

USOC Coaching Ethics Code

Reprinted by USA Roller Sports

Introduction

This ethics code is to provide standards of professional conduct that can be applied by the USOC and its' member organizations that choose to adopt them. Whether or not a coach has violated the Ethics Code does not by itself determine whether he or she is legally liable in court action, whether a contract is enforceable, or whether other legal consequences occur. These results are based on legal rather than ethical rules. However, compliance with or violation of the Ethics Code may be admissible as evidence in some legal proceedings, depending on the circumstances.

This code is intended to provide both the general principles and the decision rules cover most situations encountered by coaches. It has as its' primary goal the welfare and protection of the individuals and groups with whom coaches work. This Code also provides a common set of values upon which coaches build their professional work. It is the individual responsibility of each coach to aspire to the highest possible standards of conduct. Coaches respect and protect human and civil rights and do not knowingly participate in or condone discriminatory practices.

General Principles

Principle A: Competence

Coaches strive to maintain high standards of excellence in their work. They recognize the boundaries of their particular competencies and the limitations of their expertise. They provide only those services and use only those techniques for which they are qualified by education, training or expertise. In those areas in which recognized professional standards do not yet exist, coaches exercise careful judgement and take appropriate precautions to protect the welfare of those with whom they work. They maintain knowledge of relevant scientific and professional information related to the services they render, and they recognize the need for ongoing education. Coaches make appropriate use of scientific, professional, technical and administrative resources.

Principle B: Integrity

Coaches seek to promote integrity in the practice of coaching. Coaches are honest, fair and respectful of others. In describing or reporting their qualifications, services, products or fees, they do not make statements that are false, misleading or deceptive. Coaches strive to be aware of their own belief systems, values, needs and limitations and the effect of these on their work. To the extent feasible, they attempt to clarify for relevant parties the roles they are performing and to function appropriately in accordance with those rules. Coaches avoid improper and potentially harmful dual relationships.

Principle C: Professional Responsibility

Coaches uphold professional standards of conduct, clarify their professional roles and obligations, accept appropriate responsibility for their behavior and adapt their methods to the needs of different athletes. Coaches consult with, refer to, or cooperate with other professional and institutions to the extent needed to serve the best interests of their athletes, or other recipients of their service. Coaches' moral standards and conduct are personal matters to the same degree as is true for any other person, except when coaches' conduct may compromise their professional responsibilities or reduce the public's trust in the coaching profession and coaches. Coaches are concerned about ethical compliance of their colleagues' professional conduct. When appropriate, they consult with colleagues in order to prevent or avoid unethical conduct.

Principle D: Respect For Participants And Dignity

Participants are defined as those taking part in sports – athletes and their family members, coaches, officials, volunteers, administrators and spectators. Coaches respect the fundamental rights, dignity and worth of all participants. Coaches are aware of cultural, individual and role differences, including those due to age, gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language, and socioeconomic status. Coaches try top eliminate the effect on their work of biases based on those factors and they do not knowingly participate in or condone unfair discriminatory practices.

Principle E: Concern For Others' Welfare

Coaches seek to contribute to the welfare of those with whom they interact professionally. In their professional actions, coaches consider the welfare and rights of their athletes and other participants. When conflicts occur among coaches' obligations or concerns, they attempt to resolve these conflicts and to perform their roles in a responsible fashion that avoids or minimizes harm. Coaches are sensitive to differences in power between themselves and others, and they do not exploit or mislead other people during of after professional relationships.

Principle D: Responsible Coaches

Coaches are aware of their professional responsibilities to the community and the society in which they work and live. They apply and make public their knowledge of sport in order to contribute to human welfare. Coaches try to avoid misuse of their work. Coaches comply with the law and encourage the development of law and policies that serve the interest of the sport. They are encouraged to contribute a portion of their professional time for little or no personal advantage.

Ethical Standards

1.0 General Standards

These General Standards are applicable to the professional activities of all coaches.

1.1 ***Applicability Of The Ethics Code***

While many aspects of personal behavior and private activities seem far removed from officials duties of coaching, all coaches should be sensitive to their position as role models for their athletes. Private activities perceived as immoral or illegal can influence the coaching environment and coaches are encouraged to observe the standards of this Ethics Code consistently.

1.2 Boundaries Of Competence

(a) Coaches provide service only within boundaries of their competence, based on their education, training, supervised experience, or appropriate professional experience.

(b) Coaches provide services involving new techniques only after first undertaking appropriate study, training, supervision and/or consultation from persons who are competent in those areas or techniques.

(c) In those emerging areas in which generally recognized standards for preparatory training do not yet exist, coaches nevertheless take reasonable steps to ensure the competence of their work and to protect athletes and other participants from harm.

1.3 ***Maintaining Expertise***

Coaches maintain a reasonable level of expertise of current scientific and professional information in their field of activity and undertake ongoing efforts to maintain competence in the skills they use.

1.4 ***Basis For Professional Judgments***

Coaches rely on scientifically and professionally derived knowledge when making professional judgments or when engaging in professional behaviors.

1.5 ***Describing The Nature And Results Of Coaching Services***

When coaches provide services to an individual, a group, or an organization, they provide, using language that is reasonably understandable to the recipient of those services, appropriate information beforehand about the nature of such services and appropriate information later about results and conclusions.

1.6 ***Respecting Others***

Coaches respect the rights of others to values, attitudes and opinions that differ from their own.

1.7 ***Nondiscrimination***

Coaches do not engage in discrimination based on age, gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language, socioeconomic status or any basis prescribed by law.

1.8 Sexual Harassment

(a) Coaches do not engage in sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is sexual solicitation, physical advances, or verbal or nonverbal conduct that is sexual in nature and that either:

(1) is unwelcome, is offensive or creates a hostile environment and the coaches knows or is told this;

(2) is sufficiently severe or intense to be abusive to a reasonable person in the context. Sexual harassment can consist of a single intense or severe act or multiple persistent or pervasive acts.

(b) Coaches accord sexual harassment complainants and respondents with dignity and respect. Coaches do not participate in denying an athlete the right to participate based upon their having made, or their being the subject of, sexual harassment charges.

1.9 ***Other Harassment***

Coaches do not engage in behavior that is harassing or demeaning to persons with whom they interact in their work based on factors such as those person's age, gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language or socioeconomic status.

1.10 Personal Problems and Conflicts

(a) Coaches recognize that their personal problems and conflicts may interfere with their effectiveness. Accordingly, they refrain from undertaking an activity when they know or should know that their personal problems are likely to lead to harm to athletes or other participants to whom they may owe a professional obligation.

(b) In addition, coaches have an obligation to be alert to signs of , and to obtain assistance for, their personal problems and an early stage, in order to prevent significantly impaired performance.

(c) When coaches become aware of personal problems that may interfere with their performing work-related duties adequately, they take appropriate measures, such as obtaining professional consultation or assistance and determines whether they should limit, suspend or terminate work-related duties.

1.11 ***Avoiding Harm***

Coaches take reasonable steps to avoid harming their athletes or other participants, and to minimize harm where it is foreseeable and unavoidable.

1.12 ***Misuse of Coaches' Influence***

Because coaches' professional judgments and actions may affect the lives of others, they are alert to guard against personal, financial, social, organizational, or political factors that might lead to the misuse of their influence.

1.13 Multiple Relationships

(a) In many communities and situations, it may not be feasible or reasonable for coaches to avoid social or other non-professional contacts with athletes and other participants. Coaches must always be sensitive to the potentially harmful effects of other contacts on their works and on those persons with whom they deal. A coach refrains from entering into or promising another personal, professional, financial, or other relationship with such persons, if it appears likely that such a relationship reasonably might impair the coaches' objectivity or otherwise interfere with the coach effectively performing his or her functions as a coach, or might harm or exploit the other party.

(b) Likewise, whenever feasible, a coach refrains from taking on professional obligations when pre-existing relationships would create a risk of such harm.

(c) If a coach finds that, due to unforeseen factors, a potentially harmful multiple relationship has arisen, the coach attempts to resolve it with due regard for the best interests of the affected person and maximal compliance with the Ethics Code.

1.14 Exploitative Relationships

(a) Coaches do not exploit athletes or other participants over whom they have supervisory, evaluative or other authority.

(b) Coaches do not engage in sexual/romantic relationships with athletes or other participants over whom the coach has evaluative, direct or indirect authority, because such relationships are likely to impair judgment or be exploitative.

1.15 ***Consultations And Referrals***

When indicated and professionally appropriate, coaches cooperate with other professionals in order to serve their athletes or other participants effectively and appropriately.

1.16 Delegation And Supervision Of Subordinates

(a) Coaches delegate to their employees, supervisees and assistants only those responsibilities that such persons can reasonably be expected to perform competently, on the basis of their education, training and experience, either independently or with the level of supervision being provided.

(b) Coaches provide proper training and supervision to their employees or supervisees and take reasonable steps to see that such persons perform services responsibly, competently, and ethically.

1.17 Fees and Financial Arrangements

(a) As early as is feasible in a professional relationship, the coach and the athlete or other participants reach an agreement specifying the compensation and the billing arrangements.

(b) Coaches do not exploit recipients of services or payers and the billing arrangements.

(c) Coaches' fee practices are consistent with law.

(d) Coaches do not misrepresent their fees.

(e) If limitations to services can be anticipated because of limitations in financing, this is discussed with the athlete or other participant as appropriate.

Advertising And Other Public Statements

2.1 ***Definition of Public Statements***

Coaches comply with the Ethics Code in public statements relating to their professional services, products, or publications.

2.2 Statements By Others

(a) Coaches who engage others to create or place public statements that promote their professional practice, products, or activities retain professional responsibility for such statements.

(b) In addition, coaches make reasonable efforts to prevent others whom they do not control (such as employees, publishers, sponsors, organizational clients, and representatives of the print or broadcast media) from making deceptive statements concerning the coach or his professional activities.

(c) If coaches learn of deceptive statements about their work made by others, coaches make reasonable efforts to correct such statements.

(d) Coaches do not compensate members of press, radio, television, or other communication media in return for publicity in a news item.

(e) A paid advertisement relating to the coach's activities must be identified as such, unless it is already apparent from the context.

2.3 Avoidance Of False Or Deceptive Statements

Coaches do not make public statements that are false, deceptive, misleading, or fraudulent, either because of what that state, convey or suggest, or because of what they omit, concerning their work activities or those of persons or organizations with which they are affiliated. As examples (and not in limitation) of this standard, coaches do not make false or deceptive statements concerning:

(1) their training, experience, or competence;
(2) their academic degrees;
(3) their credentials
(4) their institutional or association affiliations;
(5) their services;
(6) the basis for, or results or degree of success with their services; or
(7) their fees.

2.4 Media Representation

When coaches provide advice or comment by means of public lectures, demonstrations, radio or television programs, prerecorded tapes, printed articles, mailed material, or other media, they take reasonable precautions to ensure that the statements are consistent with the Ethics Code.

2.5 Testimonials

Coaches do not solicit testimonials from current athletes or other participants who, because of their particular circumstances, are vulnerable to undue influence.

2.6 Recruiting

Coaches do not engage, directly or through agents, in uninvited in-person solicitation of business from actual or potential athletes or other participants who, because of their particular circumstances, are vulnerable to undue influence. However, this does not preclude recruiting athletes deemed eligible by appropriate governing bodies.

Training Athletes

3.1 Structuring The Relationship

(a) Coaches discuss with athletes as early as feasible appropriate issues, such as the nature and anticipated course of training, fees and confidentially.

(b) When the coach's work with athletes will be supervised, the above discussion includes that fact, and the name of the supervisor.

(c) When the coach is uncertified the athlete is informed of that fact.

(d) Coaches make reasonable efforts to answer athletes' questions to avoid apparent misunderstanding about training. Whenever possible, coaches provide oral and/or written information, using language that is reasonably understandable to the athlete.

3.2 Family Relationships

(a) When a coach agrees to provide services to several persons who have a relationship (such as parents and children), the coach attempts to clarify at the outset (1) which of the individuals are athletes and (2) the relationship the coach will have with each person. This clarification includes the role of the coach and the probable uses of the services provided.

(b) As soon as it becomes apparent that the coach may be called on to perform potentially conflicting roles (such as intermediary between parents and children or sibling teammates), the coach attempts to clarify and adjust, or withdraw from, roles appropriately.

3.3 Providing Coaching Services To Those Served By Others

In deciding whether to offer or provide services to those already receiving coaching services elsewhere, coaches carefully consider the potential athlete's welfare. The coach discusses these issues with the athlete or other legally authorized person on behalf of the athlete, in order to minimize the risk of confusion and conflict.

3.4 Sexual Intimacies With Current Athletes

Coaches do not engage in sexual intimacies with current athletes.

3.5 Coaching Former Sexual Partners

Coaches do not coach athletes with whom they have engaged in sexual intimacies.

3.6 Sexual Intimacies With Former Athletes

(a) Coaches should not engage in sexual intimacies with a former athlete for at least two years after cessation or termination of professional services.

(b) Because sexual intimacies with a former athlete are so frequently harmful to the athlete, and because such intimacies undermine public confidence in the coaching profession and thereby deter the public's use of needed services, coaches do not engage in sexual intimacies with former athletes even after a two-year interval except in the most unusual circumstances. The coach who engages in such activity after the two years following cessation or termination of the coach-athlete relationship bears the burden of demonstrating that there has been no exploitation, in light of all relevant factors, including:

(1) the amount of time that has passed since the coach-athlete relationship terminated,

(2) The circumstances of termination,

(3) The athlete's personal history,

(4) The athlete's current mental status,

(5) The likelihood of adverse impact on the athlete and others, and

(6) *Any statements or actions made by the coach during the course of the athlete-coach relationship suggesting or inviting the possibility of a post-termination sexual or romantic relationship with the athlete or coach.*

3.7 Drug-Free Sport

Coaches do not tolerate the use of performance-enhancing drugs and support athletes' efforts to be drug-free.

3.8 Alcohol & Tobacco

(a) Coaches discourage the use of alcohol and tobacco in conjunction with athletic events or victory celebrations at playing sites and forbid use of alcohol by minors.

(b) Coaches refrain from tobacco and alcohol use while they are coaching and make every effort to avoid their use while in the presence of their athletes.

3.9 Interruption Of Services

(a) Coaches make reasonable efforts to plan for training in the event that coaching services are interrupted by factors such as the coach's illness, death, unavailability, or relocation or by the client's relocation or financial limitations.

(b) When entering into employment or contractual relationships, coaches provide for orderly and appropriate resolution of responsibility for athlete training in the event that the employment or contractual relationship ends, with paramount consideration given to the welfare of the athlete.

3.10 Terminating The Professional Relationship

(a) Coaches terminate a professional relationship when it becomes reasonably clear that the athlete no longer needs the service, is not benefiting, or is being harmed by continued service.

(b) Prior to termination, for whatever reason, except where precluded by the athlete's conduct, the coach discusses the athlete's views and needs, provides appropriate pre-termination counseling, suggests alternative service providers as appropriate, and takes other reasonable steps to facilitate transfer of responsibility to another provider if the athlete needs one immediately.

Training Supervision

4.1 Design Of Training Programs

Coaches who are responsible for training programs for other coaches seek to ensure that the programs are competently designed, provide the proper experiences, and meet the requirements for certification or other goals for which claims are made by the program.

4.2 Descriptions Of Training Programs

(a) Coaches responsible for training programs for other coaches seek to ensure that there is a current and accurate description of the program content, training goals and objectives, and requirements that must be met for satisfactory completion of the program. This information must be readily available to all interested parties.

(b) Coaches seek to ensure that statements concerning their training programs are accurate and not misleading.

4.3 Accuracy And Objectivity In Coaching

(a) When engaged in coaching, coaches present information accurately and with a reasonable degree of objectivity.

(b) When engaged in coaching, coaches recognize the power they hold over athletes and therefore make reasonable efforts to avoid engaging in conduct that is personally demeaning to athletes and other participants.

4.4 Assessing Athlete Performance

(a) In coach-athlete relationships, coaches establish an appropriate process for providing feedback to athletes.

(b) Coaches evaluate athletes on the basis of their actual performance on relevant and established program requirements.

4.5 Honoring Commitments

Coaches take reasonable measures to honor all commitments they have made to athletes.

Team Selection

5.0 (a) Coaches perform evaluations or team selection only within the context of a defined professional relationship.

(c) Coaches' assessments, recommendations, reports, and evaluative statements used to select team members are based on information and techniques sufficient to provide appropriate substantiation for their findings.

Resolving Ethical Issues

6.1 Familiarity With Ethics Code

Coaches have an obligation to be familiar with this Ethics Code, other applicable ethics codes, and their application to the coaches' work. Lake of awareness or misunderstanding of an ethical standard is not itself a defense to a charge of unethical conduct.

6.2 Confronting Ethical Issues

When a coach is uncertain whether a particular situation or course of action would violate the Ethics Code, the coach ordinarily consults with other coaches knowledgeable about ethical issues, with NGB or USOC ethics committees, or with other appropriate authorities in order to choose a proper response.

6.3 Conflicts Between Ethics And Organizational Demands

If the demands of an organization with which coaches are affiliated conflict with this Ethics Code, coaches clarify the nature of the conflict, make known their commitment to the Ethics Code, and to the extent feasible, seek to resolve the conflict in a way that permits the fullest adherence to the Ethics Code.

6.4 Informal Resolution Of Ethical Violations

When coaches believe that they may have been an ethical violation by another coach, they attempt to resolve the issue by bringing it to the attention of that individual if an informal resolution appears appropriate and when intervention does not violate any athlete rights that may be involved.

6.5 Reporting Ethical Violations

If an apparent ethical violation is not appropriate for informal resolution under Standard 6.4 or is not resolved properly in that fashion, coaches take further action appropriate to the situation, unless such action conflicts with athlete rights in ways that cannot be resolved. Such action might include referral to NGB or USOC committees on professional ethics.

6.6 Cooperating With Ethics Committees

Coaches cooperate in ethics investigations, proceedings, and resulting requirements of the USOC and any NGB to which they belong. Failure to cooperate is itself an ethics violation.

6.7 Improper Complaints

Coaches do not file or encourage the filing of ethics complaints that are frivolous and are intended to harm the respondent rather than to protect the public.

Process Relating To Violation Of Code

7.1 The coach acknowledges that this Ethics Code is administered under the authority of their NGB or other responsible organization and that a violation of this Code subjects the coach to the process of the NGB or other such organization required to be provided in the event of disciplinary action. The NGB or other such organization acknowledges that all violations of the Ethics Code will be reviewed for possible disciplinary action and it will provide a written report to the USOC on all reviews and actions.

7.2 In the event that a violation of the Ethics Code occurs during an authorized U.S. Olympic Training Center activity, USOC may, as landlord of the facility, take action separate and independent from that of the NGB or member of the USOC in order to protect its interests and those of athletes, coaches and others at the location.

7.3 Any action taken by an NGB or member of the USOC which affects the opportunity of a coach to participate in "protected" competition as defined in the USOC Constitution shall be entitled to processes assured under the USOC Constitution and the Amateur Sports Act of 1978. This includes process within the NGB, the USOC and the American Arbitration Association.

7.4 If the violation of the Ethics Code occurs while a member of a USOC team or event, the coach and NGB acknowledge that the USOC may institute its own proceeding regarding the violation, which action shall not restrict the ability or obligation of the NGB to take its own separate and independent action.

7.5 In the event that a coach is found to have violated the Ethics Code, such action is separate and apart from any other legal consequences which may occur as a result of the act.

United States Olympic Committee
Coaching Ethics Code Agreement

Please Print

Sport: _____

Name: _____ *Social Security #* _____
Last *First* *MI*

Street Address: _____

City / State / Zip: _____

I have read and understand the United States Olympic Committee's Coaching Ethics Code. I agree to abide by the Code, and I understand that violations may result in full or partial forfeitures of my coaching privileges at sites or events under United States Olympic Committee governance.

Signature: _____ *Date:* _____