

Code of Ethical Conduct

Updated January 2021

Introduction

Every USA Gymnastics member has the power and the responsibility to shape the culture within our sport. By practicing our shared values, and staying focused on our highest priority – the safety and well-being of our athletes – we can promote an environment that empowers and supports athletes, and makes participation in the sport a positive and rewarding experience for all members.

The USA Gymnastics Code of Ethical Conduct (the “Code”) is our collective commitment to work ethically in all instances. It offers a tangible way to put our values into practice, and guidance in situations that have potential or actual ethical implications. Ultimately, the effectiveness of the Code depends on a personal commitment from every member of the gymnastics community.

This Code is divided into three sections: (1) the Athlete Bill of Rights; (2) Ethical Obligations; and (3) Resolution of Ethical Issues. The Code does not address misconduct or abusive behaviors. Instead, the *USA Gymnastics Safe Sport Policy* provides the definitions and mandatory reporting requirements for misconduct and abuse.

All Members of USA Gymnastics are required to implement and adhere to this Code.

I. Athlete Bill of Rights

Collectively, members of USA Gymnastics are committed to ensuring that athletes have a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment to train and compete, and that each athlete has the ability to:

1. Participate in gymnastics

Gymnastics is inclusive and open to everyone. All athletes have the right to participate, regardless of their age, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, religion, or other similar characteristic. Athletes have the right to participate at a level commensurate with their maturity and ability and will be given an equal opportunity to strive for success.

2. Train and compete safely

Safety is paramount. All athletes have the right to:

- Participate in an environment that is free from emotional, sexual, or physical abuse;
- Train and compete in a safe environment, free from inappropriate physical hazards, bullying, hazing, harassment, stalking, violence, or similar threats; and
- Train and compete on equipment that is clean, appropriately fitted, and properly maintained.

3. Have their personal health and wellness prioritized

Athletes have the right to pursue a healthy lifestyle that includes proper nutrition, mental health support, injury prevention and care, and necessary rest and recuperation, especially when healing from injury.

4. To be treated with dignity and respect

Athletes have the right to be treated fairly and with dignity and respect. They have the right to make mistakes and fail without fear. They have the right to be respected, encouraged and supported appropriately by other athletes, parents, coaches, judges, spectators, event officials and those in positions of authority.

5. Receive proper instruction

Athletes have the right to:

- Be coached by individuals who are knowledgeable and have received appropriate training.
- Be properly prepared for participation by those in positions of authority, including coaches, club owners, and administrators.
- Question or report improper behavior or violations of the Safe Sport Code, including of coaches or club owners, without fear that doing so will negatively impact their participation or success.
- All athletes (and particularly minor athletes) are entitled to have their parents observe coach/athlete interactions.

6. Integrity and Transparency

Athletes have the right to fair and transparent procedures and policies within their discipline – including selection procedures – that demonstrate integrity and are free from conflicts of interest, impropriety, and favoritism.

7. Provide input on matters that directly affect them

Athletes have the right to provide input, and have their voices respected, in matters that directly affect them.

8. Voice opinions on issues that affect the gymnastics community

Athletes have the right to respectfully express themselves on issues that impact the gymnastics community, with the confidence that doing so will not jeopardize their ability to participate and/or negatively impact their success.

The foundational philosophies of this Bill of Rights are separate from, but intended to guide, the responsibilities of each individual member included in the Ethical Obligations of Members (below) as well as the Safe Sport Policy. Ethical Obligations should be interpreted with these principles in mind.

II. Ethical Obligations of Members

A. Promotion of a Safe, Positive and Healthy Environment for All

Members have an ongoing obligation and commitment to ensure a safe and healthy environment for all gymnastics participants. Consistent with this obligation, members must:

- Make decisions in the best interest of athletes.
- Maintain a safe training and competing environment.
- Promote a culture of trust and empowerment.

- Respect the fundamental rights, dignity, and worth of all participants.
- Encourage a healthy lifestyle and support nutritional well-being.
- Promote and respect all Safe Sport principles.

B. Commitment to Integrity

Members have a responsibility to uphold the integrity of the sport and to act honestly, openly, fairly, and competently. Members must:

- Be knowledgeable of, understand, and follow USA Gymnastics rules and policies, and refrain from knowingly misrepresenting or misinterpreting such.
- Promote fair play.
- Maintain respect on the floor and refrain from intimidating, embarrassing or improperly influencing any individual responsible for participating in, judging, or administering a competition.
- Follow the established procedures for challenging a competitive result.
- Make honest certifications regarding compliance with USA Gymnastics' policies, procedures or membership requirements.
- Avoid engaging in business practices directed toward another Member that are known to be or are determined by a court or similar adjudicatory body to be, unethical, illegal or a breach of contract.

C. Participation and Inclusion

Members have the right to participate in any USA Gymnastics activity or event for which the Member is properly qualified under the rules of that activity or event and may participate to the best of his/her abilities at his/her discretion:

- Members may not knowingly participate in, or cause others to participate in, any activity or event where that individual is inadequately prepared or unable to participate safely.
- Members must promote positive participation and avoid behavior that is likely to interfere with the orderly conduct of the activity or other Members' participation in, or enjoyment of, an activity or event.
- Members must respect the rights and opinions of others.
- Members must facilitate cooperation in order to serve athletes and other participants effectively and appropriately.
- Members must promote inclusion and an environment free of discrimination. Members may not:
 - Restrict the ability of a Member to qualify for or participate in competition because of the Member's association with a particular organization or individual or because of that Member's race, sex, creed, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, national origin, mental or physical disability, or any other basis proscribed by law.
 - Discriminate in the allocation of resources or opportunities to any Member or prospective Member on the basis of race, sex, creed, sexual orientation, age, national origin, mental or physical disability, or any other basis proscribed by law.

D. Communication

Members of USA Gymnastics have a duty to communicate honestly and openly and must:

- Respect the voice of athletes, particularly in matters that affect them.
- Strive to promote the sport and athletes.
- Provide all information and resources necessary to enhance a gymnast's enjoyment of the sport or reduce their risk of injury or illness.
- Refrain from unsportsmanlike comments or behavior.
- Address differences in a calm and respectful manner.
- Clearly communicate roles, responsibilities and expectations.
- Avoid making false or misleading claims; or, falsify, or omit any information, record or document or other evidence for any purpose.
- Accurately represent competitive achievements, professional qualifications, education, experience, eligibility, criminal record and other misconduct, and/or affiliations.

E. Concern for the Welfare of Others

Members shall seek to contribute to the welfare of gymnastics participants and must:

- Promote a culture of empowerment with a focus on athlete health and safety.
- Comply with mandatory reporting requirements established by federal law, the U.S. Center for SafeSport and USA Gymnastics Safe Sport Policy.
- Proactively address potentially harmful behavior or an unsafe environment.
- Be sensitive to any imbalance of power.
- Resolve conflicts in a professional manner.

F. Professional Responsibility

Members have the responsibility to aspire to the highest possible standards of conduct and must:

- Prioritize athlete welfare.
- Faithfully complete USA Gymnastics membership requirements.
- Strive to maintain high standards and excellence.
- Seek to increase proficiency levels through continuing education and in consultation with other professionals.
- Participate only at a level of the sport in which an individual is qualified and prepared for.
- Accept appropriate responsibility for one's own behavior and report any unlawful or other inappropriate conduct of others in accordance with Section II below.

G. Alcohol and Drug Free Environment

Members of USA Gymnastics must ensure that the sport is conducted in an environment free of drug or alcohol abuse. Members may not:

- Use or provide to a third party any illegal (scheduled) drug pursuant to applicable federal, state or municipal law.
- Assist or condone any competing athlete's use of a drug banned by any applicable governing body, or, in the case of athletes, to use such drugs or refuse to submit to properly conducted drug tests administered by any governing body.
- Provide alcohol to or condone the use of alcohol by minors; consume alcohol while engaging in USA Gymnastics activities, including coaching and/or training and/or competing; consume excessive alcohol in the presence of athletes or at USA Gymnastics' events; or consume alcoholic beverages while a minor.

III. Resolving Ethical Issues

Members of USA Gymnastics have an obligation to be familiar with the principles outlined within this Code. The methods for reporting and resolution of possible ethical violations is outlined below. Members must cooperate fully with any and all undertakings in the review and resolution of a potential ethical violation.

A. Informal Resolution of Ethical Violations

When a Member believes that another Member has committed an ethical violation, they may 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. If such information resolution does not resolve matters, the Member should report such ethical violation in accordance with the below.

B. Reporting Possible Ethical Violations

1. If an apparent ethical violation is not appropriate for informal resolution or is not resolved properly in that fashion, a Member may file a complaint with USA Gymnastics via any of USA Gymnastics' reporting avenues, including:
 - Email: safesport@usagym.org
 - Hotline: (833) 844-SAFE
 - [Online](#)
2. Complaints must describe the nature of the alleged ethical violation, identify the aggrieved party and the individual(s) believed to be responsible for the violation, and the desired resolution. While confidentiality will be maintained where possible, in no case will confidentiality preclude the reporting of a violation as required by state or federal law.
3. Parents, on behalf of their minor child, are encouraged to file reports on behalf of their son or daughter, in situations where they believe a Member of USA Gymnastics has committed an ethical violation.

C. Resolution of Complaints

1. Review
Upon timely review and consideration of a complaint alleging an ethical violation, USA Gymnastics may:
 - a. Determine that the complaint does not merit further action after review of all material facts and opportunity for informal inquiry.
 - b. Refer the complaint for an alternate resolution path:
 - *U.S. Center for SafeSport.* If the review of a complaint gives rise to facts and circumstances that are within the exclusive jurisdiction of the U.S. Center for SafeSport, USA Gymnastics will notify the Center, and transfer the matter to the Center for resolution.
 - *USA Gymnastics Safe Sport.* If the complaint addresses facts and circumstances that may implicate USA Gymnastics' Safe Sport Policy, then USA Gymnastics will refer the complaint to its Safe Sport department for handling.
 - *Other referrals.* If the review of a complaint gives rise to facts and circumstances that are more appropriate for resolution elsewhere,

USA Gymnastics will refer the complaint, as appropriate, to a state or regional chair, committee or affiliated organization.

- c. If the complaint has not been dismissed or otherwise referred, then:
 - Notice will be provided to both parties who will be given an opportunity to respond and/or provide supporting information, and
 - Where appropriate, additional discussions with the parties or other individuals who may have relevant information will take place, and
 - If necessary, additional due diligence will be conducted which may include additional research or collection of documents, review of a member record, or any other actions that can be reasonably undertaken to assess the situation.

2. Resolution

- a. USA Gymnastics' standard of proof in determining whether an ethical violation has occurred is "more likely to have occurred than not." Based upon careful review of all the available information, an individual will be found responsible for an ethical violation if it can be reasonably concluded that the violation more likely than not occurred.
- b. USA Gymnastics will err on the side of protecting the safety and well-being of athletes.
- c. Lack of awareness or misunderstanding of an ethical standard is not itself a defense to an allegation of unethical conduct.
- d. Based on a careful review of the complaint and information obtained during the review process, USA Gymnastics may:
 - Inform the parties that based upon the review there was no finding of an ethical violation, or
 - Inform the parties that based upon the review there is a finding of an ethical violation; and counsel the members, as appropriate, or impose an appropriate sanction or an appropriate relief.
 - Report to law enforcement where required by state or federal law.
- e. *Sanction Guidelines.* Sanctions for ethical violations shall apply equally to all members based on an evaluation of the violation regardless of gender, competitive/coaching/judging level, achievements within the sport, or other factors not directly related to the violation. Sanctions will be reasonable and proportionate to the violation and surrounding circumstances, consistent with sanctions issued for similar violations and designed to promote participant welfare. General considerations when imposing sanctions include:
 - Nature and severity of the violation
 - Ages of the individuals involved
 - Member record and pattern of behavior
 - Voluntary disclosure of the violation, cooperation, or demonstration of remorse
 - Disposition by law enforcement
 - Perceived or real impact on the concerned parties
 - Likelihood of rehabilitation
 - Ability to affect positive change

- f. *Types of Sanctions.* Disciplinary sanctions include a wide range of options that range in severity (note: this is not an all-inclusive list, but rather, common forms of sanctions).
- *Warning.* A warning letter - either public or private - will detail the specific violation and/or action or inaction that led to the finding of the misconduct or violation, as well as the future behavior expectations.
 - *Removal from sanctioned activity.* Either for a specific event, series of events, or period of time.
 - *Warning with recommendation.* i.e., a mandate to review or implement a specific policy or behavior.
 - *Educational remedy.* Mandate to take an educational course or demonstrate compliance with USA Gymnastics' or a Member Club's policy.
 - *Interim Measures.* Imposing restrictions or requirements such as amended training schedules, supervised interactions, contact limitations, and may also include Probation or Suspension.
 - *Probation.* A period of time whereby the individual's behavior will be monitored, and generally includes restrictions on membership privileges.
 - *Suspension.* A period of time whereby the individual does not have any of the rights and privileges associated with membership, including the right to be involved in a Member Club's activities or participate in USA Gymnastics' sanctioned activities. The suspension notification will detail the criteria by which the suspension will be reviewed, lifted, or converted to an alternate sanction.
 - *Revocation of Member Club Status.* A club whose membership in USA Gymnastics has been terminated and therefore may no longer host USA Gymnastics sanctioned events or register/compete a team of athletes in USA Gymnastics sanctioned competitions.
 - *Permanently Ineligible for Membership.* An individual whose membership in USA Gymnastics has been terminated for life and who may no longer be affiliated with a USA Gymnastics Member Club or participate in USA Gymnastics' sanctioned activities.
 - *Membership Ineligibility.* An individual deemed ineligible to obtain membership in USA Gymnastics, such as an individual involved in the sport who has never been a member of USA Gymnastics or a Covered Individual, nor applied for membership.
 - *Other Relief.* Relief deemed appropriate to the violations and/or circumstances of the matter, for example, an apology or restitution.