



International Coach Federation Ethical Conduct Review Process Complaint Packet

This packet contains information you will need to understand pertaining to the International Coach Federation (ICF) Ethical Conduct Review Process and instructions on how to file a Complaint with the ICF in the event you believe that an ICF member or ICF Credentialed coach has breached any of the provisions of the ICF Code of Ethics. The packet consists of:

- 1. Introduction to ICF's Ethical Conduct Review Process;**
- 2. Elements of the Ethical Conduct Review Process;**
- 3. ICF Code of Ethics; and**
- 4. Necessary Information to File a Complaint.**

INTRODUCTION TO ICF'S ETHICAL CONDUCT REVIEW (ECR) PROCESS

Out of its commitment to high ethical standards the ICF has developed a Code of Ethics (Code). The purpose of the Code is to promote professional and ethical coaching practices, and to raise the awareness of people outside the coaching profession about the integrity, commitment and ethical conduct of ICF members and ICF Credentialed coaches.

The ICF is also committed to providing a forum where individuals can bring complaints about alleged breaches of the Code by ICF members and ICF Credentialed coaches. The ICF adopted a policy and set of procedures that provide for review, investigation and response to alleged unethical practices or behavior deviating from the established ICF Code. To affect this policy, ICF has implemented an Ethical Conduct Review (ECR) Process, which is intended to:

- Serve as a "model of excellence" for the fair review of complaints concerning the ethical conduct of ICF members and ICF Credentialed coaches; and
- Be responsive to complaints concerning experiences believed to be breaches of the Code by ICF members and ICF Credentialed coaches.

The first step in the ECR process is the filing of a complaint. The ECR Process applies to complaints directed to the ICF about coaches who, by virtue of their ICF membership or ICF Credential and pledge, have agreed to participate in the process. The ECR Process includes provisions for investigation of the allegations in the complaint by the ICF, in which both the coach and the person filing the complaint may provide information.

If there is a determination that a standard of the Code of Ethics has been breached, a recommendation for corrective action may also be made, which may include remedial actions (such as additional education, working with a mentor coach, community service or a written reprimand) or sanctions (such as removal from or denial of ICF membership or ICF Credentialing), if warranted by the circumstances.

The ECR Process is one between the ICF and its members and/or ICF Credentialed coaches. The ICF and its ECR Process do not have the authority of a court of law to make an award of money damages or to issue an injunction against any person.

At all times in the ECR Process the person who filed the complaint and the coach identified in the complaint are encouraged to work out their differences, work on the issues involved, and to learn from the situation. For coaches and complainants residing in the United States and Canada mediation may be offered.

The ECR Process is a confidential process. Specific information about complaints or parties involved will not be disclosed other than to ICF staff, members of the Independent Review Board (IRB) and Mediated Resolution Process (MRP), and the parties involved in the complaint.

Complaints made under the ECR Process must be filed with ICF within one (1) year of the date of the conduct complained of, or within one (1) year of the date of discovery of the conduct complained of, as long as reasonable diligence was used.

In order to maintain the fairness of the review, the ECR Process is a detailed and time-consuming one. Every reasonable effort will be made to complete the process within five (5) months, not including the time for mediation if the complainant and coach choose to avail themselves of this process for matters involving parties in the United States or Canada.

If you believe that you have an ethical complaint against an ICF member or ICF Credentialed coach, we invite you to complete the online Complaint form available at Coachfederation.org. Should you have any questions about your situation or the Complaint form, please call or e-mail the ICF Assistant Executive Director, Magdalena Mook, Tel. +1.859.219.3544, Fax. +1.859.226.4411, e-mail: magdalena.mook@coachfederation.org.



International Coach Federation Elements of the Ethical Conduct Review Process

- 1. Filing and Initial Review of Complaint**
 - 2. Review to determine if the Complaint merits further consideration**
 - 3. Mediated Resolution Process**
 - 4. Investigation**
 - 5. Review by the Independent Review Board**
 - 6. Final Determination**
-

1. Filing and Initial Review of Complaint:

(a) In order to initiate a complaint under the International Coach Federation (ICF) Ethical Conduct Review (ECR) Process, a complainant must utilize the specified online ICF ECR Complaint form. At a minimum, the Complaint must be signed by the complainant, must specify by number one or more standards of the ICF Code of Ethics that allegedly has been violated by the person identified in the Complaint, and must state the facts pertaining to the alleged breach of the ICF Code of Ethics. The complaint must be filed with ICF within one (1) year of the date of the conduct complained of, or within one (1) year of the date of discovery of the conduct complained of, as long as reasonable diligence was used.

(b) When ICF Headquarters receives the Complaint, it will be directed to the ICF staff, who will verify the person named in the complaint currently is an ICF member and/or an ICF Credentialed coach.

(c) If the ICF staff determines that the person named in the complaint is currently neither an ICF member nor an ICF Credentialed coach, the ICF staff will notify the complainant of that fact and that ICF has no authority to act.

(d) If the person named in the complaint is determined currently to be an ICF member and/or an ICF Credentialed coach, the ICF staff will forward the complaint to the Chair of the Independent Review Board (IRB), who will review the complaint for completeness. The Chair may contact the complainant for additional information, if needed.

(e) If the complaint is deemed complete by the IRB Chair, ICF staff will notify the coach named in the complaint, provide the coach with a copy of the complaint and any related materials submitted by the complainant, and request a brief response from the coach.

2. Review to determine if the Complaint merits further consideration:

(a) The Chair of the IRB will appoint two or more members of the IRB to determine if the complaint's subject matter is one that comes under the ECR jurisdiction or if a breach has been adequately alleged. The appointed IRB members may hold conversations with the complainant and/or the coach named in the complaint if additional information or clarification is needed.

(b) If the appointed IRB members determine that the complaint is not within ECR jurisdiction, or that a breach has not been adequately alleged, the IRB Chair will so notify the complainant and the coach named in the complaint.

(c) If the appointed IRB members determine that the complaint is frivolous or vexatious or of a nature and extent that would not warrant a sanction or remedy if the allegations of the complaint are proven to have occurred, the IRB Chair will so notify the complainant and the person named in the complaint.

(d) If the appointed members of the IRB determine that the complaint warrants further investigation then the complaint will move to the next stage in the ECR process.

3. Mediated Resolution Process:

- (a) If the coach and complainant reside in Canada or the United States, the IRB Chair may refer the complaint to the Chair of the Mediated Resolution Process (MRP) Panel, who will make an initial determination as to whether the complaint is appropriate for mediation.
- (b) If the MRP Panel Chair determines that the complaint is not appropriate for mediation, the Chair will so notify the IRB Chair and the IRB will proceed to deal with the complaint through the ECR Process.
- (c) If the MRP Panel Chair determines that the complaint is appropriate for mediation, the Chair will contact the complainant and the coach named in the complaint (collectively, the "Participants") to determine the willingness of both to participate in a telephone conference to attempt to resolve the complaint through mediation. If the Participants voluntarily agree to participate in the mediation, the MRP Panel Chair will send a prescribed ICF Consent to Mediate form which will, among other things, provide that the Participants agree that all statements, both verbal and written, made during the mediation will be considered strictly confidential and may not be used by or against a Participant at any future time. The Participants will be asked to sign the Consent to Mediate form and to send it back to the MRP Panel Chair before a Panel Mediator is assigned to mediate the matter.
- (d) Once the signed Consent to Mediate form is received by the MRP Panel Chair the matter will be assigned to a Panel Mediator with a request that the Mediator contact the Participants to schedule a mutually convenient time for a telephonic mediation session. The MRP Panel Chair will provide the Mediator with the Participants' names, their contact information, a copy of the signed Consent to Mediate form and a brief description of the complaint. The Mediator may conduct as many telephone mediation sessions as necessary to resolve the matter. The Mediator may cease the mediation process when the Mediator determines that no further progress can be made to resolve the matter.
- (e) If the matter is resolved through mediation by the Participants signing a written Mediated Agreement, the Mediator will report back to the MRP Panel Chair that the matter has been resolved. A copy of the signed and completed Mediated Agreement will be forwarded via fax or e-mail to the MRP Panel Chair with copies provided to both Participants.
- (f) The MRP Panel Chair will forward a copy of the completed Mediated Agreement to the IRB Chair and ICF staff, who will file the Mediated Agreement with a copy of the signed Consent to Mediate form, and the Complaint.
- (g) If the matter is not resolved through mediation, the Mediator will so report to the MRP Panel Chair without disclosing statements made during the mediation, and the MRP Panel Chair will refer the matter back to the IRB Chair for further proceedings in accordance with the ECR Process.

4. Investigation

- (a) The coach and complainant will be notified by ICF staff that an investigation will be held and the coach is requested to submit a complete written response to the complaint.
- (b) The IRB Chair will appoint a team of two (2) or more IRB members for the purpose of investigating the allegations set forth in the Complaint.
- (c) The IRB investigators are charged with collecting additional information and preparing a factual written report of their findings, which is provided to the IRB Chair.

5. Review by the IRB

- (a) A panel of at least three (3) members of the IRB is selected by the IRB Chair to review the investigators' report.
- (b) If needed, the investigators may be contacted for clarification.
- (c) The Review Panel will determine if a breach has occurred by a 2/3 majority vote of those members in attendance.

(d) If the decision is that no breach could be determined, the case is closed and the complainant and coach named in the complaint are so advised in writing by the IRB chair.

6. Final Determination by the IRB

(a) If the decision is that a breach has occurred, the Review Panel will determine the appropriate remedial actions or sanctions.

(b) If the coach accepts these remedial actions or sanctions, the case is closed and a final determination is provided in writing to the coach and complainant.

(c) If the coach does not accept these remedial actions or sanctions, the coach may ask for reconsideration and submit in writing the reasons for reconsideration.

(d) After a requested reconsideration, the Review Panel will prepare a Final Determination, which will include their findings along with any remedial actions and/or sanctions. The Final Determination will be sent to the complainant and the coach.

(e) If the coach does not accept the remedial actions and/or sanctions and does not avail him- or herself of the right to reconsideration, an automatic loss of membership and/or ICF Credential will occur.

(f) The determination of the IRB is final.

Part One: Definition of Coaching

Section 1: Definitions

- **Coaching:** Coaching is partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential.
- **A professional coaching relationship:** A professional coaching relationship exists when coaching includes a business agreement or contract that defines the responsibilities of each party.
- **An ICF Professional Coach:** An ICF Professional Coach also agrees to practice the ICF Professional Core Competencies and pledges accountability to the ICF Code of Ethics.

In order to clarify roles in the coaching relationship, it is often necessary to distinguish between the client and the sponsor. In most cases, the client and sponsor are the same person and therefore jointly referred to as the client. For purposes of identification, however, the International Coach Federation defines these roles as follows:

- **Client:** The “client” is the person(s) being coached.
- **Sponsor:** The “sponsor” is the entity (including its representatives) paying for and/or arranging for coaching services to be provided.

In all cases, coaching engagement contracts or agreements should clearly establish the rights, roles, and responsibilities for both the client and sponsor if they are not the same persons.

Part Two: The ICF Standards of Ethical Conduct

***Preamble:** ICF Professional Coaches aspire to conduct themselves in a manner that reflects positively upon the coaching profession; are respectful of different approaches to coaching; and recognize that they are also bound by applicable laws and regulations.*

Section 1: Professional Conduct At Large

As a coach:

- 1) I will not knowingly make any public statement that is untrue or misleading about what I offer as a coach, or make false claims in any written documents relating to the coaching profession or my credentials or the ICF.
- 2) I will accurately identify my coaching qualifications, expertise, experience, certifications and ICF Credentials.
- 3) I will recognize and honor the efforts and contributions of others and not misrepresent them as my own. I understand that violating this standard may leave me subject to legal remedy by a third party.
- 4) I will, at all times, strive to recognize personal issues that may impair, conflict, or interfere with my coaching performance or my professional coaching relationships. Whenever the facts and circumstances necessitate, I will promptly seek professional assistance and determine the action to be taken, including whether it is appropriate to suspend or terminate my coaching relationship(s).
- 5) I will conduct myself in accordance with the ICF Code of Ethics in all coach training, coach mentoring, and coach supervisory activities.
- 6) I will conduct and report research with competence, honesty, and within recognized scientific standards and applicable subject guidelines. My research will be carried out with the necessary consent and approval of those involved, and with an approach that will protect participants from any potential harm. All research efforts will be performed in a manner that complies with all the applicable laws of the country in which the research is conducted.
- 7) I will maintain, store, and dispose of any records created during my coaching business in a manner that promotes confidentiality, security, and privacy, and complies with any applicable laws and agreements
- 8) I will use ICF member contact information (e-mail addresses, telephone numbers, etc.) only in the manner and to the extent authorized by the ICF.

Section 2: Conflicts of Interest

As a coach:

- 9) I will seek to avoid conflicts of interest and potential conflicts of interest and openly disclose any such conflicts. I will offer to remove myself when such a conflict arises.
- 10) I will disclose to my client and his or her sponsor all anticipated compensation from third parties that I may pay or receive for referrals of that client.
- 11) I will only barter for services, goods or other non-monetary remuneration when it will not impair the coaching relationship.
- 12) I will not knowingly take any personal, professional, or monetary advantage or benefit of the coach client relationship, except by a form of compensation as agreed in the agreement or contract.

Section 3: Professional Conduct with Clients

As a coach:

- 13) I will not knowingly mislead or make false claims about what my client or sponsor will receive from the coaching process or from me as the coach.
- 14) I will not give my prospective clients or sponsors information or advice I know or believe to be misleading or false.
- 15) I will have clear agreements or contracts with my clients and sponsor(s). I will honor all agreements or contracts made in the context of professional coaching relationships.
- 16) I will carefully explain and strive to ensure that, prior to or at the initial meeting, my coaching client and sponsor(s) understand the nature of coaching, the nature and limits of confidentiality, financial arrangements, and any other terms of the coaching agreement or contract.
- 17) I will be responsible for setting clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries that govern any physical contact I may have with my clients or sponsors.
- 18) I will not become sexually intimate with any of my current clients or sponsors.
- 19) I will respect the client's right to terminate the coaching relationship at any point during the process, subject to the provisions of the agreement or contract. I will be alert to indications that the client is no longer benefiting from our coaching relationship.
- 20) I will encourage the client or sponsor to make a change if I believe the client or sponsor would be better served by another coach or by another resource.
- 21) I will suggest my client seek the services of other professionals when deemed necessary or appropriate.

Section 4: Confidentiality/Privacy

As a coach:

- 22) I will maintain the strictest levels of confidentiality with all client and sponsor information. I will have a clear agreement or contract before releasing information to another person, unless required by law.
- 23) I will have a clear agreement upon how coaching information will be exchanged among coach, client, and sponsor.
- 24) When acting as a trainer of student coaches, I will clarify confidentiality policies with the students.
- 25) I will have associated coaches and other persons whom I manage in service of my clients and their sponsors in a paid or volunteer capacity make clear agreements or contracts to adhere to the ICF Code of Ethics Part 2, Section 4: Confidentiality/Privacy standards and the entire ICF Code of Ethics to the extent applicable.

Part Three: The ICF Pledge of Ethics

As an ICF Professional Coach, I acknowledge and agree to honor my ethical and legal obligations to my coaching clients and sponsors, colleagues, and to the public at large. I pledge to comply with the ICF Code of Ethics, and to practice these standards with those whom I coach.

If I breach this Pledge of Ethics or any part of the ICF Code of Ethics, I agree that the ICF in its sole discretion may hold me accountable for so doing. I further agree that my accountability to the ICF for any breach may include sanctions, such as loss of my ICF membership and/or my ICF Credentials.

Approved by the Ethics and Standards Committee on October 30, 2008.

Approved by the ICF Board of Directors on December 18, 2008.



International Coach Federation Necessary Information to a File Complaint

On behalf of the International Coach Federation (ICF) and its membership, we thank you in advance for your cooperation with our Ethical Conduct Review (ECR) Process. To most effectively serve all those involved in allegations of possible breaches of ICF Code of Ethics, and to assist in a just resolution, you will be asked to provide the following information on the online ECR Complaint form. Before completing the form, we highly recommend that you read the ICF Code of Ethics and the Explanation of the ECR Process, which are included in this packet and also are publicly available on the ICF Web site at www.coachfederation.org.

In order to initiate a Complaint, you must complete the online ECR form, available at Coachfederation.org and upload all supporting documentation. If you have any issues with the form, please contact ICF Headquarters at icfheadquarters@coachfederation.org or by phone at +1.888.423.3131 or +1.859.219.3544.

You will be asked to provide the following information:

Part 1. Complainant (person filing the complaint)

[Please note: The ICF will **not** investigate anonymous complaints.]

- Your Name / Title
- Company (if applicable)
- Address
- Phone
- Fax
- E-mail address
- Your Time Zone
- Preferred method for contacting you:

Part 2. Information about the Coach involved in your Complaint

- Name of Coach
- Name of Coach's Business (if applicable)
- Coach's Website (if known)
- Address
- Phone
- Fax
- E-mail address
- Is the Coach an ICF Member?
- ICF Credentialed Coach?

Part 3: Information and documentation about the relationship

- Upload any documents that you feel would help the ICF understand your allegations.
- What was your relationship with this coach at the time of the alleged breach?
- If you had a coach-client relationship, was there a written agreement?
 - If yes – please attach a copy to the complaint
 - If no – please answer questions 1 through 4
- Did you hire this coach?
- Dates of hire:
- What financial arrangements did you have with this coach?
- What other agreements or understandings did you have?

Part 4. Information about your specific allegations

In order for ICF to consider this Complaint:

- The alleged breach must have occurred within one (1) year from the date of this complaint.
- A copy of the ICF Code of Ethics precedes this form in this packet and is also available on the ICF Web site at www.coachfederation.org. You must specify by number all standards of the ICF Code of Ethics that you allege the Coach named in this Complaint has breached.

Using the following outline, please state the specific factual allegations in sufficient detail for us to fully understand and appreciate your complaint against the coach.

- State the standards of ICF Code of Ethics (Part Two, paragraphs 1 through 25) that allegedly were breached by the coach named in this complaint.
- Who was involved in the alleged breach of the ICF Code of Ethics?
- When did these events take place?
- Where did the events occur?
- Specifically what happened?

Part 5. Actions you have taken to resolve your disagreement with this Coach

- What resolution alternatives have you and the coach discussed to date?
- State any other actions you have taken to resolve this coaching complaint and the outcomes.
- What are you looking for from the ECR Process?
- If residing in the United States or Canada, would you be willing to participate in mediation with the coach?

Part 6. Authorization to Investigate

- Sign a statement regarding the information you have provided.