

# COACHING ETHICS CODE





NRA Coach Department  
11250 Waples Mill Road  
Fairfax, VA 22030  
(703) 267-1401  
[coaching@nrahq.org](mailto:coaching@nrahq.org)  
[www.nrahq.org/education](http://www.nrahq.org/education)

# **COACHING ETHICS CODE**

**Produced by the  
NRA Education & Training Division  
A Publication of the  
National Rifle Association of America**

**SPECIAL THANKS**

**NRA's Education & Training Programs  
are made possible, in part, thanks to a  
grant from The NRA Foundation and its  
generous donors.**

**The NRA Foundation  
11250 Waples Mill Road, Fairfax, VA 22030**

*[www.nrafoundation.org](http://www.nrafoundation.org) ♦ [nraf@nrahq.org](mailto:nraf@nrahq.org)*

# Table of Contents

FORWARD	5
INTRODUCTION	6
GENERAL PRINCIPLES	
Competence	7
Integrity	7
Professional Responsibility	7
Respect of Participants' Rights and Dignity	8
Concern for Others' Welfare	8
Coaches' Responsibility to the Community	8
ETHICAL STANDARDS	
General Standards:	
Applicability of Ethics Code	9
Boundaries of Competence	9
Maintaining Expertise	9
Basis for Professional Judgments	10
Describing the Nature of	
Coaching Judgments	10
Respecting Others	10
Discrimination	10
Sexual Harassment	10
Avoiding Harm	10
Misuse of Coaches' Influence	10
Multiple Relationships	11
Exploitative Relationships	11
Delegation to and Supervision	
of Subordinates	12
Public Statements:	
Avoidance of False or Deceptive	
Statements	12
Media Presentations	12
Testimonials	13
Training Athletes:	
Structuring the Relationship	13
Coach/Parent Relationship	13
Sexual Intimacies with Current Athletes	14

Drug-Free Sport . . . . .	14
Alcohol, Tobacco, and Gambling . . . . .	14
Pornography . . . . .	14
Training Supervision:	
Design of Training Programs . . . . .	15
Descriptions of Training Programs . . . . .	15
Youth Protection . . . . .	15
Accuracy and Objectivity in Coaching . . . . .	16
Honoring Commitments . . . . .	16
Team Selection:	
Recruiting . . . . .	17
Tampering . . . . .	17
Player Selection . . . . .	17
Assessing Athlete Performance . . . . .	17
Resolving Ethical Issues:	
Familiarity with Ethics Code . . . . .	17
Confronting Ethical Issues . . . . .	18
Conflicts Between Ethics and Organizational Demands . . . . .	18
Informal Resolution of Ethical Violations . . . . .	18
Formal Reporting of Ethical Violations . . . . .	18
Cooperating with Ethics Committees . . . . .	19
Improper Complaints . . . . .	19
Process Relating to Violation of Code . . . . .	20

## **FORWARD**

We are not immune from ethical problems in the shooting sports. Large cases brought to court often seem to be the most difficult to resolve, and are generally based on perceived or real legal issues or on potential damage to the reputation of the individual or the organization. One of the major difficulties with many of these cases is that procedures or a system of review do not exist. This Ethics Code provides these procedures.

The intent of this code is to provide both general principles and the decision rules to cover most situations encountered by coaches. This Ethics Code is a coordinated National Rifle Association/USA Shooting/Civilian Marksmanship Program (NRA/USA Shooting/CMP) effort. It has been designed with the purpose of establishing coach ethics in order to protect the athletes, coaches, volunteers, and our associations. These standards define (to the extent possible) acceptable and unacceptable categories of behavior.

Special thanks go to USA Hockey for allowing us to use their format and extract text from their Coaching Ethics Code publication. In addition, we thank the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) for allowing us to use their material regarding youth protection. We also thank USA Shooting for their coordination with USA Hockey and for their cooperation in developing the Ethics Code. It is our hope that this Ethics Code will help keep the shooting sports a healthy and safe environment for all participants.

## **INTRODUCTION**

This Ethics Code is intended to provide standards of ethical conduct that can be applied by NRA/USA Shooting/CMP and its member organizations. Whether a coach has violated the Ethics Code does not in itself determine if a contract or agreement is enforceable or if legal consequences occur. These results are based on legal rather than ethical rules. However, compliance with or violation of the Ethics Code may be relevant as evidence in some legal proceedings, depending upon the circumstances.

The Code is intended to provide both general principles and the decision rules to cover most situations encountered by coaches. It has as its primary goal the welfare and protection of individuals and groups with whom the coaches work. This Code also provides a common set of values. It is the individual responsibility of each trainer 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**

### **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.

### **INTEGRITY**

Coaches seek to promote integrity in the practice of coaching. Coaches are honest and fair. 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.

### **PROFESSIONAL<sup>1</sup> 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

---

<sup>1</sup>*Professional: Of, engaged in, or worthy of high standards.*

athletes. Coaches consult with, refer to, or cooperate with other professionals and institutes to the extent needed to serve the best interests 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 in order to prevent or avoid unethical conduct.

## **RESPECT OF PARTICIPANTS' RIGHTS AND DIGNITY<sup>2</sup>**

Coaches respect the fundamental rights, dignity, and worth of all participants. Coaches are aware of individual differences. Coaches try to eliminate the effect on their work of biases, and they do not knowingly participate in or condone unlawful discriminatory practices.

## **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. When conflicts occur among coaches' obligations or concerns, they attempt to resolve these conflicts 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 or after their relationships.

## **COACHES' RESPONSIBILITY TO THE COMMUNITY**

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

---

<sup>2</sup>*Participants: Those taking part in shooting sports, including shooters and their family members, coaches, officials, volunteers, administrators, and spectators.*

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 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 athletes and community. 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 qualified coaches from their respective association.

b. In those areas of the United States that require coaching education, coaches take reasonable steps to ensure their attendance at appropriate coaching education schools, seminars, or clinics, and to ensure that they are in compliance with the law.

#### 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 Judgements

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. Discrimination

Coaches do not engage in discrimination on any basis as prescribed by law.

#### 8. Sexual Harassment

- a. Coaches do not engage in sexual harassment.
- 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. Avoiding Harm

Coaches take reasonable steps to avoid harming their athletes.

#### 10. 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.

## 11. 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. 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 maximum compliance with this Ethics Code.

## 12. 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.

13. Delegation to and Supervision of Subordinates

- a. Coaches delegate to their assistants only the authority that such persons can reasonably be expected to perform competently on the basis of their education, training, or experience.
- 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, competence, or services.
- b. Their institutional or association affiliations.
- c. Their academic degrees.
- d. Their credentials.
- e. The basis for, results of, or degree of success of their services.
- f. Their criminal record.

2. Media Presentations

When coaches provide advice or comment by means of public lectures, demonstrations, radio or television programs, pre-recorded 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. Coaches make every reasonable effort never to work alone with athletes. As much as possible, two adults (one female with female athletes), one of whom will be 21 years old, are required on all trips and programs. In situations that require a personal conference, such as a youth/adult conference, the meeting is to be conducted privately, but in full view of other adults and youths. Coaches insure that sufficient leadership and supervision are provided for all activities.

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 athletes.

### 2. Coach/Parent Relationship

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. The 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

a. Coaches do not engage in sexual/romantic activity with minors.

b. Coaches do not engage in sexual/romantic activities with current athletes.

### 4. Drug-Free Sport

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

### 5. 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 any unlawful use of alcohol or tobacco.

b. Coaches refrain from using tobacco or alcohol and from gambling while they are coaching, and make every effort to avoid such activities while in the presence of their athletes.

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

### 6. Pornography

a. Coaches do not tolerate the use of pornographic material.

- b. Coaches do not tolerate the use of pornography while they are coaching and make every effort to avoid pornography.
- 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 completely 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. Youth Protection

a. Coaches respect the privacy of the athletes they coach and never improperly touch an athlete. Coaches always request permission to properly touch an athlete for the purpose of adjusting equipment or a position.

b. When taking trips, coaches will not, unless absolutely necessary, permit junior athletes to sleep in accommodations of another adult other than team members of the same sex or their own parent or guardian. Coaches will ensure that separate shower and latrine facilities are provided for males and females whenever possible. If not possible, coaches will ensure that a specific schedule is available for males and females to use these facilities.

c. Coaches will not allow junior athletes to participate in high adventure, dangerous, or high-risk activities without proper preparation, supervision, and safety measures.

d. Coaches do not permit secret organizations. All aspects of athlete programs are open to observation by parents and volunteers.

e. Coaches require proper attire for all activities. (For example, "skinny-dipping" is not an appropriate activity.)

f. Coaches never use corporal punishment (physical abuse) or abusive language.

g. Coaches do not permit hazing or initiations as part of their organization.

#### 4. 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 demeaning to athletes or other participants.

#### 5. Honoring Commitments

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

## **E. TEAM SELECTION**

### **1. Recruiting**

Coaches do not engage, directly or through agents, in uninvited in-person solicitation of business or services from current or potential athletes or other participants who, because of their particular circumstances, are vulnerable to undue influence.

### **2. Tampering**

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

### **3. Player Selection**

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

### **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.

## **E. 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 in 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 NRA, USA Shooting, or with CMP.

## 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 Resolution of Ethical Violations

When athletes 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. Formal Reporting of Ethical Violations

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

### a. Athlete:

(1) Contacting the coach's Club President or appropriate designee.

(2) Confirming with the coach's Club President if there was an attempt for informal resolution.

(3) Notifying in writing the NRA/USA Shooting/CMP National Coach Trainer, identifying the specific ethical violations and describing actions taken to resolve the violation.

b. Association:

(1) Will review the Ethical Violation charge.

(2) Will give a copy of the completed Ethical Violation form to the coach in question approximately seven days prior to the association's review.

(3) If necessary, will review the ethical violation with counsel, and follow counsel's recommendations (which could result in revocation of coach credentials).

(4) Will keep a written record on all reviews and actions.

c. Government:

Coaches are knowledgeable about laws regarding child abuse and will comply with required reporting procedures.

## 6. Cooperating with Ethics Committees

Coaches cooperate in ethics investigations, proceedings, and resulting requirements of NRA/USA Shooting/CMP 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 NRA/USA Shooting/CMP and its member organizations, and that a violation of the Code subjects the coach to the processes of NRA/USA Shooting/CMP and its member organizations.

2. In the event that a violation of the Ethics Code occurs during an authorized NRA/USA Shooting/CMP activity, NRA/USA Shooting/CMP 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. If the violation of the Ethics Code occurs while a coach is a member of a NRA/USA Shooting/CMP team or event, the coach's member organization acknowledges that NRA/USA Shooting/CMP 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.

4. 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.

## Ensuring The Future

**N**ow more than ever, the demand for youth programs is growing at an unprecedented rate. The NRA Foundation is meeting this challenge by providing millions of dollars to fund these vital programs. To assure that this growth is sustained, the foundation is actively building a permanent endowment fund to ensure financial support for the future.

To date, The NRA Foundation has funded thousands of grants totaling more than \$60 million, with training programs receiving a substantial portion of the grant dollars awarded. With so many extraordinary programs developed specifically for training, the opportunities for investment are numerous.

The NRA Foundation's goal is to fund these programs entirely through endowment income to ensure the future of the shooting sports for generations. No other organization in the country can make this kind of commitment to the future of hunting and the shooting sports, yet there is still a long way to go before our funding needs are met. It is our hope to secure the funding necessary to endow these programs for years to come. The NRA Foundation takes pride in investing in the future of our precious firearm heritage, and we hope that those who embrace these American ideals will join us as we strive to leave a legacy of tradition and freedom for our children.

For more information, please contact The NRA Foundation, at (800) 423-6894, or visit our Web site at [www.nrafoundation.org](http://www.nrafoundation.org).





**NRA**<sup>TM</sup>

To join NRA today, or for additional  
information regarding membership,  
call (800) NRA-3888.

Your membership dues can be charged to  
American Express, Discover, MasterCard, or VISA.

EM 13660