

## **Forza Soccer Academy: Bullying Policy and Procedure**



### **Vision**

At Forza Soccer Academy, we are committed to creating the best soccer experience for every child in our programs. Our mandate is to provide a caring, friendly, and safe environment, free from harassment and bullying.

### **Bullying Policy**

Forza Soccer Academy is dedicated to promptly investigating and addressing reported incidents of bullying or harassment. Our goal is to handle such cases objectively, sensitively, and take necessary corrective action while providing appropriate support for victims. No individual shall face penalties for reporting a complaint or providing evidence in a bullying or harassment investigation.

### **Definition of Bullying**

Bullying is the use of aggression with the intent to harm another person, causing pain and distress to the victim. It can take various forms, including:

1. Emotional: Being unfriendly, excluding (emotionally and physically), sending hurtful messages, tormenting, and using threatening gestures (e.g., hiding cleats/clothing).
2. Physical: Pushing, kicking, hitting, punching, or any form of violence.
3. Racist: Engaging in racial taunts, graffiti, or gestures.
4. Sexual: Involving unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments.
5. Homophobic: Targeting individuals based on their sexuality.
6. Verbal: Name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumors, or teasing.

Bullying may be:

1. Planned or unintentional.
2. Individual or group action(s).
3. Isolated or continual in nature.

### **Procedure When Bullying Occurs**

1. Any incident of bullying or harassment should be reported to the team coach as soon as possible.
2. The team coach will conduct an investigation, speaking to both parties individually.
3. The team coach will inform the parents of the involved players and may arrange a meeting to discuss the incident and develop a plan to prevent future occurrences.
4. Within 30 days of receiving the information about the incident, the team coach will file a Bullying Incident Report form with the Forza Soccer Academy Technical Director.

5. The Forza Soccer Academy Technical Director will keep a record of all submitted bullying incident forms.
6. If initial measures to stop the bullying are ineffective and the behavior continues, a second report will be filed with the Forza Soccer Academy Technical Director and forwarded to the President.
7. Upon receiving a second incident referral, the President will determine appropriate intervention and/or possible disciplinary action.
8. If mediation and disciplinary actions fail to resolve the bullying, the President may consider further disciplinary measures, including player expulsion from the club.
9. If deemed necessary and appropriate by the Technical Director or President the police may be consulted regarding bullying or harassment matters.

### **Recommended Actions**

If intervention is deemed appropriate, the following suggested measures may be taken:

1. Attempt reconciliation by bringing the parties together, encouraging a genuine apology if possible.
2. If reconciliation fails or is not appropriate, a small panel consisting of executive board members and Technical Director should meet with the parent and child alleging bullying to gather details of the allegation, with minutes taken for clarity.
3. The same panel should meet with the alleged bully and their parent(s) to address the raised incident and obtain their perspective, with minutes taken again.
4. The panel should also interview any witnesses to gather additional information, recording minutes for reference.
5. If bullying is confirmed, the athletes should be warned and notified of possible further action. Consideration should be given to whether a reconciliation meeting between parties is appropriate at this time.
6. Coaches involved with both athletes should be informed of the concerns and the outcome of the process (e.g., the warning).

### **Consequences for Those Who Bully**

Athletes found to be bullying teammates or members of other teams/clubs may face consequences, including but not limited to:

1. Formal apology.
2. Restitution for any damage to property or personal possessions.
3. Benching.
4. Barring from travel to tournaments or training trips.
5. Suspension.
6. Expulsion from Forza Soccer Academy.

Any retaliation by athletes or their parents against individuals who report bullying will be treated with utmost seriousness.