

# Introduction to & Elements of ICF's Ethical Conduct Review (ECR) Process

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## Introduction

Out of its commitment to high ethical standards the International Coaching Federation (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 Professionals.

ICF is also committed to providing a forum where individuals can bring complaints against ICF Members and ICF Credential-holders where a breach has been alleged. 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 Professionals; and
- Be responsive to complaints concerning experiences believed to be breaches of the Code by ICF Professionals.

The first step in the ECR process is the filing of a complaint. The ECR Process applies to complaints directed to ICF about coaches who, by virtue of their ICF membership or ICF Credential have pledged, to participate in the process. The ECR Process includes provisions for investigation of the allegations in the complaint by 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 research paper) or sanctions (such as removal from or denial of ICF membership or ICF Credential), if warranted by the circumstances.

The ECR Process is one between ICF and its Members and/or credential-holders which is administered by the IRB. ICF, the IRB, and its ECR Process do not have the authority of a court of law to award money damages or to issue an injunction against any one individual.

Prior to and throughout the ECR Process when possible, the complainant and the coach identified in the complaint are encouraged to resolve their differences, work on the issues involved, learn from the situation, and come to an amicable resolution.

The ICF's Ethical Conduct Review Process is intended to be confidential in nature. It is the intent of the ICF that specific information about ECR complaints filed and the parties named in the complaints not be disclosed to third parties, except to authorized ICF staff with a legitimate need to access the complaint file information/documents, members of the Independent Review Board (IRB) and the named parties and witnesses identified in the complaint. Furthermore, some facts and information derived from the complaint, investigation and IRB findings may be disseminated and used by the ICF and/or IRB for educational and training purpose only. Such use will only be made where the ICF has undertaken reasonable and good faith efforts to protect the identities of the parties and to remove references that may identify or be used to identify the parties to the complaint, as well as any confidential information contained in the complaint file records.

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 however longer completion times may be required due to the diligence of the work.

If you believe that you have an ethical complaint against an ICF Member or ICF Credential-holder, we invite you to complete the online complaint form available at [Coachfederation.org](http://Coachfederation.org). Should you have any questions about your situation or the complaint form, please email ICF at [ethics@coachingfederation.org](mailto:ethics@coachingfederation.org).

## **Elements of the Ethical Conduct Review Process**

### **1. Filing and Initial Review of Complaint**

- a. In order to initiate a complaint under the International Coaching 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 individual 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 individual named in the complaint is currently an ICF Member and/or an ICF Credential-holder.
- c. If the ICF staff determines that the individual names in the complaint is currently neither an ICF Member nor an ICF Credential-holder, ICF staff will notify the complainant of such and advise the complainant that ICF has no authority to act.
- d. If it is determined that the individual named in the complaint is currently an ICF Member and/or an ICF Credential-holder, the ICF staff will forward the complaint to the Initial Review Panel (IRP) who will review the complaint for completeness. The IRP may contact the complainant for additional information if needed.
- e. If the complaint is deemed complete by the IRP, 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 that the coach submit a complete written response to the complaint.

## **2. Review to determine if the Complaint merits further consideration**

- a. The IRP determines if the complaint's subject matter is one that comes under the IRB jurisdiction and if a breach has been adequately alleged. The IRP and ICF staff may hold conversations with the complainant and/or the coach named in the complaint if additional information or clarification is needed.
- b. If the IRP determines that the complaint is not within IRB's jurisdiction, or that a breach has not been adequately alleged, ICF staff will so notify the complainant and the coach named in the complaint.

- c. If the IRP determines that the complaint is frivolous or vexatious, or of a nature that would not warrant a sanction or remedy if the allegations of the complaint are proven to have occurred, ICF staff will so notify the complainant and the person named in the complaint.
- d. If the IRP determines that the complaint warrants further investigation, then the complaint will move to the next stage in the ECR process.

### **3. Investigation**

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

### **4. Final Review**

- a. A panel of at least three (3) members of the IRB is appointed by the Vice Chair of Operations to review the investigators' report.
- b. If needed, the Final Review Panel may contact investigators for clarification.
- c. The Final Review Panel will determine if a breach has occurred by a 2/3 majority vote.
- d. If it is determined that no breach has occurred, the case is closed, and the complainant and coach named in the complaint are so advised in writing by the IRB chair.

### **5. Final Determination by the IRB**

- a. If the decision is that a breach has occurred, the Final 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 request a formal reconsideration in writing.
- d. 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.

## **6. Reconsideration**

- a. If the coach does not accept the remedial actions and/or sanctions, the coach may request reconsideration by submitting in writing new information or evidence that was not available at the time of investigation, pertinent information that the coach felt was overlooked, or other extenuating circumstances.
- b. If reconsideration is granted by the IRB leadership , an objective panel of three (3) IRB members with no previous interaction with the case will be appointed by the Vice Chair of Operations. The Final Determination will be sent to the complainant and the coach.
- c. If after the reconsideration process, the coach does not accept the remedial actions and/or sanctions, and automatic loss of membership and/or ICF Credential will occur.
- d. The findings of this reconsideration panel will be final, subject only to review by ICF legal counsel.



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