



UNITED STATES
OLYMPIC & PARALYMPIC
COMMITTEE
1 Olympic Plaza
Colorado Springs, CO 80909

September 28, 2022

USOPC Investigation Report & Findings

Dear USA National Karate-do Federation Members:

After receiving a series of complaints and concerns from a certain segment of USA National Karate-do Federation (“USA-NKF”) members, the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee (“USOPC”) conducted a review and assessment of USA-NKF. Specifically, the scope of the review, which was carried out with the full support and participation of USA-NKF, was to examine whether allegations of retaliation, conflicts of interest, favoritism, and poor governance of the referee committees could be substantiated and, if so, determine what reforms are necessary to create a culture within USA-NKF so that all members of the USA-NKF community, including but not limited to the referee corps, may have a successful participation experience. The topics of review centered around the following:

1. The roles and responsibilities of the three established referee committees (Operations Committee, Education and Training Committee, and Certification Committee), to ensure appropriate and effective governance.
2. USA-NKF’s grievance procedures and practices, to assess the extent to which USA-NKF properly addresses reported grievances without fear of retaliation.
3. USA-NKF’s Conflict of Interest Policy and Procedures, to review whether actual, potential, and / or perceived conflicts are effectively managed for referees at USA-NKF sanctioned events.
4. The perception of favoritism amongst certain members of USA-NKF who are closely affiliated with USA-NKF leadership.

This summary is prepared for the USA-NKF community and contains a summary of our findings and corresponding requirements and recommendations. A confidential report, containing a more detailed accounting of our investigation findings has been provided to USA-NKF. The confidential report also identifies specific referee corps needs compared to the current practices of USA-NKF, and in that context, evaluates whether any USA-NKF practices are inconsistent with its general duties and obligations as set forth in the Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act (the “Ted Stevens Act”), the USOPC Bylaws and relevant USA-NKF policies and procedures, all of which apply in the implementation of USA-NKF’s duties under the Ted Stevens Act and the USOPC Bylaws as a National Governing Body (“NGB”), and its internally adopted rules, policies and guidelines, including the USA-NKF Code of Conduct (including the Code of Conduct for Referees, the USA-NKF Athlete

Agreement and Code of Conduct, the Coaches Code of Conduct), the USA-NKF Complaint and Hearing Procedures, the USA-NKF Whistleblower Policy, and the USA-NKF Conflict of Interest Policy.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Many members we interviewed expressed concerns with their names and content of their interview(s) being disclosed to USA-NKF leadership. To facilitate an honest discussion without fear of retaliation, we informed each interviewee, prior to conducting his/her interview, that the USOPC would not identify any interviewees in this summary or the confidential report to USA-NKF.

PROCESS OF REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT

On or around January 27, 2022, the USOPC received a complaint regarding alleged retaliation within USA-NKF. Specifically, the complaint alleged that retaliation occurred, without explanation, at the 2022 Team Trials and in response to a prior filing of a grievance with the USA-NKF Ethics Committee. This complaint prompted the USOPC to initiate an investigation, which focused on determining whether any of the allegations were based in evidence, and, if so, what actions the USOPC could recommend to foster a culture that appropriately remediates the findings and deters similar conduct in the future. As the investigation progressed, the USOPC became aware of additional concerns, including allegations of additional acts of retaliation by certain members of USA-NKF leadership, perceived conflicts of interest, favoritism, and poor governance of the referee committees. As a result, the USOPC expanded the scope of the initial investigation to review these allegations as well.

The investigation began on March 10, 2022, and interviews concluded May 6, 2022. During the investigation, the USOPC reviewed materials the complainant provided, as well as USA-NKF's Bylaws, Code of Conduct and Conflicts of Interest policies and procedures, and various other relevant documents. Further, the USOPC interviewed 16 individuals, including current and former referees, committee members, and staff to better understand the complaints alleged. Interviewees were invited to share any relevant communication and/or documentation with us that they desired. Some interviewees shared email correspondence and other documentation, which we reviewed and considered.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

During the investigation, the USOPC found evidence that members of USA-NKF leadership retaliated against members of the referee corps. Moreover, there was evidence of perceived conflicts of interest by individuals with responsibility for organizing and hosting USA-NKF sanctioned events, as well as a perception of favoritism related to ring assignments and invites to World Karate Federation ("WKF") licensure events. Finally, there was evidence that USA-NKF lacks appropriate oversight of matters it is charged with governing, specifically related to the referee committees. As a result, the USOPC put forth a number of requirements and recommendations.

REQUIREMENTS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the investigative findings, the USOPC developed a list of requirements and recommendations to address the specific impediments, which were found to be or may be interfering

with the creation of a healthy and successful culture for members of the USA-NKF referee corps. The requirements and recommendations are meant to help USA-NKF rebuild trust amongst members of the referee corps and to foster a culture where individuals within the organization know their specific function, how they fit within the overall mission, that they are cared for and important to the mission, and that they will be treated with respect, fairness, and in accordance with USA-NKF's Bylaws, and other policies and procedures. Each of the requirements and recommendations is supported by greater context and guidance in the USA-NKF confidential report.

I. Referee Committees

USA-NKF must evaluate its referee committee structure and current practices to determine whether changes are warranted, and if so, provide an operating framework to the committees consistent with those changes. As part of this evaluation, USA-NKF was encouraged to consider a number of suggestions proposed by the referee corps to improve the committees.

II. Retaliation

USA-NKF has a culture in which members fear retaliation for raising concerns and a lack of trust that any concerns they do raise will be appropriately reviewed and managed. Accordingly, the USOPC has required all members of USA-NKF Board of Directors, staff, and referee committees to complete anti-retaliation training.

III. Conflicts of Interest

USA-NKF lacks an effective policy to manage conflicts of interest amongst referees at USA-NKF sanctioned events. Accordingly, at a minimum, USA-NKF must adopt the reforms listed below to address this deficiency.

- Since referees are already within the purview of USA-NKF's Conflicts of Interest Policy as “affiliated individuals,” USA-NKF must ensure that all relevant referee conflicts are appropriately identified, managed, and resolved in accordance with that policy.
- USA-NKF must establish a Conflicts of Interest disclosure and review process for conflicts that may affect a nationally certified referee’s participation at USA-NKF sanctioned national level events and trials events for international competition. Where possible, the Ethics Committee, or equivalent, should include the review of referee conflict disclosures as part of its overall disclosure review process.
- USA-NKF must establish a communication procedure for situations in which a referee conflict is identified, to notify the affected referee of the established conflict, the measures put in place to manage the conflict, and the period any such measures will remain in place.
- The referee corps members with a certification of national level or above must receive training on the scope and implications of the organization’s Conflicts of Interest Policy and complete a written acknowledgment that they understand and will abide by it.

IV. **Favoritism**

There is a perception of favoritism toward certain members of the USA-NKF staff and community members. Accordingly, the USOPC has recommended that USA-NKF provide greater transparency and communication regarding the qualifications for participation at USA-NKF and WKF events, including selection for WKF's annual licensure testing event.

CLOSING

USA-NKF has some challenges to be addressed to overcome the issues that the organization is currently facing. The USOPC believes that these issues are capable of remedy, but addressing them will require concerted effort from the Board, the staff, and the USA-NKF referee corps. The recommendations are designed to help USA-NKF build trust with its members, particularly the referee corps, and develop good governance practices, which will require attention and persistence.