

VHSL Executive Committee approves policy against the use of hate speech, ethnically or racially insensitive expressions

The following policy against using hate speech, ethnically, or racially insensitive expressions in all VHSL athletics and activities competitions serves to protect VHSL participants, athletes, coaches, and officials. The VHSL membership is committed to providing an environment that respects every individual.

On Tuesday, November 9, 2021, The VHSL Executive Committee voted to approved Policy **27-16-1 Use of Hate Speech, Ethnically or Racially Insensitive Expressions**. This policy is in effect immediately.

Section 27: School Regulations (submitted by Executive Director)

27-16-1 Use of Hate Speech, Ethnically or Racially Insensitive Expressions- Any coach, team personnel and/or contestant who confronts or addresses a coach, contestant or official using hate speech, ethnically or racially insensitive expressions will be disqualified for the contest and will be ineligible for the team's next scheduled contest and/or subsequent contests until penalties and educational/restorative interventions are completed.

Note: For the remainder of the 2021-2022 school year, the disqualification will continue as a one-game suspension. In May, the Executive Committee will revisit the suspension and consider the possibility of increasing this to a two- or three-game suspension.

For the remainder of the 2021-2022 school year, educational/restorative interventions are a recommendation. Beginning July 1, 2022, educational/restorative interventions will be required for any person violating this policy.

Procedure

- (1) A school is expected to inform the League Office any alleged incident involving the use of hate speech, ethnically or racially insensitive expressions within two working days after the school administration becomes aware of the incident.
- (2) A copy of the report will be transmitted to the principal of each school(s) involved.
- (3) Within five working days of receiving the report, each principal concerned shall file a response or provide information concerning the incident to the League office.
- (4) A VHSL committee consisting of three or four principals, athletic directors, and coaches will review the incident report and response from each school(s) involved. Following the completion of the review, the committee will make a recommendation to the VHSL Executive Director and/or designee for action.

Penalties

The following represents degrees of VHSL discipline which will be referred to in interpreting a violation of using hate speech, ethnically or racially insensitive expression.

- (1) **Ejection** - Any coach, team personnel and/or contestant who confronts or addresses a coach, contestant, or official using hate speech, ethnically or racially insensitive expression will be disqualified for the remainder of the contest.
- (2) **Player/Coach Suspension** - Any coach, team personnel and/or contestant who is ejected from a contest for using hate speech, ethnically or racially insensitive expression will be

ineligible for the team's next scheduled contest.* If a coach or player commits a second offense, he/she will be ineligible for the remainder of that sport/activity season.

***For the remainder of the 2021-2022 school year, the disqualification will continue as a one-game suspension. In May, the Executive Committee will revisit the suspension and consider the possibility of increasing this to a two- or three-game suspension.**

- (3) **School Warning** - A school's program may be placed on warning status for a one-year period of time by a Sportsmanship Committee for repeated infractions of using hate speech, ethnically or racially insensitive expression.
- (4) **School Probation** - Probation is a more severe penalty, based on repeated offenses with-in a two-year period of time by the same program or cumulative warnings over a period of time within the school. A school or program on probation may not enter any play-off toward a district, regional, or state championship nor may the school enter any sanctioned event.
- (5) **School Suspension** – A school suspended from the League may not compete in interscholastic competition of any kind with a member of the League or a school that is a member of another state associated with the National Federation of State High School Associations.
- (6) **School Fine** – A fine not to exceed \$1,000 may be levied with or without any other penalty on a school. Failure to report violations involving the use of hate speech, ethnically or racially insensitive expression will result in a fine per occurrence.

Appeals

A decision may be appealed to a Sportsmanship Committee.

Parents, Players, and Coaches

Schools will hold parent, player, and coach preseason meetings to discuss expectations for students, parents, coaches, and spectator's behavior related to cultural awareness and equity.

Note: For the remainder of the 2021-2022 school year, preseason meeting with parents, players and coaches are a recommendation. Beginning July 1, 2022, these preseason meetings will be required.

Spectators

The authority and rules of the VHSL govern the schools themselves, including athletes and coaches. Schools are responsible for the conduct of its spectators except at championship events which are conducted by the VHSL.

The VHSL does provide the following recommendations for schools when dealing with spectators who use ~~race~~ and hate speech, ethnically or racially insensitive expressions.

- (1) First Offense – removal from the audience/school property
- (2) Second Offense – suspension from attending contests for a semester
- (3) Third Offense – suspension from attending contests for a year, no trespassing letter

Hate Speech – abusive or threatening speech or writing that expresses prejudice against a particular group, especially on the basis of race, religion, or sexual orientation.