

# USA Gymnastics Code of Ethics

## I. Introduction

The mission of USA Gymnastics is to encourage participation and the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of gymnastics. USA Gymnastics grants the privilege of membership to individuals and organizations committed to that mission. The privilege of membership may, therefore, be withdrawn by USA Gymnastics at any time where USA Gymnastics determines that a member's conduct is inconsistent with the mission of the organization or the best interest of the sport and those who participate in it.

In order to assist all members to better serve the interests of those who participate in gymnastics, USA Gymnastics has adopted the *Ethical Code* which follows. This *Code* is not intended to establish a set of rules that will, by inclusion or exclusion, prescribe the appropriate behavior for USA Gymnastics' members in every aspect of their participation in the sport. Rather, the *Code* offers general principles to guide the conduct, and the judicious appraisal of conduct, of all USA Gymnastics' members (including employees and agents of USA Gymnastics) in situations that have ethical implications.

This *Code* cannot further ethical conduct in the sport of gymnastics; that can only come from the personal commitment of the participants in the sport to behave ethically. This *Code* is offered instead to guide and to affirm the will of all of USA Gymnastics' members to safeguard the best interests of the sport by acting ethically at all times.

## II. Elements of the Code

### A. Participant Relationships

Members of USA Gymnastics are charged with the responsibility for contributing to an environment which makes participation in the sport a positive and rewarding experience. In order to achieve that result, each professional member has a special obligation to make decisions based on the best interest of the athlete. It is inconsistent with this obligation for any member to:

1. Fail to follow the safety guidelines established by USA Gymnastics, or otherwise knowingly subject a participant to unreasonable physical or emotional risk.
2. Engage in conduct which is unfair including, in particular, attempting to injure, disable or intentionally interfere with the preparation of a competitor.
3. Engage in conduct toward another participant in the sport which is abusive. USA Gymnastics recognizes that the process for training and motivating athletes will vary with each coach and each athlete, but it is nevertheless incumbent on everyone involved in the sport to support the development and use of motivational and training methods which avoid conduct which is, or is likely to be perceived as being, abusive.
4. Discriminate in the provision of resources or opportunities to any member or prospective member on the basis of race, sex, creed, sexual orientation, age, national origin or mental or physical disability.
5. Attempt to intimidate, embarrass or improperly influence any individual responsible for judging or administering a competition.
6. Engage in business practices directed toward another member which are determined by a court or other similar adjudicatory body to be unethical, illegal or a breach of contract.

### B. Participation

Any USA Gymnastics' activity or event should be open to any member properly qualified under the rules of that activity or event, and every member participating in a USA Gymnastics' activity or event has an obligation to participate to the best of their abilities. It is inconsistent with this obligation for any member to:

1. 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, age, national origin or mental or physical disability.

2. Participate as a judge, coach, athlete or administrator in any activity where that judge, coach or athlete is inadequately prepared, unable to participate or fails to participate to the best of his or her ability.
3. Engage in behavior which is so disorderly or inappropriate as to interfere with the orderly conduct of the activity or other members' participation in, or enjoyment of, the activity.

### **C. Responsibility**

A member of USA Gymnastics has a responsibility to the sport of gymnastics and the rules and regulations which govern it. It is inconsistent with this obligation for any member to:

1. Knowingly misrepresent the policies or actions of USA Gymnastics or its authorized representatives.
2. Fail to resort in the first instance to the established procedures for challenging a competitive result, contesting a team selection decision, complaining about the conduct of another member, or attempting to reverse a policy adopted by USA Gymnastics.
3. Breach the duty to maintain appropriately established confidences of USA Gymnastics or its members.

### **D. Communication**

Members of USA Gymnastics have a duty to communicate honestly and openly with the organization and its members. It is inconsistent with this obligation for any member to:

1. Misrepresent competitive achievements, professional qualifications, education, experience, eligibility, criminal record or affiliations.
2. Knowingly disseminate false or misleading information about another member.
3. Withhold from athlete members information or resources likely to enhance the athletes' enjoyment of the sport or reduce their risk of injury or illness.
4. Fail to consult with or inform fully the athlete or the athlete's parents about opportunities made available to the athlete involving competitions, commercial activities or recognition.
5. Misrepresent the nature or extent of an injury in order to decline an invitation to participate in or withdraw from a competition assignment, training camp or other similar activity.
6. Misrepresent the nature or extent of an injury in order to participate in (or cause an athlete to participate in) a competition, training camp or other similar activity when such participation is inconsistent with the appropriate medical response to the injury.

### **E. Alcohol and Drug Abuse**

Members of USA Gymnastics must ensure that the sport is conducted in an environment free of drug or alcohol abuse. It is inconsistent with this obligation for any member to:

1. Use or provide to a third party any drug proscribed by applicable federal, state or municipal law.
2. Assist or condone any competing athlete's use of a drug banned by the International Olympic Committee, United States Olympic Committee, Federation *Internationale de Gymnastique*, USA Gymnastics, or National Collegiate Athletic Association, or, in the case of athlete members, to use such drugs or refuse to submit to properly conducted drug tests administered by one of those organizations.
3. Provide alcohol to, or condone the use of alcohol by, minors, abuse alcohol in the presence of athlete members or at USA Gymnastics' activities or, in the case of athlete members, consume alcoholic beverages while a minor.

### **F. Criminal Conduct**

Members of USA Gymnastics are expected to comply with all applicable criminal codes. This obligation is violated by any member who has been convicted of or has entered a plea of guilty or no contest to a criminal charge or indictment involving sexual misconduct, child abuse, or conduct that is a violation of a law specifically designed to protect minors, and, depending on the nature of the crime, may be violated by any member who has been convicted of or has entered a plea of guilty or no contest to any felony charge or indictment involving conduct other than that specifically described above.

## **G. Sexual Misconduct**

Professional Members of USA Gymnastics must protect the integrity of the sport and the interests of the athletes they serve by avoiding sexual relationships with athletes except where the capacity and quality of the athlete's consent to enter that relationship is beyond question. It is inconsistent with this obligation for any member to:

1. Solicit or engage in sexual relations with any minor.
2. Engage in any behavior that utilizes the influence of a professional member's position as coach, judge or administrator to encourage sexual relations with an athlete.
3. Engage in sexual harassment by making unwelcome advances, requests for sexual favors or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature where such conduct creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment.

## **H. Professional and Athletic Development**

Members of USA Gymnastics should strive to increase their level of proficiency and skill. To fulfill this obligation professional members should:

1. Participate in continuing education programs like the safety certification and professional development programs made available by USA Gymnastics.
2. Remain current on safety, health and training developments relevant to the sport and seek advice and counsel of colleagues and experts whenever such consultation is in the best interests of the athlete.

## **I. Conflict of Interest**

Members of USA Gymnastics are responsible for avoiding both actual and perceived conflicts of interest in the conduct of business on behalf of the organization. It is inconsistent with this obligation for any member to:

1. Use, or be perceived as using, USA Gymnastics' properties, services, opportunities, authority or influence to gain private benefit.
2. Fail, as an employee, director, officer or committee member of USA Gymnastics, to complete an annual conflict of interest of form, or fail to complete that form accurately.
3. Incur expenses in furtherance of USA Gymnastics' business which are unreasonable, unnecessary, or unsubstantiated.
4. Participate in the deliberation or decision making process about any issue for which the member has a direct financial interest.

## **III. Enforcement of Code**

Compliance with this *Code* depends primarily upon understanding and voluntary compliance, secondarily upon reinforcement by peers, and, when necessary, upon enforcement through disciplinary action.

Any individual who believes that a member of USA Gymnastics has failed to meet his or her obligations under this *Code* is, under all but the most egregious circumstances, encouraged to first address that concern directly to that member. If that action does not result in a satisfactory resolution, the individual may file a written complaint with the President, program director or other appropriate staff member of USA Gymnastics. That complaint must be signed and must state specifically the nature of the alleged misconduct. Upon review of the complaint and, where appropriate, additional discussions with the complainant and/or member who is the subject of the complaint, the President may:

1. Determine that the complaint does not merit further action,
2. Counsel the member who is the subject of the complaint and record both the complaint and the nature of the counseling in the member's permanent record,
3. Refer the complaint, as appropriate, to the state or regional chairs/committees or affiliated organization, or
4. Process the complaint under the member misconduct or grievance procedures of USA Gymnastics' Bylaws