

USA GYMNASTICS PURPOSE AND CODE OF ETHICAL CONDUCT

The purpose of the Women's Program of USA Gymnastics is to promote, serve, and administer the official gymnastics program for girls and women of all levels of ability throughout the United States. This shall be done by:

- A. Carrying out the purposes and objectives of USA Gymnastics.
- B. Providing for the expansion and improvement of gymnastics programs through the training and certification of judges and the education of qualified instructors to conduct appropriate gymnastics programs.
- C. Organizing competitions for girls and women of all ability at local, state, regional, and national events.
- D. Providing for the technical organization and development of specific guidelines, rules and policies, and providing a network of communication necessary for the implementation of these objectives.

Interpretation of this publication is the expressed duty and responsibility of the Women's Program Committee and the President of USA Gymnastics.

USA Gymnastics Code of Ethical Conduct

Members of USA Gymnastics have an ongoing, affirmative duty to promote a culture that empowers and supports athletes and focuses on USA Gymnastics' highest priority: the safety and well-being of our athletes. Every member of USA Gymnastics is responsible for ensuring an environment that makes participation in the sport a positive and rewarding experience. The USA Gymnastics Code of Ethical Conduct (the "Code") is intended to work in conjunction with the *USA Gymnastics Safe Sport Policy*, and as such sets forth USA Gymnastics and its members' commitment to act ethically in all instances. Further the Code is intended to provide guidance in situations that have potential or actual ethical implications. The effectiveness of the Code depends on a personal commitment from every member of the gymnastics community. It is expected that all Members of USA Gymnastics will implement and adhere to the Code.

This Code is divided into two sections: (1) Ethical Obligations; and (2) 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.

I. Ethical Obligations

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

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, 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:

- Strive to promote the sport and athletes in a positive manner.
- 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. Member 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.
- Participation 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.
- **Adhere to USA Gymnastics Safe Sport Policy to include mandatory reporting, adherence to all prevention policies, and conducting themselves in a manner free from all misconduct.**

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.

II. 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 are 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: safesportpolicy@usagym.org
 - Hotline: (833) 844-SAFE
 - Online: <https://usagym.org/pages/education/safesport/report.html>
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.
 - *Articles 9 and 10 of USA Gymnastics Bylaws.* If the review of a complaint gives rise to facts and circumstances that are more appropriate for investigation and adjudication by the process described in Articles 9 and 10 of its Bylaws, USA Gymnastics will process the complaint pursuant to those procedures.
 - *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 gymnasts.
 - 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.

Part II. USA Gymnastics' Safe Sport Measures

Any adult under the jurisdiction of USA Gymnastics who becomes aware of an incident of child abuse or sexual misconduct involving a minor MUST immediately report the incident to law enforcement and the U.S. Center for SafeSport.

A. Criminal Background Screening of Individual Members

As a condition to being granted the privilege of membership in USA Gymnastics, individuals applying for a membership must submit to criminal background screening pursuant to USA Gymnastics' Criminal Background Screening Policy. Individuals given a "Green Light" or "meets the screening criteria" consistent with that policy fulfill the background-screening requirement for membership in USA Gymnastics. Individuals given a "Red Light" consistent with that policy means criminal history has been sourced that "does not meet the screening criteria."

USA Gymnastics will continually monitor and review the individuals who are subject to criminal background searches, with the primary goal of safeguarding gymnasts and other participants through proactive measures while conforming to legal norms and industry best practices.

B. Permanently Ineligible for Membership List

USA Gymnastics maintains a list of individuals and clubs who are permanently ineligible for membership, available at usagym.org/ineligible. Persons and clubs who are sanctioned with a lifetime ban are restricted from involvement or association with USA Gymnastics and Member Club activities. Members who knowingly employs or associates with an ineligible member will be subject to termination of their membership.

C. Code of Ethical Conduct

The Code provides guidance and affirms the commitment of all members to safeguard the best interests of the sport and its athletes by acting ethically at all times.

D. Athlete Member Advisement

Upon obtaining membership in USA Gymnastics, an enclosure is mailed with the Athlete Membership Card advising Athletes of the organization's initiatives to promote a safe environment including awareness of this Safe Sport Policy, his/her role in maintaining the Athlete's own safety, and available Safe Sport resources.

E. Member Advisement

Upon obtaining membership in USA Gymnastics, an enclosure is mailed with the Membership Card advising the member of the organization's initiatives to promote a safe environment for gymnasts and other participants, including awareness of this Safe Sport Policy, the member's obligation's in maintaining a safe environment, and available Safe Sport resources.

F. Member Clubs

As a condition for the privilege of membership in USA Gymnastics as a Member Club, a club must agree to and comply with the following requirements for the entirety of the club's membership period, and a certification of compliance must be made annually.

1. Have a policy consistent with USA Gymnastics' Safe Sport Policy that affirms the club's commitment to the welfare of gymnastics participants in its club and includes, at minimum, a description of conduct that will not be tolerated, standards of behavior that promote participant welfare, and a process for receiving and handling complaints regarding conduct that violates its policy.
2. **Maintain compliance with educational requirements of U110: SafeSport Core Course that includes all Adult Participants that include management, coaches, adult athletes, office staff, and any person with authority over a minor athlete.**
3. Must adopt USA Gymnastics "Prevention Policies" into the club's policies and be able to provide written documentation of compliance.
4. **Must assign a Safety Champion.**
5. Certify that no persons permanently ineligible for USA Gymnastics membership and no persons listed on a federal or state sex-offender registry are or will be associated with the club or its activities in any way.
6. Maintain current commercial general liability insurance that includes at a minimum, participant liability and participant accident medical insurances.
7. Maintain a current Organizational Membership for the owner of any private gymnastics facility and/or the managing director of a public/non-profit facility.
8. Have a mission statement consistent with USA Gymnastics' mission to encourage participation and the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of gymnastics.

G. Requirements to Member Clubs

It is strongly encouraged that local clubs join with USA Gymnastics in taking affirmative steps beyond those described in Section F to promote a safe environment for all gymnastics participants by:

1. Adopting additional "Prevention Policies" to foster a safe gymnastics environment and the prevention of abuse by instituting measures that minimize the opportunity for adult members to be one-on-one with minor athletes, and by training staff and volunteers to implement such policies;
2. Referencing the reporting portals for USA Gymnastics and the U.S. Center for SafeSport on either the club website, handbooks, or social media pages.
3. Implementing a thorough hiring process including, for example, reference and criminal background checks;
4. Encouraging parents/guardians to become as active as reasonably possible in his/her child's gymnastics activities; and
5. Otherwise implementing policies and procedures to lessen the likelihood that an abusive situation and athlete grooming could develop.

H. Event Sanctions

As a condition for being granted a USA Gymnastics sanction for an event, the applicant must certify that no persons permanently ineligible for USA Gymnastics membership, and no persons listed on a federal or state sex-offender registry, will be associated with the event in any capacity, including, but not limited to, volunteers and meet support personnel.

Sanctioned events may only be hosted by Member Clubs and/or other organizations holding a USA Gymnastics Organizational membership.

I. Advertising/Trade Shows

As a condition to place advertising in USA Gymnastics publications, on its web site or through other USA Gymnastics media platforms/publications, or to participate in USA Gymnastics Congress Regional/National Trade Shows, advertisers, vendors and exhibitors must certify that no persons permanently ineligible for USA Gymnastics membership are or will be associated with the advertiser's gymnastics-related activities, the position, activity, or event it intends to publicize; or the vendor or exhibitor's on-site activities.

J. Hiring/Training of USA Gymnastics Staff/Volunteers

1. USA Gymnastics staff members must complete criminal background screening consistent with USA Gymnastics' "Background Screening Policy." Individuals not given a "Green Light" consistent with that policy prior to their employment may not be hired. Individuals not given a "Green Light" on any subsequent criminal background screening may be subject to dismissal.
2. USA Gymnastics shall also check at least two (2) references for each applicant.
3. All USA Gymnastics staff members will be informed about the Safe Sport Policy, which is included as an appendix in the *Employee Policies & Procedures Handbook*, and made aware of its importance to our members and our organization.
4. The members of the USA Gymnastics Board of Directors must submit to criminal background screening consistent with the Criminal Background Screening Policy. Individuals not given a "Green Light" consistent with that policy may be subject to removal.

K. Education of the Gymnastics Community

USA Gymnastics will provide education for members of the gymnastics community geared toward promoting a safe gymnastics environment by:

1. Requiring all Adult Participants, including athletes over the age of 18 to complete the Core Safe Sport Course and subsequent annual updates, as required by the U.S. Center for SafeSport.
2. Updating the Safe Sport Policy as necessary or required by the U.S. Center for SafeSport and then communicating those changes to the general membership.
3. Making available templates for consent forms required by the Safe Sport Policy.
4. Designating a section of its website, usagym.org/SafeSport, with educational and safe sport content that is updated as necessary.
5. Featuring articles on athlete safety online;
6. Conducting live presentations at each National and Regional Congress with specific Safe Sport related topics.
7. Providing online or electronic access through the Safety/Risk Management Certification or other USA Gymnastics University courses;

8. Addressing Safe Sport related topics at a minimum on an annual basis at designated Region and State meetings, designated athlete and parent meetings, and with USA Gymnastics' staff and board members.
9. Including information in its publications, where appropriate, including the *Safety/Risk Management Handbook* and each discipline's *Rules and Policies*.
10. Offering education related to the understanding of misconduct as defined by the SafeSport Code, Prevention Policies defined by the U.S. Center for SafeSport Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policies and USA Gymnastics Safe Sport Policy, and other Safe Sport topics as deemed necessary. USA Gymnastics offers individualized and tailored Safe Sport Education to member clubs, as well as for Regional and/or State meetings upon request and at no charge. To find out more information, please contact safesportpolicy@usagym.org.
11. Including information in its publications, where appropriate, including the *Safety/Risk Management Handbook* and each discipline's *Rules and Policies*.

L. Member Development

Members of USA Gymnastics should strive to increase their level of proficiency and skill by remaining current on safety, health and training developments relevant to the sport and by seeking advice and counsel of colleagues and experts whenever such consultation is in the best interests of the gymnast.

M. Communication

USA Gymnastics will consistently communicate:

1. Its mission and that misconduct is inconsistent with its mission and the best interest of its participants and the sport of gymnastics.
2. Its commitment to, and working toward, a safe environment for all gymnastics participants.

N. Document Retention

USA Gymnastics will permanently retain misconduct / grievance files and materials.

O. Policy Review

Safe Sport policies will be reviewed at least annually and updated as necessary. Any updates to the Safe Sport policy can be found at <https://usagym.org/pages/education/safesport/>.