Our Teen Referees have proved themselves to be competent and passionate volunteers. Please encourage their participation in your division.

### *Key Points*

- **Get down to the fields and meet your referees**
- **Identify candidates for mentoring**
- **Utilize the Teen Referees**

## Other Duties (in and out of season)

Always be recruiting! Referee classes are offered throughout the year including over the summer and winter. Check the website regularly for details and send reminders to your referee prospects. Note the following certification levels:

- 8U Official with Safe Haven certifies a volunteer to referee for 6U, 7U and 8U. This class is offered on the weekend before each season starts and at other times in the year.
- Regional Referee certifies referees for 9U and above. This class is also offered on the weekend before each season starts and at other times in the year.
- Intermediate Referee class is optional but highly recommended for games in 12U and higher. This class is offered the last weekend of January and at WSSL Training Super Camps.
- Advanced and National Referee certification is also optional and highly self-selecting among more experience referees, generally at 13U and older divisions.

In addition to training, all referee volunteers must update their volunteer registration in InLeague each season, and complete Safe Haven and CDC Concussion in eTrainU. Finally, all adult volunteers must complete SafeSport training every year. Without these four components, a referee will not be able to access the online referee schedule and therefore cannot and **MUST NOT** referee any games. They are not covered by AYSO's insurance and will not have the benefit of the Volunteer Protection Act of 1997.

Consider organizing or attending Referee Q & A sessions and social events, and encourage your referee team to attend.

Consider upgrading your own certification to Intermediate Referee and beyond.

If you spot an enthusiastic and competent club linesman, encourage them to come to a class and become a certified referee. Tell them that they have what it takes to be a great Assistant Referee... a little flattery goes a long way in this area!

### *Key Points*

- **Protect the league by ensuring that all referee volunteers have completed their registration and training**
- **Recruit, recruit, recruit!**

## Other Resources

There are lots of resources available to you and your referee team, from WSSL and from AYSO National.

In particular, the Volunteers/ Referees / Referee section of the website has a load of useful information: <https://www.wssl.org/volunteers/referees/referee-resources/>

Periodically dip into the Referee Survival Kit or read one of the Laws of the Game on the IFAB smartphone app to refresh your knowledge.

Attend the monthly WSSL Leadership meeting, which is usually held on Zoom. Network with other Chief Referees.

Consider holding a meeting or social event for your team of referees at the end of the season.

WSSL will foot the (reasonable) bill, so get a carload of referees and come to the AYSO Section 3 Expo in March each year to meet with leadership of other AYSO regions, get updates on national programs, and exchange ideas.