



FREEDOM AREA RECREATION COUNCIL
IN COOPERATION WITH CARROLL COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION & PARKS
ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY & GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES
March 17, 2022

Zero Tolerance Policy on Abusive Behavior

THIS POLICY IS EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY: 03/17/2022

Purpose of the Policy

This policy is being implemented to eliminate abuse of FARC program coaches, referees/umpires, or volunteers by adult spectators; both physical and verbal, and to discourage public dissent of same. The purpose is to make clear that verbal abuse or overtly unjustified or unproven negative criticism of FARC program coaches, referees/umpires, or volunteers is as unacceptable as verbal abuse or physical altercation and to adopt basic standard sanctions for improper conduct. As well, impart a proper grievance process for issue resolution. Even though public dissent may not be considered abuse it is not in keeping with the principles of a positive participation environment for our youth in teaching good sportsmanship and therefore will not be tolerated.

This policy is not intended to imply that all FARC representatives: coaches, referees/umpires, or volunteers are always right, and the adult spectator is always wrong. However, we must remember that the focus of the service the FARC Programs provides for the community is focused on providing a fun and rewarding experience for our adult and youth participants.

There are appropriate avenues for spectators to share concerns about the quality of coaching, referees/umpires, or volunteerism. Each FARC Program has a Program Commissioner/President in charge and will hear any constructive comments on coaches, referees/umpires, or volunteers. As well, FARC has an Executive Board and Grievance Committee that have the responsibility to objectively hear and consider any constructive criticism or issue.

The Zero Tolerance Policy on Abuse Behavior also highlights the grievance procedures we hope our adult spectators follow for issue resolution.

Guidelines for disciplinary action range from a one-week suspension for verbal abuse to expulsion from participation with any FARC Program for egregious offenses. More importantly, abuse or dissent of youth referees will be held to a more severe standard.

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Policy procedural details for proper resolution are outlined below.

Grievance Procedures

If an Adult Spectator has an issue, please follow the simple steps below to convey or formally file your grievance with FARC.

1. **If the issue is with the Referee/Umpire**, please contact your coach. The coach has the ability to speak with a referee/umpire after a game and sometimes at halftime. Some league rules specifically state that referee/umpire calls during a game are subjective and cannot be protested, period. Some even charge money for a formal protest to be filed.
2. **If the issue is with the Coach/Volunteer**, please try and communicate with the coach/volunteer. If that is not feasible, contact the Program Commissioner/President. The FARC Executive Board and Grievance Committee would prefer and hope that as adults most concerns or issues can be worked out prior to escalation.
3. **If the issue is with the Program Commissioner/President**, please try and communicate with the Program Commissioner/President. If that is not feasible, contact any FARC Executive Board Member or the FARC Grievance Committee. To contact the FARC Grievance Committee, email: freedomareareccouncil@gmail.com. If you file a formal grievance, please be sure to have information that supports and justifies the grievance filing. In all cases the FARC Grievance Committee will hear both the filing party and the accused.
4. **If the issue is with FARC**, please try and communicate with any of the FARC Executive Board Members. If that is not feasible, contact the CCRP. To contact the CCRP, email ccrec@carrollcountymd.gov or call **410-386-2103**.
5. **All FARC Program contact email addresses can be found on the FARC website <http://www.freedomarearec.org/>.**
6. Please **DO NOT STEP ON TO ANY PLAYING FIELD** before, during, or after a game/practice to confront any coach, referee/umpire, or volunteer. Simply follow the grievance procedures above. Your voice will be heard but **remember all resolution may not be in your favor.**
7. All FARC Volunteers have formally received a background check. The FARC paid for all the background checks via the CCRP. Each approved volunteer has a volunteer badge provided by the CCRP. In some cases, a volunteer may not yet have received their volunteer badge but are on the approved volunteer list provided by the CCRP and communicated to the program. **If you are not on the approved list, you are not allowed on the playing field, unless invited by a coach or volunteer once the program event starts.** This includes game/practice warmup through end of game. Of course, at end of game you can join the team with coach and players.
8. Please **REMEMBER FARC has valid and legal permits for all its events.** With that said, if a FARC Volunteer feels physically threatened, they have been instructed, if necessary, to call the police.

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Guidelines for Disciplinary Action:

1. Verbal abuse of a coach, referee/umpire, or volunteer = 1-game/week suspension; whichever is more.
2. Extreme and/or Serious verbal abuse of a coach, referee/umpire, or volunteer (e.g., using foul/profane language) = 2-game/week or more suspension; whichever is more.
3. Stepping onto the field or other threat to a referee/umpire or volunteer (by word or action) = 3 or more game/week suspension; whichever is more.
4. Continued non-compliance with FARC volunteer policy where only approved volunteers are allowed to interact with and train players. If this is a requirement for you to interact and train players, please have the program guide you through the background check process. **Disciplinary action will not include an emergency one-time situation where a coach needs immediate support.**
5. Egregious offenses (e.g. multiple abusive situations, physical contact with a coach/referee/umpire/volunteer, or another person, or exceptional misbehavior/harassment/unwarranted character assassination (including social media) directed toward a coach/referee/umpire/volunteer/team/program shall result in immediate removal from the FARC program via an extended suspension (6-months or more), termination of volunteerism, exclusion of your family as a participant in any FARC Program until further notice. This also constitutes any egregious negative action viewed as detrimental to the positive function of FARC or any of its programs.
6. **If removal is necessary and occurs after season starts, the FARC will abide by the respective program's refund policy. This means no refund may be offered if that is what the policy states.** Please take the time to read and understand the program refund policy.
7. If necessary local law enforcement will be called in for assistance. The incident will be reported to Carroll County Government. An egregious offense violates the fundamental mission of youth activities and sports and requires strong action.

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Of course, FARC hopes it never has to take any disciplinary action toward any of its Volunteers or Adult Spectators. However, it is important to emphasize that FARC is a volunteer organization. FARC volunteers **DID** sign-up to support our community and service its recreational activity requirements. FARC volunteers **DID NOT** sign-up to dismiss adult spectators, referee unacceptable adult behavior, or be abused by adult spectators of any kind and especially those who did not offer their time in volunteerism. **FARC cannot function without its many and great volunteers.**

Please read information below.

- **When a decision is made to no longer accept the gift of volunteer services from an individual, there is no obligation from FARC to provide cause, per the direction of the CCRP, because volunteering is a privilege, not a right.**
- **If adults affiliated with a FARC program cannot consistently govern themselves in a reasonably positive manner that promotes a positive fun participation environment for our community, the FARC Executive Board has a responsibility to take action to remove all negative parties and even shutdown the offending team and/or program as a whole.**

This policy applies primarily to the discipline of adult spectators, coaches, and volunteers. Youth violations may follow these tenants but will be discussed as a council towards an agreeable resolution.

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Signature and Acknowledgement of Understanding:

1. I have read the **FARC ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY & GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES.**
2. I understand the **FARC ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY & GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES.**
3. I agree to follow and abide by the **FARC ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY & GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES.**

NOTE: It is unfortunate that most of the recreation councils local, state, and nationally must formally issue policies of this nature, but the few bad apples are causing the need for this type of requirement. **If you do not sign the FARC ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY & GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES, your player will not be allowed to participate in the FARC program activities.**

<u>DATE:</u>
<u>PRINT NAME:</u>
<u>SIGNATURE:</u>

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