

2025-26 MHSAA OFFICIALS REVIEW COMMITTEE MINUTES

Tuesday, October 21, 2025, 9:30 a.m. – East Lansing

MEMBERS PRESENT

Shawn Andrews, Flushing
Kenny Goodrich, Lansing
Marla Grant, Jackson
Vincent Gross, Paradise
Leroy Hackley, Muskegon
Linda Hoover, Marshall
Anika McEvans, Detroit
Nicole Norris, East Lansing
Malcolm Pennington, Detroit

Fred Smith, Bangor
Matt Stabley, Macomb
Justin Terry, Lansing
Sean Zaborowski, St. Clair Shores

MHSAA STAFF

Sam Davis, (Recorder)
Laura Roberts
Jeff Spedoske

The Officials Review Committee (ORC) met on October 21, 2025. The committee was reminded of its responsibility and the process by which regulation and policy changes occur.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

2024-25 ORC MEETING MINUTES REVIEW

The committee reviewed last year's ORC meeting minutes, including staff recommendations that were implemented in 2024, which included an increased penalty for any coach or player who is ejected for spitting at, hitting, slapping, kicking, pushing and/or aggressively physically contacting an official as well as the approved increase of the number of officials required to work events.

MHSAA OFFICIALS DEPARTMENT UPDATES

Jeff Spedoske provided an explanation of the ejection report and appeal process. He highlighted the key issues with the report process, including delays in submission, inaccuracies in the information, and concerns with the format of the report writing.

Sam Davis outlined the ejection, suspension and appeal process, sharing data on the number of appeals received by the MHSAA over the past year. The committee was provided with information on the appeals and decisions from the Spring of 2024 to the present. Athletic directors are required to submit ejection and suspension appeals within 72 hours of the contest's conclusion.

Laura Roberts clarified for the committee that officials will be honored in the year they reach their service milestones. However, those who register after the deadline for submitting names to the engraver will be recognized in the following year.

The committee received a report on the NASO Summit, which centered around the theme "Develop, Direct, and Defend Officials." Key discussion topics included officiating soft skills, social media and its impact on officials, mental fitness, burnout, and sportsmanship behaviors and celebrations.

The Midwest Officials meeting, which was held last month, highlighted several important issues, including recruitment successes, mentoring programs aimed at retaining officials, observation programs, postseason official selection processes, background check policies, concerns about unregistered or improperly registered officials, and membership in local associations.

The committee received a summary of the Assigners and Association Leaders Summer Meeting. Key discussion points included an emphasis on utilizing the officials' dashboard to prevent registration issues and ensure postseason eligibility, a review of the Code of Conduct for officials, assigners, and association leaders, and a reinforcement of the roles and responsibilities of assigners and association leaders.

Officiate Michigan Day 2026 information was shared with the group. The event will be held at DeVos Place in Grand Rapids and will feature a combination of general and sport-specific officiating sessions. The program will include training opportunities, guest speakers, lunch, gifts, and prizes. Attendance is mandatory and in-person for assigners, association leaders, trainers, observers, and recruiting and mentorship coordinators. The event will be hosted in conjunction with the 2026 NASO Summit.

The committee received an update showing a 4.2% increase in individual registrations for the 2024-25 season, rising from 8,825 in 2023-24 to 9,197 in 2024-25. In addition, total sports registrations increased by 5.3% over the previous year. It was noted that the MHSAA's efforts to recruit mentors for new officials have been successful. The program's implementation and its impact on new officials' development and retention continue to be monitored.

MHSAA staff provided an update of ongoing efforts to educate assigners, athletic directors, and association leaders about the negative impact of officials working unregistered or improperly. To help reduce these occurrences, officials are regularly reminded to review their MHSAA dashboard, which provides real-time updates on their registration and eligibility status. The committee discussed that sanctions to those responsible for contracting and assigning officials are important to reduce the numbers of officials working without proper clearance.

Following last year's discussion regarding the perceived unfairness of athletes being required to miss their next contest and complete the NFHS Sportsmanship Course for certain rule violations not directly related to sportsmanship, such as a DOGSO (Denial of an Obvious Goal-Scoring Opportunity) in soccer, the committee revisited the issue. Andy Frushour presented his findings after reviewing all soccer ejection reports from the previous season. His analysis showed that the majority of red cards were appropriately issued, while in some cases, yellow cards should have been red. He also noted that the NFHS classifies offenses on a scale from least to most violent, with DOGSO categorized among nonviolent, non-conduct-related offenses.

The committee then discussed whether ejections for "handling violations" should carry the same penalty, missing the next contest, as conduct-related ejections. The consensus was that handling violations should be treated similarly to a fifth foul in basketball or a game disqualification in hockey, where the athlete is removed from the current game but not suspended for the next competition. As a result, the committee recommends that the Soccer Committee consider proposing a rule change so that ejections for handling violations in soccer do not require the player to miss the next date of competition.

The committee reviewed the findings from the beta test group that evaluated the RefReps courses for new officials. The group's consensus was that the program significantly enhances a new official's ability to learn, adapt, and effectively officiate their sport. The committee reaffirmed its recommendation that all new officials be required to complete the RefReps course in their primary sport.

A discussion also took place regarding officials remaining on-site after a contest to observe the postgame handshake line. The committee agreed that officials should not be required to manage activities once the contest has concluded. It was recommended that the MHSAA continue to

monitor the postgame handshake tradition to determine whether it contributes to any conduct-related issues.

An idea was shared of allowing the MHSAA Ejection Review Committee to review unsportsmanlike conduct actions not seen by the officials when video evidence was presented. The committee felt that this could be problematic and was not supportive of the idea.

Staff presented a proposal requiring that officials who make intentional or aggressive physical contact with an athlete or coach be subject to a minimum 14-day suspension and ineligible for postseason assignments. This policy would align with the current penalty structure for coaches. The committee unanimously supported implementing this measure for officials.

The committee also discussed whether to maintain the current seasonal registration system or move to a single annual registration date. Members agreed that the existing system better serves officials' needs, as it allows those who work only winter or spring sports to register later in the year without incurring late fees.

Staff reviewed the current policy regarding officials who experience a gap in service, which presently requires those individuals to complete all registration steps as new officials. The committee expressed that veteran officials with a reasonable gap in service should instead be treated as renewed officials, rather than starting over as new registrants. The committee directed staff to develop a policy addressing such gaps in service and recommended that a gap exceeding three years continue to require officials to complete all new official eligibility requirements.

The committee renewed support for enforcing the code that requires registered officials join and actively participate in an approved association before they can work regular and postseason high school contests.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL

1. Implement a rule requiring officials who make aggressive and/or intentional physical contact with a student or coach be suspended for a minimum of 14 days and be excluded from postseason assignments. (14-0)