



COACHING CODE OF ETHICS

USA/MASS HOCKEY COACHING ETHICS CODE

USA Hockey would like to give special thanks to the United States Olympic Committee. Many of the ideas for this Coaching Ethics Code were drawn from the USOC Coaching Ethics Code. In particular, USA Hockey would like to thank William J. Hybl, USOC President; Richard D. Schultz, USOC Executive Director; and the members of the USOC Coaching Committee.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

[INTRODUCTION](#)

[GENERAL PRINCIPLES](#)

[ETHICAL STANDARDS](#)

INTRODUCTION

This Ethics Code is intended to provide standards of ethical conduct that can be applied by USA Hockey and its member organizations. Whether or not a coach has violated the Ethics Code does not by itself determine whether a contract or agreement 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 to 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. It is the individual responsibility of each coach to aspire to the highest possible standards of conduct. Coaches should respect and protect human civil rights, and should not knowingly participate in or condone unfair 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 experience. In those areas in which recognized professional standards do not yet exist, coaches exercise careful judgment and take appropriate precautions to protect the welfare of those with whom they work. They maintain knowledge of relevant coaching educational 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 roles. 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 professionals and institutions to the extent needed to serve the best interest of their athletes, or other recipients of their services. 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 responsibilities or reduce the public's trust in coaching and/or coaches. Coaches are concerned about the ethical compliance of their colleagues' conduct. When appropriate, they consult with their colleagues in order to prevent or avoid unethical conduct.

- **PRINCIPLE D: Respect of Participants and Dignity****

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 to 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. In their actions, coaches consider the welfare and right 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 nor mislead other people during or after their relationships.

- **PRINCIPLE F: Responsible Coaching**

Coaches are aware of their ethical 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 sport.

ETHICAL STANDARDS

A. GENERAL STANDARDS

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

- **1. Applicability of the Ethics Code**

While many aspects of personal behavior and private activities seem far removed from official 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.

- **2. Boundaries of Competence**

(a) Coaches provide services only after first undertaking appropriate study, training, supervision, and/or consultation from persons within their respective association.

(b) In those Affiliates or Districts which require coaching education, coaches take reasonable steps to ensure their attendance at appropriate coaching education clinics.

- **3. Maintaining Expertise**

Coaches maintain a reasonable level of awareness of related coaching information and undertake ongoing efforts to maintain competence in the skills they use.

- **4. Basis For Professional Judgements**

Coaches rely on scientifically and professionally derived knowledge when making judgments or when engaging in coaching endeavors.

- **5. Describing The Nature Of Coaching Services**

When coaches provide services or information to an individual, a group, or an organization, they use language that is reasonably understandable and appropriate to the recipient of those services and information that is always updated and truthful.

- **6. Respecting Others**

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

- **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.

- **8. Sexual Harrassment**

(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 coach 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 of multiple persistent or pervasive acts.

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

- **9. Other Harrassment**

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

- **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.

(b) In addition, coaches have an obligation to be alert to signs of, and to obtain assistance for, their personal problems at 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 determine whether they should limit, suspend, or terminate their work-related duties.

- **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.

- **12. Misuse of Coaches' Influence**

Because coaches' 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 misuse of their influence.

- **13. Multiple Relationships**

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

(b) Likewise, whenever feasible, a coach refrains from taking on obligations when preexisting relationships would create a risk of 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.

- **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.

- **15. Delegation To, And Supervision Of Subordinates**

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

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

B. PUBLIC STATEMENTS

- **1. Avoidance Of False Or Deceptive Statements**

Coaches do not make public statements that are false, deceptive, misleading, or fraudulent (either due to what they 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:

- (a) their training, experience, or competence;
- (b) their academic degrees;
- (c) their credentials;

- (d) their institutional or association affiliations;
- (e) their services;
- (f) the basis for, or results or degree of success of their services; or
- (g) their criminal record.

- **2. Media Presentations**

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 this Ethics Code.

- **3. Testimonials**

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

C. TRAINING ATHLETES

- **1. Structuring The Relationship**

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

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

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

- **2. Coach/Parent 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 the relationship they 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 conflicting roles (such as mediator between parents and children or sibling teammates), the coach attempts to clarify and adjust or withdraw from roles appropriately.

- **3. Sexual Intimacies With Current Athletes**

Coaches do not engage in sexual intimacies with current athletes.

- **4. Coaching Former Sexual Partners**

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

- **5. 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.

- **6. Drug-Free Sport**

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

- **7. Alcohol, Tobacco and Gambling**

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

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

(c) Coaches discourage gambling in conjunction with athletic events, at playing sites and during road trips.

- **8. Pornography**

(a) Coaches discourage the use of pornographic material.

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

(c) Coaches do not engage in illicit behavior or activities with athletes or other participants over whom the coach has direct or indirect authority.

D. TRAINING SUPERVISION

- **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 coaching education or other goals for which claims are made by the program.

- **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.

- **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. Honoring Commitments**

Coaches take responsible measures to honor all commitments they have made to all participants.

E. TEAM SELECTION

- **1. Recruiting**

Coaches do not engage, directly or through agents, in uninvited in-person solicitation of business or services 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 exceptional by USA Hockey.

- **2. Tampering**

In deciding whether to recruit players already on another team, coaches must carefully consider the potential athlete's welfare. The coach must discuss these issues with the player's present coach first, then the player's parents before approaching the athlete in order to minimize the risk of confusion and conflict.

- **3. In-Season Contact**

Contact with any player(s) should not occur during the progress of a season when the player's team is still actively engaged in their schedule of play. The only exception would be regarding participation on a USA Hockey National Team on a temporary assignment basis, where the player would be returned to his/her regular team at the conclusion of the assignment.

- **4. Player Selection**

Coaches perform evaluations or team selection only in a manner consistent with the Ethical Code.

- **5. 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.

F. Resolving Ethical Issues

- **1. Familiarity With Ethics Code**

Coaches have an obligation to be familiar with this Ethics Code (or as it may be amended from time to time), other applicable ethics codes and their application to the coach's work. Lack of awareness or misunderstanding of an ethical standard is not itself a defense to a charge of unethical conduct.

- **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 their Association, Affiliate or District with USA Hockey.

- **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 this Ethics Code, and to the extent feasible, seek to resolve the conflict in a way that permits the fullest adherence to the Ethics Code.

- **4. Informal Resolutions Of Ethical Violations**

When USA Hockey participants believe that there may have been an ethical violation by a coach, they attempt to resolve the issue by bringing it to the attention of that individual in an informal manner.

- **5. Reporting Ethical Violations**

If an apparent ethical violation is not appropriate for informal resolution under Standard F4 or is not resolved properly in that fashion, participants and the association may take further action by:

Participant

- (a) Contacting the coach's Association President or appropriate designee.
- (b) Confirm with the coach's Association President if there was an attempt for an informal resolution.
- (c) Complete an Ethical Violation Form available through the Association President or designee.

Association

- (a) Will review the Ethical Violation charge using the appropriate due process procedure as outlined in USA Hockey's Annual Guide, By-Law G, 10 Suspensions and Resolution of Disputes.
- (b) Will give a copy of the completed Ethical Violation form to the coach in question seven (7) days prior to the association's review.
- (c) Will keep a written report on all reviews and actions.

- **6. Cooperating With Ethics Committees**

Coaches cooperate in ethics investigations, proceedings, and resulting requirements of USA Hockey and any of its member organizations. Failure to cooperate is itself an ethics violation.

- **7. Improper Complaints**

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

G. PROCESS RELATING TO VIOLATION OF CODE

1. The Coach acknowledges that this Ethics Code is administered under the authority of USA Hockey and its member organizations, that a violation of the Code subjects the coach to the processes of USA Hockey and its member organizations. USA Hockey and its member organizations acknowledge that all violations of the Ethics Code will be reviewed for possible disciplinary action, and member organizations will keep a written report on all reviews and actions.

2. In the event that a violation of the Ethics Code occurs during an authorized USA Hockey activity, USA Hockey may take action separate and independent from that of its member organizations in order to protect its interests and those of athletes, coaches and others involved with the activity.

3. Any action taken by a member organization of USA Hockey which affects the opportunity of a coach to participate in "protected" competition as defined in the USA Hockey Annual Guide shall be entitled to due processes assured under the USA Hockey By-Laws.

4. If the violation of the Ethics Code occurs while a coach is a member of a USA Hockey team or event, the coach's member organization acknowledges that USA Hockey may institute its own proceedings regarding the violation, which action shall not restrict the ability or obligation of the member organization to take its own separate and independent action.

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.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This Coaching Code of Ethics is the result of the work of many people and committees. The approach, structure and contents of this code were inspired by the Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct, December 1992 (American Psychological Association,

Vol. 47, No. 12, 1597-1611). Many of the ideas for these ethical standards were drawn from numerous other codes. The most significant of these were developed by the Coaching Association of Canada, the British Institute of Sport Coaches, the United States Olympic Committee and the NCAA. In particular, USA Hockey would like to thank:

Bob O'Connor, National Coach-In-Chief and Section Director, USA Hockey

Peter Lindberg, Vice President, USA Hockey

Ted Brill, Member, USA Hockey Board of Directors

Mike MacMillan, Minnkota District Coach-In-Chief, USA Hockey

Dick Emahiser, Minnkota District Associate Coach-In-Chief, USA Hockey

Matt Walsh, Central District Coach-In-Chief, USA Hockey

Laura Halldorson, Head Women's Hockey Coach, University of Minnesota

Jill Pothilla, Head Women's Hockey Coach, Augsburg College

Val Belmonte, Director, Coaching Education Program, USA Hockey