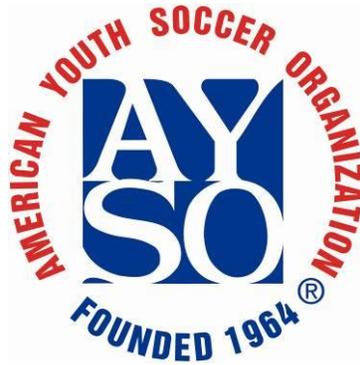


AYSO Program: Referee Lead Instructor: Advanced Referee Instructor	<h2>Recruiting & Retaining Referees</h2>	Latest Revision Date: 11/07/16 Length: 1 ¼ hours Page: 1



Change History	
August 30, 2006	Lesson Plan First Developed
August 1, 2007	Lesson Plan Update
September 2, 2009	Update
December 12, 2011	Update
October 8, 2012	Update
August 5, 2013	Reviewed
October 13, 2013	Customer Service Pod Added
October 28, 2015	Reviewed; Customer Service Pod Deleted
November 2016	Reviewed files

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1. DESCRIPTION

This workshop focuses on well-established techniques for recruiting and retaining referees. Good referees are essential to the success of soccer programs. Recruiting and retaining volunteers willing to assume the duties and responsibilities of the referee is challenging. In this session, we will review the techniques that have proven successful in the past and will brain storm new ideas offered by the attendees.

2. GOALS

The goal of this workshop is to give administrators and others ideas for recruiting referees and getting them to stay with AYSO.

3. PREREQUISITES

There are no prerequisites for this workshop.

4. STUDENT MATERIALS

Copy of Recruiting and Retaining Referees Manual (Optional)

5. INSTRUCTOR EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS

PowerPoint presentation, computer, and projector

Flip chart or white board and markers

6. INSTRUCTOR NOTES

This workshop is information intensive and is intended to review the material in the AYSO Recruiting and Retaining Referees manual. You must manage your time wisely. Reinforce the importance of controlling problems outside the touchline where referee abuse adversely affects the retention of existing referees and recruiting new referees.

Be sure to watch your time to ensure that there will be adequate time (approximately 35 minutes) to cover the “retaining referees” material completely.

6. ATTACHMENTS

None

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LESSON PLAN

I. INTRODUCTION (Slide 1) [5 min]

A. Introduce self and co-instructors

B. Introduce topic

Good referees are essential to the success of AYSO soccer programs. The most important responsibility referees have is to ensure that AYSO games are “FUN, FAIR and SAFE.” That means referees should understand the spirit of "Laws of the Game" and apply the Laws appropriately. Referees need to manage any unacceptable behavior or comments by players, coaches or spectators that spoil the enjoyment of everyone. They are expected to maintain their composure and set a good example as an authority for all, especially for our impressionable young players. Recruiting and retaining volunteers to assume these responsibilities is challenging. In this workshop, we will explore some suggestions that have proven successful in recruiting and retaining referees.

C. Link to past

Recall the apprehension you probably had when you first started refereeing and perhaps tell a short story to make the point that it really is an enjoyable and worthwhile activity once you get over the initial butterflies.

II. BODY [35 min]

A. We will start with Recruiting

Refer the attendees to the Recruiting and Retaining Referees manual and explain that during the remainder of the workshop we will review and expand upon the material in this manual. If attendees do not have one, inform them that the manual is available for purchase from the AYSO Supply Center or can be downloaded from www.aysotraining.org.

B. Recognize that Recruiting is a never ending task.

Every person you come in contact with is a potential referee

Instructor Note: Consider demonstrating a poor attempt at recruiting a potential volunteer from among the spectators at a game and then demonstrate a more successful approach. Pre-rehearse this with a co-instructor or play the role of a potential volunteer yourself and ask an attendee to recruit you.

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1. Recruiting Recruiters

The job of recruiting referees is the responsibility of the Regional Referee Administrator and the Regional Referee Staff. Whether one person or a recruiting staff does the recruiting, there are certain characteristics that are desirable in a recruiter:

- **Sales experience:** Recruiters are like salesmen because they are trying to sell the idea that refereeing is an enjoyable and worthwhile volunteer activity. And all it will cost is some of your free time.
- **Personable:** The recruiters need to be personable, reasonably articulate, and knowledgeable about AYSO national and local procedures and philosophies concerning officiating.
- **Persistent:** Good salespersons, and good recruiters, understand that a little persistence can produce results, but they also need to understand the difference between being persistent and being "pushy."
- **Dedicated:** The recruiters should be willing to seek out and talk to prospective volunteers and to follow up on any interest expressed.
- **Gender Specific:** It is helpful to have some recruiters who are the same gender and general age of the people they will be trying to recruit. This is particularly true when recruiting youth and women as they tend to be more inclined to volunteer when they are solicited by one of their peers.
- **Genuine Believers:** Good "salespeople" and good recruiters must believe in their product. That is, referee recruiters should be referees and assistant referees who genuinely enjoy refereeing and who enthusiastically support the AYSO program. This genuine enthusiasm can be the most convincing aspect of their recruiting efforts.

2. Training Recruiters

To prepare your recruiters, you might suggest they become familiar with some basic recruiting techniques.

- **Initial contact:** When approaching a potential volunteer referee, the manner in which questions are asked often determines whether or not they will be receptive.
- **Go slowly:** Do not put the volunteer in a position where he is uncomfortable making a large time commitment. They might be willing to "help" some, but might not want to referee. Explain the options and time involved for each such as; club linesman, U-8 Official or Assistant Referee, for which training is provided.

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- **Know Your Customers:** Recruiters should understand that most AYSO referees do not start out with a burning desire to become referees and only begin to enjoy officiating after a few games. With good training and positive support from fellow referees, the challenges and rewards of refereeing should be enough to motivate a reluctant volunteer to work at becoming a good referee.

3. 3. Common Excuses and Some Suggested Responses

Instructor Note: There is an opportunity for class participation here by getting some attendees to role play as reluctant volunteers and have other attendees attempt to recruit them. Refer to the Recruiting and Retaining Referees Manual and explain how this can be used as a poster for recruiting referees.

I don't know anything about the game!

Possible Response:

Many referees understood little about soccer when they first volunteered. All we ask of you is a little of your time, and we will train you. The training can be done a little at a time or all at once, whatever is most convenient. AYSO has a referee training program for officiating youth soccer games which many consider to be the best you will find anywhere in the world and can be completed in short evening sessions over an extended time or all at once in a full day training course. The more you take advantage of the available training, the better referee you will become. We will not ask you to do anything you do not feel ready to try. Even if you have never refereed a game in your life, with a few hours of training, you will know more about the Game of soccer than most of the people you know. We believe that with training your appreciation and enjoyment of the game will increase.

I don't have time!

Possible Response:

We do not ask our referees to obligate themselves to be constantly available to referee. What we need is a little help. Referees are free to choose the games they can do, which can be scheduled at your convenience; possibly just before or after the game your child is playing.

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I don't think I could put up with the behavior of some coaches and spectators!

Possible Response:

Boy, am I glad to hear you say that. We do not want our referees to put up with it! The majority of players and adults involved in our program are here because we do not allow unsporting behavior. Regions have strict policies governing such behavior, and we are strongly committed to these policies. We actually have few problems. As a referee, we can teach you how to deal with situations in a dignified and appropriate manner. You can help maintain the AYSO philosophy, while setting a good example for our impressionable young players.

I'm not the right kind of person to be a referee. I'd be embarrassed!

Possible Response:

To be the "right kind of person" to referee AYSO games, all you need is to enjoy watching kids having fun playing soccer. We can teach you the rest. Believe me; you would make a good AYSO referee because I know you care about kids. There is no need to feel embarrassed at making mistakes because we are all volunteers and even our most experienced referees were beginners at some point.

I'm a woman and women don't referee!

Possible Response:

Women certainly do referee, and are good ones, too. This is exactly why I am asking you to volunteer, because we would like to have more women involved as referees. Many of our players are girls and they love having women referees. They are comfortable with them and look up to them as role models. If you are a mom, you already are used to making quick decisions and multi-tasking. (If you are the mother of two or more children, you already know what it means to be a referee!) Don't worry. We will teach you and support you and start you with younger children. We will be there to mentor you until you feel comfortable and confident.

I can't afford the equipment!

Possible Response:

Don't worry about expense, because the Region will provide you with a uniform and all the necessary equipment.

I'm too old.

Possible Response:

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As long as you can still think and move around, you can do it. Lots of people your age are referees. Many of our referees are older than you are. One of the reasons they keep doing it is because it keeps them young!

I'm too young!

Possible Response:

If you are at least 10 years old, you are not too young to be a U-8 Official. Regional Referees and Assistant Referees only have to be 12 years old. There are many boys and girls around the country who referee.

I don't think I could keep up with the players. Some of them are pretty fast!

Possible Response:

Don't worry you will begin with the younger age divisions. Our most seasoned referees work with the older age division games, with the faster players, as we provide them with more extensive training. We still have plenty of younger division games on smaller fields where you would be able to keep up. You know, refereeing is also a good way to get a little exercise and to have fun at the same time.

I don't think I could handle the responsibilities of the referee!

Possible Response:

In time, I'm sure you would develop the confidence to referee. You can also provide vital assistance to the center referee by being an assistant referee. We have several qualified volunteers who only work as assistant referees. Every good referee will tell you that having good assistant referees can make all the difference.

4. When and Where to Recruit

Since it normally takes several seasons to develop an effective referee, recruiting must be ongoing and continuous. However, there are certain times when recruiting efforts should be intensified.

Instructor Note: Solicit from the attendees their suggestions regarding when and where recruiting efforts have a good opportunity for success. Ensure the following points are covered.

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- **Prior to registration**, consider sending a letter to the parents of all previously registered players to remind them of the need for volunteers and suggest that each family help in some way. You may want to include a list of the options and advantages of refereeing.
- **During registration** it is worthwhile to have recruiters available to talk to the parents. If possible, have both adult and youth referee recruiters present, in uniform, and smiling. Use women referees to recruit females. These recruiters can informally talk to potential volunteers in their own peer group. Anyone who indicates they would be willing to help should be considered a potential referee, even if they did not specifically volunteer to referee. The fact they are willing to help is half the battle. Do not fail to follow up with these volunteers.
- **During practices**. Parents who are frequently present during team practices are a good source of potential referees because they are already devoting the time and demonstrating an interest in the program.
- **During games**, recruiters should also look for the spectator who is frequently concerned with the accuracy of the referee's decisions. These people have already demonstrated a willingness to express their opinion as to whether a foul was committed or not. The recruiter could suggest to them that if they would be willing to attend a training course they could become "real referees." If your recruiting efforts are unsuccessful, at least the spectator may be a little less critical of the officiating in the future, particularly if you detail all of the training and experience necessary to become a referee.

It pays to advertise! Consider publicizing your need for referees in the local newspapers, on radio stations or with flyers and always include a statement about the need for referees in any of your regional publications, such as newsletters, parents' handbooks, etc. Advertising is particularly worthwhile prior to any referee clinics you will be having. The more people know of the need for referees, the more likely you are to get volunteers.

5. Who to Recruit

There are certain people who will be more likely to be recruited as referees and to remain active in the program.

Instructor Note: Solicit from the attendees their suggestions regarding who are likely to be good prospects to approach as potential volunteer referees. List the suggestions and ensure the following points are covered.

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- **Players' Parents:** Obviously, players' parents are the primary source of AYSO referees and parents of the younger players are the best prospects since they will probably be involved in the program longer than the parents of older players. Therefore, you may want to concentrate your recruiting efforts among the parents of U-6 and U-8 teams. Often, you will find that the parents of the child who is particularly motivated to play soccer are usually supportive and make excellent volunteers.
- **Players:** Another excellent source of referees is your players. You can begin with players as young as age 10 and train them as U-8 Officials. Twelve-year-olds can become Regional Referees and Assistant Referees. Players from the older divisions, high school and college, as a group, already have a firsthand knowledge of the game and are easier to train.
- **Boy and Girl Scouts:** Scouts can use refereeing to earn community service merit badges.
- **Church Groups:** Church groups often encourage "public service".
- **Schools:** Schools in many areas require students to perform a minimum number of "community service hours" in order to graduate.
- **College bound players:** Students with plans to attend college can add to their list of "organizations and activities" on their college admissions applications. Colleges want to see examples of leadership and responsibility, which volunteer refereeing provides with abundance.
- **Job hunting players:** Students who want to apply for a job. Youth referees who can list soccer refereeing on a job application have a better chance of getting a job. Employers are impressed with a youth referee who has the courage, confidence and discipline to be a referee.
- **Senior Centers or "Villages":** Be Imaginative.

6. How to recruit

There are several general methods of recruiting, and you must determine what works best for your region's particular circumstances.

- **Designated Recruiters:** Designating specific individuals as recruiters is often an effective method when there are a sufficient number of these

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recruiters available with the free time to spend soliciting volunteers and following up with the necessary arrangements for their training.

- **Publicity:** It pays to advertise and you should take advantage of every opportunity to publicize the need for volunteer referees.
- **Forced Recruiting:** Some Regions have adopted various kinds of "forced recruiting" policies which require every coach or every team provide referees. This "crisis management" is not recommended because it does not encourage the development of motivated referees who will continue their involvement with refereeing.
- **The Buddy System:** The "buddy system" is simply allowing and encouraging experienced referees to recruit and personally train a "buddy" or two to develop a referee team. The experienced referee would, in effect, take these new volunteers "under his/her wing" and personally support and encourage their development.
- **The Referee Mentor Program:** This program is designed specifically to provide a means for more experienced referees to be Mentors for less experienced referees. Using Referee Mentors can be a powerful tool to aid in recruitment and retention of referees.

7. Use of the Diagonal System in Recruiting

"We have difficulty getting one official on the field, how do you expect us to get three?" This is probably the most common response to requests for three officials per game instead of one or two. Do not get too involved in discussing the relative merits of the diagonal, dual, or single refereeing systems here. Suffice it to say that the diagonal system is the recommended system in AYSO. The vast majority of experienced referees prefer it, and it is the way the "big boys" do it all over the world.

- **Convenient:** The diagonal system lends itself nicely to recruiting potential new referees. If there is only one official available per game, the official should be encouraged to enlist (recruit) the assistance of two volunteers as "club linesmen." If only two officials are available for games, one becomes a qualified assistant referee and a club linesman is recruited to serve as a "club linesman." When only one or two referees are available for a game and they make no attempt to recruit a club linesman or two to help them, they are missing a very good opportunity to stimulate the interest of a potential new referee.

RETAINING REFEREES

BODY (35 Minutes)

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- a. Ask why the attendees, in groups or collectively, to identify:
 - i. Why referees quit refereeing?
 - ii. Why referees continue to referee?

Record the answers on a flip chart or white board and summarize the answers. Make certain to share the following point:

- **Nothing succeeds like success.** Retaining volunteers is much easier if you have a successful, well organized program. The fewer problems you have, the more likely people are to stay.

Refereeing should be FUN so...

- **First things first:**

Minimize problems: The more problems you have at games, the more difficult it will be to retain your referees. Do not tolerate issues from coaches, spectators or other referees that are not supporting the AYSO program philosophies.

- **REMEMBER** – for every referee you retain, that person can assist in the recruitment of new referees and help you get more referees to cover your matches.

8. Provide Adequate Training from the start.

Once you have recruited a potential referee, the next step in retaining them is to provide adequate training so they have a better chance for success and to enjoy the experience.

- **A Good Start:** Getting off to a good start is important in any new endeavor, and this is particularly true with soccer refereeing. Also, you are more likely to retain them if they are well trained and are able to enjoy refereeing.
- **Don't Forget Your Veterans:** Experience is the best teacher, but do not make your referees learn everything the "hard way." Training for the beginners is important but do not forget to offer additional training for your more experienced referees. Upgrades to the next higher level of referee certification should be offered at least once per year for Intermediate and Advanced referee candidates. Many referees can get frustrated if there are few or no opportunities for advancement.
- **Use the National Referee Program:** Comprehensive referee training programs and materials are available for all levels to prepare referees for more challenging games.

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- **Use of the Diagonal System:** The diagonal system lends itself nicely to training and supporting newer referees. Assigning an experienced referee as an AR to games with newer referees in the center provides opportunities for mentoring and performance feedback.

9. Establish Good Communication

Instructor Note: It could add interest to your presentation to provide some examples of poor communication. For example, you could read some Church Bulletin bloopers like:

“The Low Self-Esteem Support Group will meet Thursday from 7 to 8:30 pm. Please use the back door.”

“This being Easter Sunday, we will ask Mrs. Johnson to come forward and lay an egg on the altar.”

“Don’t let worry kill you off – let the church help.”

IV

misunderstandings are a fact of life but, when they occur, it is important that AYSO leaders are able to address issues quickly to avoid losing a good referee.

ASK: What are some effective methods to deal with misunderstandings?

All volunteers become dissatisfied and disillusioned if they are not well informed and this is particularly true with referees. Do not rely on word of mouth to convey important information. Additionally, make sure your referees receive current publications

- Current AYSO edition of the FIFA Laws of The Game.
- AYSO Guidance for Referees, Coaches, Parents and Other Volunteers.
- Local Regional or inter-Regional guidelines.
- Contact information for staff and other referees.
- Game assignments as far in advance as possible.
- Regional handbook.

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10. Form a Referee Club

Instructor Note: Ask the attendees what they like about refereeing. After a few responses, hopefully you will be able to confirm that camaraderie among referees is a very important and enjoyable aspect of refereeing. Referees enjoy having the opportunity to exchange "war stories," discuss various ways to deal with problem situations, and, in general, enjoy the fellowship and support of fellow referees. Referee clubs can offer these opportunities and they are fun. Then discuss the following points regarding opportunities for referees to congregate.

- **Meetings:** Schedule meetings at a suitable location and have an organized format but still allow plenty of time for social interaction and idea exchange.
- **Speakers:** A member may be selected to present a particular aspect of refereeing and formulate a few interesting questions for discussion.
- **Involve Everyone:** An effort should be made to give ample opportunity for everyone to be involved in the discussions and social interaction.
- **Don't Forget the Women:** Women referees may also want to form their own group where they can meet with other women referees and share experiences. Women find that what works for them on the field may not work for men and vice versa. Another woman may offer insights no one else has.
- **Youth Referee Programs:** Youth Referee Programs are often used to provide the special kind of support and training youth referees benefit from. Consider a Player Referee Organization (PRO) program for you region. Consult the Youth Referee manuals on aysotraining.org.

11. Offer Motivational Incentives

Keep your referees engaged and interested through support with mentors, interesting meetings and good training. Don't make refereeing a "thankless job." Expressing thanks and appreciation to referees by providing support in various ways.

- **Uniforms:** Referees should always wear the proper attire when they are refereeing to be readily visible as a "trained official." Provide your referees with uniforms.
- **Thanks from Players and Coaches:** encourage the players and coaches to express gratitude to the referees after the games. Too often,

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we forget that referees are also volunteers just like the rest of us and are contributing their time and energy free of charge. A simple "thanks for reffing" from the players or coaches, regardless of the outcome of the game, can go a long way toward keeping a referee motivated.

- **Awards:** Public recognition of referees in your program is a way to express appreciation and also to motivate others. The exact manner in which you try to offer incentives to your referees can take many forms, as people respond in different ways.
- **End of Season Banquet or Potluck:** It is good to reward your volunteers for a job well done with an end of season banquet or potluck. In this setting, referees can mingle and exchange stories. This is a good time to publicly acknowledge referees for their contributions throughout the season. Board members should give a standing ovation to each group of critical volunteers – coaches, referees, and team managers.

12. Deal Firmly with Abuse of Referees

Abuse of referees and assistant referees, whether verbal or physical, has absolutely no place in AYSO. Any offending actions against match officials must not be tolerated under any circumstances. Point out that the number one problem in all youth sports today is parents and coaches behaving inappropriately at games. This is also a primary reason referees quit and why it is difficult to recruit new volunteers as referees. Review the following points to address the issue.

- **Be Proactive:** Regions must be proactive in preventing referee abuse through the education of coaches and parents.
- **Be Committed:** Regions must also set an example by dealing immediately and firmly with all incidents of referee abuse. The Regional board needs to back their referees by removing from the program anyone whose negative behavior towards referees does not change.
- **Zero Tolerance:** Coaches and spectators acting in an abusive, offensive or insulting way is a particular obstacle to the recruiting and retaining of women and youth referees. Every Region should have a “zero tolerance” policy regarding abuse of youth referees.
- **The Coach Administrator is Key:** The Regional Coach Administrator needs to understand that a negative coach is worse than no coach. Referee input should be elicited when deciding which coaches will represent AYSO.

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13. Shaping the Referee's Image

Instructor Note: Ask the attendees to close their eyes and imagine the ideal referee and all of the qualities they would like to see in this ideal referee. Then ask a few attendees to describe for the class exactly what they imagined. It will be interesting to listen to the descriptions and to see if anyone imagined a woman referee or a youth referee. Make the following points.

Regions that want to attract a wide variety of volunteers to join their referee staff should first look at their current program. Does the Region's recruitment program communicate to the potential volunteers that anyone including women and youth can become a good referee, or does it give the impression that only adult men who know a lot about soccer need apply?

- **Fight to Change Public Perception:** The general soccer public's perception of who is a good referee has a great effect on both recruitment and retention of referees. Many coaches and parents see "good referees" as being strong men with plenty of soccer experience. This image becomes self-fulfilling as parents and coaches question, and don't trust, any referee that doesn't fit their image of a "good" referee. Unfortunately, women and youth referees frequently fall into this category.
- **Train coaches** to be support the AYSO triangle and philosophies towards the referees and not to allow poor parent behavior or negative comments.
- **Public Recognition:** All referees should be recognized publicly at AYSO meetings and gatherings.
- **Spread the Word:** Communicate to parents and coaches the training that referees must complete to become certified and at every opportunity show parents and coaches that all referees, regardless of gender or age, are knowledgeable and competently trained officials. If possible, get as many coaches as you can to complete a referee training course.
- **Be Proud:** Highlight the accomplishments of women and youth referees along with all the others.
- **Spotlight Individuals:** Look for opportunities to put up and coming men, women and youth referees in positions of high visibility such as being the Referee or an Assistant Referee on a finals match.

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14. Referee Mentor Program

The Mentor program is designed to provide support and encouragement for new and developing officials with guidance from experienced referees. Regions can use current, temporarily out of commission, or retired referees to implement this important program that fosters improvement, upgrading and recruiting.

15. Develop a CORE Referee Group:

This is a group of your most experienced referees:

- The ones with older children playing or no longer playing.
- The ones the gladly worked to upgrade to Advanced and National referees.
- The ones that already are or are targeted to become instructors.
- The ones that already are or are targeted to become assessors.
- The ones doing extra games.
- The ones that exemplify what a referee should be.

Keep your CORE referee group busy with teaching, mentoring, assessing, and, most importantly, encouraging the next set of referees that you want to join the CORE group.

- **Personalized Attention:** The Mentor Program is simple: get experienced referees to help less experienced referees in a one on one environment.
- **Make a New Friend:** Mentors have the opportunity to make a new friend and to help the referee program at the same time. It's people that make programs successful and successful programs help people make friends.
- **Assessing:** Invite these CORE referees to become assessors to assist in getting your referees upgraded.
- **Encourage the next set of referees:** Emphasize that attendees should continue their efforts to recruit and retain referees and express your hope that they have picked up a few ideas during the workshop to help in that endeavor.

Remind them to use the Recruiting and Retaining Referees manual available for purchase from the AYSO Supply Center or download from aysotraining.org and implement the idea and suggestions to improve their referee programs.

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III. CONCLUSION

A. Review

Review the highlights of the fourteen topics addressed and emphasizing that recruiting and retention is a never ending job because of attrition and other natural factors.

B. Confirm

Ask which ideas are most helpful to the attendees and ask what they feel is the most important factor to control to help with recruiting and retention (prevent referee abuse!).

C. Bridge to future

Express your appreciation on behalf of AYSO for their efforts in helping provide good referees who in turn provide a great place for AYSO players to have a FUN, fair and safe to play.