

COACHING for the ETHICAL TREATMENT of ATHLETES (CETA)

INTRODUCTION

The COACHING for the ETHICAL TREATMENT of ATHLETES (CETA) Code is intended to provide standards of professional conduct that are applied to members of US Gymnastics Coaches Association (USGCA). Whether or not a coach has violated the CETA Code does not by itself determine if he or she is legally liable in a court action, if a contract is enforceable or if other legal consequences occur—these results are based on legal rather than ethical rules. However, compliance with or violation of USGCA CETA Codes may be admissible as evidence in some legal proceedings, depending on the circumstances.

The CETA Code provides both the general principles and the decision rules to cover most situations encountered by coaches. Its primary goal is the welfare and protection of the individuals and groups with whom coaches work. This Code and its parts 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 unfair discriminatory practices.

The CETA Code was inspired by the Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct (*American Psychological Association, Vol. 47, No. 12 1597-1611*). Other ideas for ethical standards were drawn from Coaching Association of Canada and British Institute of Sport Coaches and Aimee Boorman, USA coach.

COACHING PRINCIPLES

PRINCIPLE A—COMPETENCE

- Strive to maintain high standards of excellence in their work
- Recognize boundaries of their particular competencies and limitations of their expertise
- Provide only those services and use only those techniques for which they are qualified by education, training or experience
- In 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
- Maintain knowledge of relevant scientific and professional information related to the rendered services and recognize the need for ongoing education
- Make appropriate use of scientific, professional, technical, administrative resources

PRINCIPLE B—INTEGRITY

- Seek to promote integrity in the practice of coaching
- Are honest, fair and respectful of others
- In describing or reporting their qualifications, services, products, or extra fees, they do not make statements that are false, misleading or deceptive
- Strive to be aware of their own belief systems, values, needs and limitations and the effect of these on their work
- Clarify for relevant parties the roles they are performing and to function appropriately in accordance with those roles
- Avoid improper and potentially harmful dual relationships

PRINCIPLE C—PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

- 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

- Consult with, refer, cooperate with other professionals and institutions to the extent needed to serve the best interest of their athletes or other recipients of their services
- 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
- Are concerned about the ethical compliance of their colleagues' professional conduct and when appropriate, consult with colleagues to prevent or avoid unethical conduct

PRINCIPLE D—RESPECT FOR PARTICIPANTS AND DIGNITY

- Respect the fundamental rights, dignity and worth of all participants (*athletes, their family members, coaches, officials, volunteers, administrators and spectators*)
- 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
- 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

- Seek to contribute to the welfare of those with whom they interact professionally
- Consider the welfare and rights of their athletes and other participants in their professional actions
- 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
- Are sensitive to differences in power between themselves and others and they do not exploit or mislead other people during or after professional relationships

PRINCIPLE F—RESPONSIBLE COACHING

- Are aware of their professional responsibilities to the community and the society in which they work and live
- Apply and make public their knowledge of sport to contribute to human welfare
- Avoid misuse of their work
- Comply with the law and encourage the development of law and policies that serve the interest of sport
- Are encouraged to contribute a portion of their professional time for little or no personal advantage

CETA STANDARDS

1.0—GENERAL STANDARDS—These CETA Standards are applicable to the professional activities of gymnastic coaches in all disciplines

1.1—APPLICABILITY OF THE CETA 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 the CETA Code consistently.

1.2—BOUNDARIES OF COMPETENCE

- A. Coaches provide services only within the 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 awareness of current scientific and professional information in their fields 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 endeavors.

1.5—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 hold 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 proscribed 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 sexual in nature and:

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 accord sexual-harassment complainants and respondents dignity and respect—coaches do not participate in denying an athlete the right to participate based upon their having made, or 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 the persons' age, gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language or socioeconomic status

1.10—PERSONAL PROBLEMS AND CONFLICTS

- A. Coaches recognize their personal problems or conflicts may interfere with their effectiveness—accordingly, refrain from undertaking an activity when knowing their personal problems are likely to lead to harm to athletes or other participants to whom they may owe a professional obligation
- B. Coaches have an obligation to be alert to signs of, to obtain assistance for, their personal problems at an early stage 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

1.11—AVOIDING HARM

Coaches take reasonable steps to avoid harming their athletes or other participants and 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, must be alert to guard against personal, financial, social,

organizational or political factors that might lead to 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 nonprofessional contacts with athletes and other participants
 - 1. Coaches must always be sensitive to the potential harmful effects of other contacts on their work and on those persons with whom they deal
 - 2. 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 coach's objectivity or otherwise interfere with the coach effectively performing their 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 preexisting relationships would create a risk of such harm
- C. If a coach finds (*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 CETA 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 to serve their athletes or other participants effectively and appropriately

1.16—DELEGATION TO AND SUPERVISION OF SUBORDINATES

- A. Coaches delegate to their employees, supervisors and 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 employees or supervisors 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, coach and athlete (*or other participants*) reach an agreement specifying compensation and billing arrangements
- B. Coaches do not exploit recipients of services or athletes with respect to fees
- C. Coaches do not misrepresent their fees
- D. If limitations to services can be anticipated because of limitations in financing, this is discussed with the athlete or other participant as appropriate

2.0—ADVERTISING AND OTHER PUBLIC STATEMENTS—Coaches comply with the CETA Code in public statements relating to their professional services, products or publications

2.1—STATEMENTS BY OTHERS

- A. Coaches who engage others to create or place public statements promoting their professional practice, products or activities retain professional responsibility for such statements

- B. Coaches make reasonable efforts to prevent others whom they do not control (such as employers, publishers, sponsors, organizational clients and representatives of print or broadcast media) from making deceptive statements concerning the coach or his professional activities
- C. Coaches learning of deceptive statements about their work made by others will 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

2.2—AVOIDANCE OF FALSE OR DECEPTIVE STATEMENTS

- A. Coaches do not make public statements that are false, deceptive, misleading, or fraudulent, either because of what they state, convey or suggest, of what they omit, concerning their work activities or those of persons or organizations with which they are affiliated
- B. As examples (*and not limited*) of this standard, coaches do not make false or deceptive statements concerning:
 - 1. Training, experiences or competence
 - 2. Academic degrees
 - 3. Credentials
 - 4. Institutional or association affiliations
 - 5. Services
 - 6. Basis for, or results or degree of success of their services
 - 7. Extra fees

2.3—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 the statements are consistent with the CETA Code

2.4—TESTIMONIALS

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

2.5—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

3.0—TRAINING ATHLETES

3.1—STRUCTURING THE RELATIONSHIP

- A. Coaches discuss with athletes as early as is feasible appropriate issues, such as the nature and anticipated course of training, extra fees and confidentiality
- 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 reasonably understandable to the athlete.

3.2—FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

- A. When a coach agrees to provide services to several persons who have a relationship (*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—clarification includes the role of the coach and the probable uses of the services provided
- B. As soon as it becomes apparent the coach may be called on to perform potentially conflicting roles (*i.e., 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—coach discusses these issues with the athlete or another legally authorized person on behalf of the athlete 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.
- C. 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. Amount of time that has passed since the coach-athlete relationship terminated;
 - 2. Circumstances of termination;
 - 3. Athlete's personal history;

4. Athlete's current mental status;
5. Likelihood of adverse impact on the athlete and others; and
6. Only 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 AND 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
- C. Use or provide to a third party any illegal (*scheduled*) drug pursuant to applicable federal, state or municipal law
- D. 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

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
- 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 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

4.0—TRAINING SUPERVISION

4.1—DESIGN OF TRAINING PROGRAMS

Coaches who are responsible for training programs for other coaches seek to ensure 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—information must be readily available to all interested parties
- B. Coaches seek to ensure 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've made to athletes

5.0—TEAM SELECTION

5.1—EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

- A. Coaches perform evaluations or team selection only within the context of a defined professional relationship
- B. 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

6.0—RESOLVING ETHICAL ISSUES

6.1—FAMILIARITY WITH CETA CODE

Coaches have an obligation to be familiar with the CETA Code, other applicable ethics codes, and their application to their work—lack 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 CETA 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 CETA Code, coaches clarify the nature of the conflict, make known their commitment to the CETA Code, and to the extent feasible, seek to resolve the conflict in a way that permits the fullest adherence to the CETA Code.

6.4—INFORMAL RESOLUTION OF ETHICAL VIOLATIONS

When coaches believe there may have been an ethical violation by another coach, they attempt to resolve the issue by bringing it to the individual's attention 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 or is not resolved properly, 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 the NGB—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

7.0—PROCESS RELATING TO VIOLATION OF CODE

7.1—Coach acknowledges CETA is administered under the authority of the USGCA and a violation of this Code subjects the coach to the

processes of the USGCA—USGCA acknowledges that all violations of the CETA Code will be reviewed for possible membership removal

7.2—In the event a violation of a CETA Code occurs during an authorized NGB activity, NGB may, as sanctioner of the event, take action separate and independent from that of the USGCA to protect its interests and those of athletes, coaches and others at the location

7.3—Any action taken by USGCA 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—includes process within USGCA, the USOC and the American Arbitration Association

7.4—If the violation of CETA occurs while a member of the NGB, 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—If a coach is found to have violated CETA, such action is separate and apart from any other legal consequences which may occur as a result of the act

PLEDGE

USGCA has adopted a COACHING for the ETHICAL TREATMENT of ATHLETES (CETA) and is my responsibility to familiarize myself with this document and conduct myself according to its tenets. Failure to understand any of the principles of these documents does not constitute a defense for violation of its rules. The principles outlined are intended to be clarifications or expansions on the USOC document, among others, and are an emphasis on the values of USGCA. This document should not be considered to be the full scope of regulations and ethics codes required of coaches. Further, where this document supersedes, contradicts or exceeds the scope of the USOC Coaching Ethics Code or our gymnastics NGB codes, I will adhere to the principles and intent of the USGCA CETA Code. I recognize CETA goes beyond the scope of the law, and should be treated with the same, or greater, respect and gravity with which I treat the laws and standards of my community.

PLEDGE I—PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES

I pledge to maintain practices that protect the public and advance my profession; I will:

- A. Maintain responsible association with the gymnastics NGB, its national programs and member organizations
- B. Continue personal and professional growth, remaining current on new developments in the field through continuing education
- C. Use my knowledge and professional association(s) for the benefit of the people I serve
- D. Always strive to be truthful and put colleagues or other professionals in a positive light
- E. Avoid discrimination in all of its forms

PLEDGE II—COACH/ATHLETE RELATIONSHIPS

I pledge to maintain relationships with athletes on a professional basis; I will:

- A. Conduct all my relationships from a perspective of dignity and sound educational and scientific foundation to:

1. Direct comments or criticism relative to the performance, not the athlete
 2. Ensure all activities are suitable for the age, experience and ability of the athletes
 3. Educate athletes as to their responsibilities in contributing to a safe environment, and to do my best to ensure all facilities and equipment meet safety standards and are age/ability appropriate
 4. Consider the athlete's future health and well being as foremost when making decisions regarding an injured athlete's ability to continue competing or training, and seek professional medical opinions to serve as a basis for my decisions
 5. Be aware of academic responsibilities; conduct practices and match schedules in a manner so as not to unduly interfere with academic success. Never encourage, condone, or require any behavior that threatens an athlete's high school, collegiate eligibility or amateur status
 6. Comply with regulations and ethical guidelines for recruiting practices as defined by governing sport organizations
 7. Strive to develop individual and team respect for the ability of opponents
 8. Prioritize being present at all practices and competitions and when unable to, will procure knowledgeable and safe supervision
- B. Work with and strive to develop every individual
- C. Show sensitive regard for the moral, social, religious and sexual orientations of others and communities and will not impose my beliefs on others
- D. Recognize the trust placed in and the unique power of the coach and athlete relationship and will not exploit the dependency of athletes
- E. Avoid dual relationships (*business or close personal relationships*) which could impair my professional judgment, compromise the integrity of the process and/or take advantage of the relationship for my own gain
- F. While serving in a professional capacity or as a role model, avoid any drug, tobacco or alcohol use while in the presence of athletes, will

discourage by way of education any consumption of these substances by minors and will remain at all times within the limits of the law with regard to legal substances—I will avoid illegal ones entirely

- G. Not engage in physical, verbal or emotional harassment, abusive words or actions, or exploitative coercion of current or former athletes and will report any suspected cases of abuse to the appropriate authorities immediately
- H. Recognize all forms of sexual abuse, assault or harassment with athletes are illegal and unethical, even when an athlete invites or consents to such behavior or involvement and will report all suspected cases of sexual assault or abuse to law enforcement as required by law

PLEDGE III—CONFIDENTIALITY

I pledge to respect the integrity and protect the welfare of all persons with whom I am working; I will:

- A. Safeguard information about them that has been learned or obtained during the coaching relationship, including performance reviews, statistics and all personal confidences
- B. Obtain permission from athletes before sharing videotape recordings or other data of them with anyone except the recognized coaching staff
- C. Disguise current or former athletes when referred to in a publication, while teaching or in a public presentation that is not laudatory
- D. Not use these standards of confidentiality to avoid intervention when it is necessary (*evidence of physical or psychological abuse of minors, or legal issues*)

PLEDGE IV—STAFF / EMPLOYEE RELATIONSHIPS

I pledge to maintain all relationships with employees and staff on a professional and confidential basis and avoid exploiting their trust and dependency

