



2026 Referee Coach Pathway

Eligibility & General Requirements

U.S. REFEREEING WAY





REFEREE COACH PATHWAY



NATIONAL REFEREE COACH

REFEREE COACH

MENTOR +

MENTOR



New Coaching Pathway Goals



Coaches and Mentors are the foundation of a strong refereeing program

- Increase the number of mentors/mentor+ in the program
- Improved training for our educators, at all levels
- Provide credible and experienced coaches to develop our referees serving the growing professional leagues
- Retain referees with top experience to continue to give back to the game as coaches



New Referee Coach Pathway is a Progressive Model

**Football
Understanding**

Evaluations
5-Step Process

Practical Training Sessions

Basics

Designing & Leading

Technical Presentations

PEACE Model

Leading Video Analysis

Performance Observation/Insights

Development & Guidance

Observation Skills Leveled Up

Mentor

Mentor+

Referee Coach

National

U.S. REFEREEING WAY



Coaching Pathway Course Summary

MENTOR

Course		Min. Age	Requirements / Previous Certification (see individual course page for details requirements)	Delivery	Online Duration	In-person Duration
Referee Mentor	First-time	18	Two (2) years cumulative on-field experience as a certified referee	Online OR in-person	3 hours	3 hours
	(2027) Recert.		Mentor license within previous two (2) years OR Mentor+ or Referee Coach license within previous two (2) years	Online OR in-person	TBC	TBC

MENTOR +

Course		Min. Age	Requirements / Previous Certification (see individual course page for details requirements)	Delivery	Online Duration	In-person Duration
Referee Mentor +	First-time	18	Mentor license within previous two (2) years OR Referee Coach license within previous (2) years OR a FIFA, PRO, or National Match Official license during their career	Online (2026)	3.5 hours coursework	N/A
				Hybrid (2027)	60 min homework + 3.5 hours coursework	4-6 hours
				In-person (2027) **	60 min homework	8 hours
	(2027) Recert.		Mentor+ license within previous two (2) years OR Referee Coach license in previous year	Online OR in-person	TBC	TBC

- All Mentors with licenses in 2024 or 2025 are eligible and encouraged to complete the new Mentor+ course for 2026 (abridged online version), with only First-Time Mentors required to complete the new Mentor course. Recertification courses for the new Mentor and Mentor+ levels will return for the 2027 registration year

** In-person course materials developed by U.S. Soccer will become progressively available from July 2025, providing SRCs the ability to host courses in-person, online and a combination of both



Coaching Pathway Course Summary

REFEREE COACH

Course		Min. Age	Requirements / Previous Certification (see individual course page for details requirements)	Delivery	Online Duration	In-person Duration
Referee Coach	First-time	21	Letter of recommendation required from member of home SRC or a National Referee Coach for registration to be valid; AND Mentor+ license for previous two (2) years (Mentor in 2024 & 2025) OR FIFA, PRO, or National Match Official license within current or previous two (2) years <i>Note: FIFA, PRO, NMO who elect to start at Mentor+ only require one year for eligibility</i>	Online AND Course	8 hours	Four (4) days
	Recert.**		Referee Coach or National Referee Coach license within the previous two (2) years • Practical Assignments: Five (5) match evaluations	Online	TBC	N/A

NATIONAL REFEREE COACH

Course		Min. Age	Requirements / Previous Certification (see individual course page for details requirements)	Delivery	Online Duration	In-person Duration
National Referee Coach	First-time	25	Application process, selected by U.S. Soccer; Referee Coach for previous (3) years, AND three (3) years as a National Match Official; OR <i>Provisional Pathway</i> – FIFA or PRO license within current or previous three (3) years. • Practical Assignments: Seven (7) match evaluations	Online AND Camp	TBC	Four (4) days
	Recert.		Selected by U.S. Soccer; National Referee Coach in previous year • Practical Assignments: Seven (7) match evaluations	Online AND Camp	TBC	Four (4) days

** Referee Coach recertification course are planned to be made available in Fall 2025



Course Details

U.S. REFEREEING WAY

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First-Time Referee Mentor

Age	18 years of age or older
Enrollment	Registration
Previous Certification Experience	Must have at least two (2) years of cumulative on-field experience as a certified referee
Safety & Compliance	Background Screening SafeSport training Safe and Healthy Playing Environments
Training	Online Referee Mentor training Online Laws of the Game Update
Practical Assignments	N/A

2026 Changes

- New course level – for new entrants to the Referee Coaching pathway



Referee Mentor Recertification (2027)

Age	18 years of age or older
Enrollment	Registration
Previous Certification Experience	Must have held at least: One (1) Referee Mentor license within the two (2) previous registration years; OR Mentor+ or Referee Coach license within the two (2) previous registration years
Safety & Compliance	Background Screening SafeSport training Safe and Healthy Playing Environments
Training	Online or In-person Referee Mentor recertification training Online Laws of the Game Update
Practical Assignments	N/A

Course to become available for 2027 registration year, following introduction of new Mentor course in 2026



First-Time Referee Mentor+

Age	18 years of age or older
Enrollment	Registration
Previous Certification Experience	Must have held at least: Mentor license within previous two (2) years; OR Referee Coach license within previous (2) years; OR a FIFA, PRO, or National Match Official license during their career
Safety & Compliance	Background Screening SafeSport training Safe and Healthy Playing Environments
Training	Online Referee Mentor+ training (<i>In-person option for 2027</i>) Online Laws of the Game Update
Practical Assignments	N/A

2026 Changes

- New course for 2026, for those with an existing Mentor license in 2024 or 2025, replacing previous Mentor certification
- For 2026, existing Mentors will only be required to complete abridged online training to certify



Referee Mentor+ Recertification (2027)

Age	18 years of age or older
Enrollment	Registration
Previous Certification Experience	Must have held at least: One (1) Referee Mentor+ license within the two (2) previous registration years; OR Referee Coach license during the previous registration year
Safety & Compliance	Background Screening SafeSport training Safe and Healthy Playing Environments
Training	Online or In-person Referee Mentor+ recertification training Online Laws of the Game Update
Practical Assignments	N/A

New recertification for new course

Course to become available for 2027 registration year, following introduction of new Mentor+ course in 2026



First-Time Referee Coach

Age	21 years of age or older
Enrollment	Registration Note: Letter of recommendation required from member of home SRC or a National Referee Coach for registration to be valid
Previous Certification Experience	Must have held at least: Referee Mentor+ license for each of the previous two (2) registration years (Mentor license in 2024 & 2025); OR One (1) FIFA, PRO, or National Match Official license within the current or previous two (2) registration years (no Mentor or Mentor+ license required) Note: FIFA/PRO/NMOs who start at Mentor+ only require one (1) year for eligibility <i>(Future Implementation: Successful passing of Laws of the Game exam)</i>
Safety & Compliance	Background Screening SafeSport training Safe and Healthy Playing Environments
Training	Online Referee Coach training Online Laws of the Game Update In-person Referee Coach course - four (4) days
Practical Assignments	In-course assessments requiring a passing grade

2026 Changes

- Course completely revised, focused and streamlined
- New requirement to receive letter of recommendation from member of home SRC or a National Referee Coach
- New entry pathway option for current or recently retired FIFA/PRO/National match officials
- Defined in-person course length and requirement for in-course assessments requiring a passing grade



Referee Coach Recertification

Age	21 years of age or older
Enrollment	Registration
Previous Certification Experience	Must have held at least: One (1) Referee Coach license or one (1) National Referee Coach license within the previous two (2) registration years
Safety & Compliance	Background Screening SafeSport training Safe and Healthy Playing Environments
Training	Online Referee Coach recertification training Online Laws of the Game Update
Practical Assignments	Five (5) evaluations of match official performance including post-game reflection with the referee team Must be completed by the end of the registration year

2026 Changes

- Reduced length of time for previous certification experience from three (3) years to two (2) due to re-write of coaching pathway courses

Note: Course is planned to be made available in Fall 2025



First-Time National Referee Coach

Age	25 years of age or older
Enrollment	Application required → Selected by U.S. Soccer
Previous Certification Experience	<p>Must have held: Referee Coach license for each of the three (3) previous registration years; AND National Match Official license for three (3) cumulative registration years</p> <p>Provisional National Referee Coach Must have held at least one (1) FIFA or PRO license within the current or previous three (3) registration years</p>
Safety & Compliance	Background Screening SafeSport training Safe and Healthy Playing Environments
Training	Online course Online Laws of the Game Update U.S. Soccer National Referee Coach Camp
Practical Assignments	Seven (7) evaluations of match official performance including post-game reflection with the referee team Must be completed by the end of the registration year

2026 Changes

- Increased requirement for number of years as a Referee Coach, previously two (2) years
- Additional requirement to have been a National match official for three (3) years – not applicable to existing license holders
- Additional option of Provisional National Referee Coach for current or recently retired FIFA/PRO match officials



National Referee Coach Recertification

Age	25 years of age or older
Enrollment	Selected by U.S. Soccer
Previous Certification Experience	Must have held a National Referee Coach license during the previous registration year
Safety & Compliance	Background Screening SafeSport training Safe and Healthy Playing Environments
Training	Online course Online Laws of the Game Update U.S. Soccer National Referee Coach Camp * (* National Referee Coaches may not miss two consecutive years of camp attendance)
Practical Assignments	Seven (7) evaluations of match official performance including post-game reflection with the referee team Must be completed by the end of the registration year

2026 Changes

- Addition of requirement for camp attendance
- Removed practical assignments of Leading Video Analysis and Practical Training Exercise