

# 2023 ETHICAL CONDUCT AND COMPLIANCE REPORT

*January 1, 2023-December 31, 2023*

The Independent Review Board (IRB) is an integral part of the International Coaching Federation (ICF) and a cornerstone for the Association's guidelines regarding ethics and values. The IRB's charge is to uphold the standards of the coaching profession as stated in the ICF Code of Ethics. This report summarizes the complaints received via the Ethical Conduct Review (ECR) and Accreditation Complaint processes. Further, this overview includes a review of trademark and compliance matters brought before ICF during this time frame.



# Standards and Compliance Overview

ICF invests significant resources in refining and maintaining the complaint processes. It is our goal to support ICF members in better understanding the charge of the IRB and the role of the ECR process, as well as its value to the industry. We hope that by providing information about the number of complaints that come before the ICF, including the standards that have been breached, trends we are seeing and areas in which coaches need to be particularly mindful, we will enhance awareness and promote greater ethical behavior.

This work also contributes to the IRB's educational initiatives regarding the ICF Code of Ethics and how it can be improved to ensure coaches are held to higher standards within the industry.

Further, by sharing some statistical information regarding the number of trademark disputes managed, we can enhance ICF members' understanding of our efforts to ensure the sustained value of the ICF brand. Individuals who have not met and committed to the stringent ICF standards for membership and/or credentialing cannot refer to themselves as ICF members and/or ICF credential-holders.

ICF is committed to upholding high standards and educating our members and the public. We believe the best way to do this—and to hold ourselves accountable to making it a continuing commitment—is through transparency.

## Independent Review Board 2023

**Chair:** Sue McMahon, PCC (USA) - January 1, 2023-March 31, 2023;  
Carrie Doubts, PCC (USA) - April 1, 2023-December 31, 2023

**Vice Chair of Development:** João Luiz Pasqual, MCC (Brazil)

**Vice Chair of Operations:** Katherine Taberner, PCC (Canada) - January 1, 2023-March 31, 2023;  
Cecilia Engquist, PCC (USA) - April 1, 2023-December 31, 2023

<b>Members:</b>	Franda Graves, PCC (UAE)	Gürkan Sarioğlu, PCC (Turkey)
Jürgen Bache (Germany)	Anita Gupta, MCC (India)	Janine Schindler, MCC (USA)
Evguenia (Jenny) Barkan, ACC (Canada)	Lynn Harrison, MCC (Canada)	Linda Schnabel, PCC (Canada)
Thomas Chen, MCC (Malaysia)	Sahaila Irazabal, ACC (Venezuela)	Mukesh Sharma, PCC (India)
Jayaveni Lola Chetti, MCC (USA)	Laura Licato, PCC (USA)	Sandra Stewart, MCC (USA)
José Manuel Estrada, PCC (Argentina)	Michael Marx, MCC (USA)	Svea van der Hoorn, MCC (South Africa)
	Decimar (Daisy) Ogotu (Kenya)	Karl van Hoey, MCC (Belgium)
	Cathy Pantano, PCC (USA)	

## Growing the IRB

With the immense growth of the ICF Ecosystem and the increasing complexity of ethical complaints filed over the last few years, the IRB added six new seats to the team in April 2023.

A total of 32 applications were received for these open seats. Selection for this team is a competitive process including a stringent application and verbal interview. This process took place in late 2022 and the first quarter of 2023.

The newest IRB members include: Evguenia (Jenny) Barkan; Franda Graves; Lynn Harrison; Cathy Pantano; Linda Schnabel; and Karl Van Hoey.

## ICF Global Staff

**Chief Operating Officer:** Todd Hamilton

**Director of Ethics, Compliance and Culture:** Kristin Kelly

**Assistant Director of Ethics and Compliance:** Elissa Johns

# Trademark Summary

We are diligent in maintaining ICF intellectual property, including the management of trademark infringement, to ensure brand alignment and the continued value of affiliating with the ICF brand. Conveying one's affiliation with ICF appropriately is imperative for market clarity; therefore, we strictly enforce logo usage policies as outlined in our [brand guidelines](#).

## Individual Issues: 208

### TYPICAL EXAMPLES:

- A non-ICF member using the ICF logo on marketing materials (or referring to themselves as an ICF coach).
- An individual ICF member using the ICF logo on their employer's website, conveying an overarching affiliation with ICF.
- An individual ICF member using an ICF program accreditation logo to convey that they completed ICF-accredited coach-specific training.
- An individual with an expired membership or credential still referring to themselves as such.

## Organizational Issues: 96

### TYPICAL EXAMPLES:

- A non-approved ICF coaching program using an ICF program accreditation logo on marketing materials.
- A coaching school with an ICF-accredited program using ICF program accreditation logo to imply that all programs offered are ICF-accredited (when they are not).
- An organization using the ICF logo on its website to convey an overarching relationship with ICF.

## Unauthorized Database Usage Issues: 12

### TYPICAL EXAMPLES:

- An organization or individual purposely or inadvertently using the ICF Credentialed Coach Finder or the Member Database for outreach purposes that are not in line with the ICF Spam Policy.

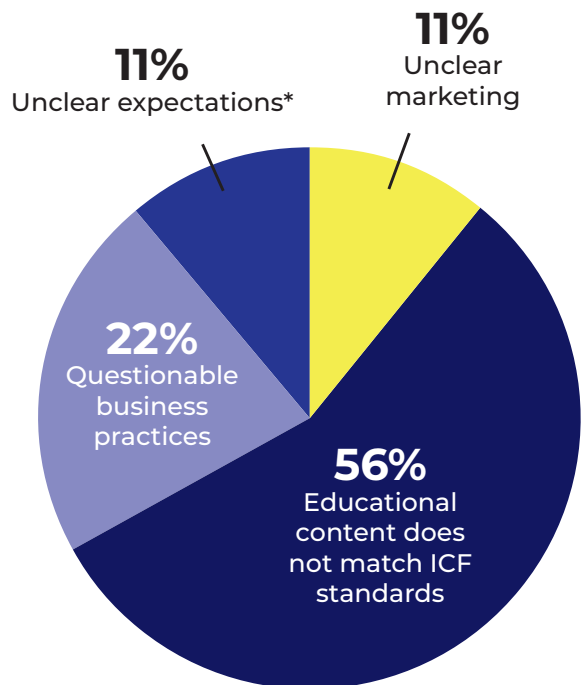
## ICF-Accredited Providers (Accreditation Complaint Process)

### Complaints: 13

ICF takes all complaints very seriously. In 2023, no ICF-accredited coaching education/training providers lost their accreditation status.

Learn more about ICF's industry leadership in the areas of ethics, standards, and self-regulation at [coachingfederation.org/ethics](https://coachingfederation.org/ethics).

### THEMES OF CONCERN:



*\*Service didn't meet expectation of students, students didn't meet expectation of trainers, etc.*

# 2023 Ethical Complaint Summary Fact Sheet



Map represents the countries in which complaints were received.

## 15 Total Formal Complaints Filed

### 5 complaints deemed not eligible for Initial Review

Complaints were filed against non-ICF affiliated personnel and thus outside the scope of the ECR process.

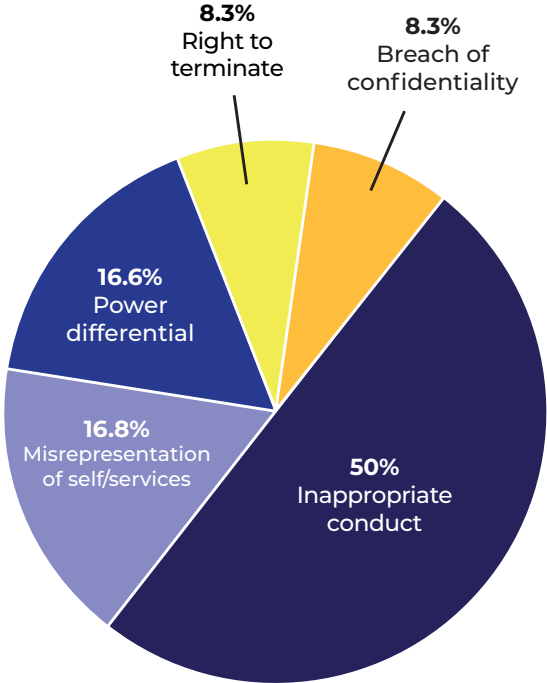
### 10 complaints met the requirements for Initial Review

These complaints were deemed complete and eligible for Initial Review. Of these, six complaints were ultimately accepted into the ECR process. The four complaints that did not make it past the Initial Review did not show enough evidence to point toward a potential breach of the ICF Code of Ethics or the complainant did not have a relationship with the ICF Professional.

### 6 complaints administered by the IRB

These refer to the complaints that were accepted into the ECR process. The ECR process includes an investigation and final review by our IRB.

## THEMES OF CONCERN:



# 2023 ICF Ethical Complaints

The cases below are heavily redacted to ensure anonymity. As a result, nuances upon which the IRB based a final decision may not be present in the text.

## Complaint 1

**Situation:** The ICF Professional allegedly did not allow for the complainant to adjust coaching schedule.

**Standards allegedly in breach:** 8, 9

**Outcome:** The ICF Professional was not found in breach of the Code of Ethics by the IRB so the case was closed.

## Complaint 2

**Situation:** The ICF Professional allegedly did not manage a power difference with the complainant.

**Standards allegedly in breach:** 4, 9, 11

**Outcome:** The ICF Professional was found in breach of standard 11 by the IRB. The ICF Professional and the Final Review Panel co-created a Learning Plan to help them learn from this breach. The ICF Professional completed their Learning Plan in early 2024.

## Complaint 3

**Situation:** The ICF Professional allegedly shared personal information and inaccurately marketed themselves.

**Standards allegedly in breach:** 3, 20

**Outcome:** The ICF Professional was found in breach of Standards 3 and 20 by the IRB. The ICF Professional requested a Reconsideration that was accepted by the IRB Leadership Team in early 2024. At the time of this writing, the Final Review Panel is conducting a Reconsideration of the findings of the IRB.

## Complaint 4

**Situation:** The ICF Professional was allegedly disrespectful and gave misguided feedback.

**Standards allegedly in breach:** 28

**Outcome:** The ICF Professional was not found in breach of the Code of Ethics by the IRB so the case was closed.

## Complaint 5

**Situation:** The ICF Professional was allegedly disrespectful and ignored requests from the Complainant.

**Standards allegedly in breach:** 25

**Outcome:** At the time of this writing, the complaint is still being reviewed by the IRB.

## Comment 6

**Situation:** The ICF Professional was allegedly threatened by another ICF Professional.

**Standards allegedly in breach:** 14

**Outcome:** The complainant decided to withdraw the complaint due to personal reasons.

# 2022 ICF Ethical Complaints

## Follow-up on complaints that were initiated in 2022 and concluded in 2023

Below is a final reporting of those ethical complaints first noted in the 2022 Ethical Conduct and Compliance Report that were still under review when the report was being written.

### Complaint 5

**Situation:** The complainant felt the ICF Professional breached confidentiality, lacked professionalism, and there was no partnership between the coach and client.

**Standards allegedly in breach:** 3, 21, 25, 28

**Outcome:** When the 2022 Ethical Conduct and Compliance Report was written, this complaint was still being reviewed. In 2023, the IRB did not find the ICF Professional to be in breach of the ICF Code of Ethics.

### Complaint 6

**Situation:** The ICF Professional allegedly misrepresented themselves on their website and in person.

**Standards allegedly in breach:** 1, 3, 8, 11, 20, 21, 23, 27

**Outcome:** When the 2022 Ethical Conduct and Compliance Report was written, this complaint was still being reviewed. In 2023, the IRB did not find the ICF Professional to be in breach of the ICF Code of Ethics.

### Complaint 7

**Situation:** The complainant allegedly tried to terminate the coaching agreement but was charged for services not rendered.

**Standards allegedly in breach:** 8, 9, 10, 11

**Outcome:** When the 2022 Ethical Conduct and Compliance Report was written, this complaint was still being reviewed. In 2023, the IRB did not find the ICF Professional to be in breach of the ICF Code of Ethics.

### Complaint 8

**Situation:** The ICF Professional had an alleged intimate relationship with the complainant.

**Standards allegedly in breach:** 8, 11, 17, 23, 24

**Outcome:** When the 2022 Ethical Conduct and Compliance Report was written, this complaint was still being reviewed. In 2023, the IRB found the ICF Professional in breach of standards 8, 11, 17, 23 and 24. The ICF Professional and Final Review Panel co-created a Learning Plan that the ICF Professional worked on through the early months of 2024.

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