



# **INTEGRITY**

## **RESOURCE CENTER**

**Developing and Establishing  
an Effective Integrity Program  
for Sports Officiating**

# ***INTRODUCTION***

Scandals have become as much a part of sports as athletes, officials, and administrators and it won't be long before today's headlines are replaced by reports of wrongdoing and misconduct tomorrow. While most reports center on illegal, unethical, or other inappropriate conduct by players, administrators and others, officials have not been spared. The poster child for wrongdoing in officiating, of course, is the Donaghy affair, where a professional basketball referee was sentenced to 15 months in prison for using his knowledge of relationships between referees, coaches, players, and owners, to bet on professional basketball games.

But most wrongdoing in officiating gets less attention and is certainly not as serious. When misconduct is discovered in the officiating ranks, the response is often along the lines of: suspensions, bans, hoping it won't happen again, hoping he/she will move out of state or to another Association, hoping the authorities will intervene, or sweeping it under the rug. However, the sports industry and the public at large expect more from officials. Not only are officials expected to be near perfect on the field, surely they must be beyond reproach off the field. Some mistakes in making calls will be tolerated, but breaches of trust and character lapses are another matter. In officiating, it's all about trust and good character. Ben Franklin once noted, "It takes many good deeds to build a good reputation and only one bad one to lose it."

Well-designed, effective integrity programs that have the support of officiating leaders would be a huge first step towards making it clear that ethical behavior is expected from all in the officiating ranks: officials, supervisors, assigners, and others, and there will be consequences for transgressions. Effective integrity programs are designed to prevent wrongdoing, to detect and investigate problems when they are small, and to take corrective action when appropriate.

# ***GETTING STARTED***

Getting started on any new initiative or program is never easy. And when it's not mandated by upper management or an outside regulatory body, it's easy to put off. But officiating leaders have the responsibility to protect their organizations and their officials from problems that can be avoided. After all, no one wants to deal with the embarrassment of a public display of officiating misconduct.

Before deciding to develop an integrity program for your department or organization, a few first steps are in order:

- Review the blog section at [sportsofficiatingconsulting.com](http://sportsofficiatingconsulting.com) to better understand and appreciate the need for sports organizations to develop and establish effective integrity programs.
- Read "Compliance 101 (2nd ed.) How to Build and Maintain an Effective Compliance and Ethics Program." This publication of the Society of Corporate Compliance and Ethics (SCCE) is available through [corporatecompliance.org](http://corporatecompliance.org).
- Review the NASO "Minimum Standards for an Effective Integrity and Compliance Program for Sports Officiating" as approved by the NASO Board of Directors, April 25, 2017. (See Appendix A).
- Review resources and information available on [nasointegrity.com](http://nasointegrity.com), the NASO Integrity Resource Center dedicated website.

# WHAT IT TAKES

## DEVELOPING AND ESTABLISHING AN EFFECTIVE INTEGRITY PROGRAM

- As with any new initiative, it takes a **CHAMPION** to educate key stakeholders on the need for the program and the benefits to be realized. This champion needs to lead the initiative, gain the support of top management, and set forth a plan for the design and implementation of the program.
- The commitment to support the program by **TOP MANAGEMENT** is essential. Without it, the program will fail.
- **RESOURCES** will be needed. Human resources are essential to assure that the champion and others have the time needed to get the program started and to ensure a smooth rollout and implementation.
- **EXPERT ASSISTANCE** from outside the organization may be needed. While paid consultants could be helpful, they are not essential. Assistance in getting started, developing, and establishing the program is available through the NASO Integrity Resource Center.
- Developing an **IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY** is vital. A written plan should be developed detailing the design and implementation strategy. This plan as developed by the champion must gain top management support.

# ASK YOURSELF

## QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF BEFORE GETTING STARTED

### **RISK ASSESSMENT**

- What keeps me up at night?
- What wrongdoing have I observed or heard about that I hope won't happen again?
- What could happen that would embarrass our organization or cost me my job?

### **CODE OF CONDUCT**

- Does our Code of Conduct make clear expectations of our officials?
- Does our Code of Conduct reflect our values and specify behavior that is unacceptable?
- Is our Code of Conduct written plainly and concisely so everyone can understand our expectations?
- Do all covered individuals attest in writing that they have received, read, and understood the Code of Conduct?
- When was the last time we updated our Code of Conduct?

### **POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

- Do we have a non-retribution/non-retaliation policy (See Appendix B for sample) assuring our officials that they will be protected to the extent possible if they report instances of misconduct, wrongdoing, or other integrity-related issues?
- Do we have any other policies related to misconduct, wrongdoing or other integrity-related issues?

## **INTEGRITY OFFICER**

- Do we have someone who would be a suitable integrity officer?
- Would this person have the respect of everyone throughout the organization?
- Would this individual have the time to educate himself or herself on the job responsibilities/requirements?
- Would this person report directly to the top manager in our officiating department/organization?
- Would this person have direct access to the governing authority?

## **EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

- Do we have the resources needed to conduct education and training of all personnel including online training?

## **REPORTING**

- How will we make our officials aware of the three opportunities to report instances of misconduct, wrongdoing or other integrity issues (See Appendix C)?
  - 1 The local director/supervisor
  - 2 The integrity officer
  - 3 The hotline
- How will we assure that our non-retribution/non-retaliation policy is understood by all?

## **INVESTIGATIONS**

- Will our Integrity Officer have the authority to conduct unbiased investigations?
- How will we assure that our investigations will protect the confidentiality, wherever possible, of those reporting wrongdoing?

## **CORRECTIVE ACTION**

- How will we assure that corrective action taken will be administered consistently throughout the organization?



# APPENDIX A

## Minimum Standards for an Effective Integrity and Compliance Program for Sports Officiating

As the sports officiating industry matures, it is becoming apparent to officiating leaders that their industry needs to develop effective integrity and compliance programs. Such programs are the best way for this industry to demonstrate its commitment to prevent wrongdoing, to detect and investigate problems when they do occur, and to take corrective action as appropriate.

While today there are no standards for compliance programs in the officiating industry, the board of the National Association of Sports Officials believes adopting the following minimum standards would be a useful first step towards assuring NASO members, the US sports industry, and the public at large of its commitment to integrity in sports. These minimum standards are appropriate for officiating programs at all levels: high school, college, national governing bodies, and the professional leagues.

- A risk assessment to determine the primary risks of the organization should be conducted before starting a program.
- A code of conduct tailored to the individual organization is the cornerstone of any effective integrity and compliance program. This set of rules and expectations must demonstrate the organization's emphasis on integrity and compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, and the policies and ethical standards of the organization.
- An integrity officer must be designated. The officer must have adequate resources, should report to top management, and must have direct access to the governing authority.
- Education and training is critical to the success of any program. All employees and independent contractors should be covered by the program, and receive orientation and annual training.

- Reporting wrongdoing is essential. This can be accomplished through the normal chain of command or through a hotline (a third-party site) to ensure anonymous reporting.
- Unbiased investigations should be conducted promptly, usually by the integrity and compliance officer. The organization must have a non-retaliation, non-retribution policy. Confidentiality of those reporting wrongdoing should be maintained to the extent possible.
- Corrective action must be taken when appropriate to address specific incidents and to prevent future wrongdoing.
- A monitoring and evaluation system will help ensure the program is working. A report should be made to the governing body annually.

Adopted by the NASO Board of Directors, April 25, 2017



# **APPENDIX B**

## **Non-Retribution / Non-Retaliation Policy**

The (Organization Name) has established an Integrity Program that promotes the highest standard of ethical and legal conduct. Standards of conduct and procedures for staff, assigners, and officials are established to guide this effort.

The (Organization Name) believes that positive relations and morale with all covered individuals can be achieved and best maintained in an environment that promotes ongoing communication between the assigners and officials. Open and candid discussion among all of the (Organization Name) covered individuals about any problems or concerns is encouraged.

The (Organization Name) believes that all covered individuals should express their problems, concerns, and opinions on any issue and that their views are important. To that end, a policy that will encourage covered individuals to communicate problems, concerns, and opinions without fear of retaliation or retribution has been implemented.

### **POLICY**

- 1** All covered individuals are responsible for promptly reporting actual or potential wrongdoing, including an actual or potential violation of law, regulation, policy, or procedure.
- 2** The (Organization Name) staff and assigners will act upon the concern promptly and in an appropriate manner.
- 3** The (Organization Name) Integrity Hotline (xxx-xxx-xxxx) will permit covered individuals to report anonymously and/or in confidence, to report problems and concerns or to seek clarification of integrity/compliance related issues.
- 4** Covered individuals who report concerns in good faith will not be subjected to retaliation, retribution, or harassment.

- 5 No covered individual is permitted to engage in retaliation, retribution, or any form of harassment against another covered individual for reporting integrity/compliance-related concerns.
- 6 Covered individuals cannot exempt themselves from the consequences of wrongdoing by self-reporting, although self-reporting may be taken into account in determining the appropriate course of action.

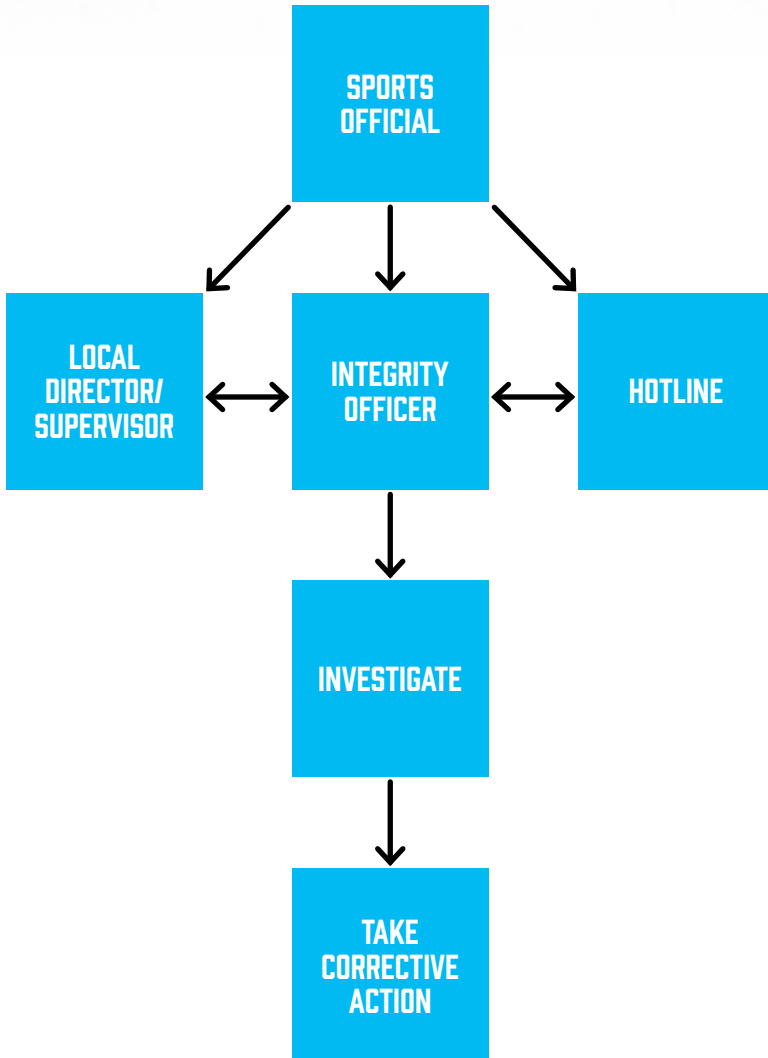
## **PROCEDURES**

- 1 Knowledge of actual or potential wrongdoing, misconduct, or violations of the Integrity Program should be reported immediately to the (Organization Name) staff, assigners, or via the hotline.
- 2 All assigners should maintain an open-door policy and take aggressive measures to assure their officials that the system truly encourages the reporting of problems and concerns and that there will be no retaliation, retribution, or harassment for doing so.
- 3 Officials should report concerns to their assigner, to the (Organization Name) staff, or to the hotline.
- 4 All concerns will be investigated promptly.

Confidentiality regarding covered individuals' concerns will be maintained at all times insofar as legal and practical, informing only those who have a need to know.

# APPENDIX C

## Reporting/Investigating Misconduct, Wrongdoing and Other Integrity Issues





**Implementing effective integrity programs will enable sports officiating to catch up with the business community where such programs have been common for many years and proven in preventing, detecting and correcting wrongdoing.**

**NASO INTEGRITY COMMITTEE**

**Dave Dodge (Chair), Bill Carollo, Barry Mano, Todd Stordahl**

*Special thanks to the committee for contributions to this booklet.*