



Governance Code for Sport

Ethics – Codes of Conduct

Sample codes of conduct for administrators, athletes, coaches, parents, volunteers

Disclaimer

Sport Ireland is making available a range of resources including guidance notes, policy documents and templates for selected areas aligned to the Governance Code for Sport which will support sport organisations, boards, management and staff in the development of relevant governance processes and procedures particular to their own organisation.

For the avoidance of doubt, the final decision on the nature, type, extent and format of approved governance policies, procedures and processes for each organisation is a matter for the board / highest governing structure of the organisation and the resources and material provided may assist the approval process.

This document is not, nor is it intended to be, a definitive statement of the law and it does not constitute legal advice. This document is not a substitute for professional advice from an appropriately qualified source and it is recommended that sport organisations consult their governing document or obtain their own independent legal advice where necessary.

Sport Ireland does not accept any responsibility or liability for any errors, inaccuracies or omissions in this document.

Managing and supporting staff: why an organisation needs codes of conduct

Principle 1 of the Governance Code for Sport (the Code) is *“Leading our Organisation”*, whilst Sub-principle 1.3 states that organisations do this by: *“Managing, supporting and holding to account staff, volunteers and all who act on behalf of the organisation.”* Type A, Type B and Type C organisations are all obliged to both support and hold to account all who act on behalf of the organisation. Codes of conduct are a way of both supporting people and holding them to account.

A good Code of Conduct will aim to promote and strengthen the reputation of a sport by establishing a standard of performance, behaviour and professionalism for everyone involved, its participants and stakeholders. In addition, it seeks to deter conduct that could impair public confidence in the honest and proper conduct of a sport or in the integrity and good character of its participants. For local authority based sports organisations, codes of conduct are part of HR policy.

Codes of conduct outline an agreed standard and expectation of behaviour for a sport’s administrators, coaches, officials, players, parents and supporters and are an essential part of the leadership of a sport.

Whose responsibility is it to develop Codes of Conduct?

It is the responsibility of the executive lead (in volunteer organisations) / Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to ensure that human resource policies are being implemented and having and sharing codes of conduct would be an integral part of that. It is also the responsibility of the Board to be confident that all involved with the sport are being held to account, as per the Governance Code for Sport, and having codes of conduct would form part of that.

Developing Codes of Conduct

There are a number of considerations for sport organisations in developing codes of conduct:

- ☐ Codes of conduct should be developed for administrators, officials, coaches, athletes/players, parents, and in some cases spectators
- ☐ Organisations should seek to gain compliance by having members sign the codes of conduct
- ☐ Sports should remind their members of the codes on a regular basis
- ☐ Sports should seek to share the codes of conduct onwards into clubs, for use at club level
- ☐ Sports should have a policy in place for instances of non-compliance with the code of conduct

Non-compliance with Codes of Conduct

There should be an agreed policy in place in the case of members of the governing body/association who are found to have behaved inappropriately and in breach of the code

of conduct. Normally such behavior would mean facing disciplinary action as outlined in the Discipline Guidelines.

Sample Codes of Conduct

Here below are a number of sample codes of conduct, outlining the typical length and style of a code of conduct – they tend to be relatively short and direct in nature. In some cases, sports would ask that the code of conduct is signed – in other cases it may be displayed prominently, for example at the organisation’s office or main sporting venue.

Volunteer – Sample Code of Conduct

As a volunteer with (insert governing body/association name), we require you to:

- ☐ Comply with our safeguarding policy and procedures, if applicable
- ☐ Report any concerns or allegations to NAMED PERSON / Volunteer Co-ordinator within the association
- ☐ Consider how you behave and act when representing the governing body /association
- ☐ Respect your position of trust
- ☐ Put the safety of people (especially children) as a top priority
- ☐ Ensure any sporting equipment that you use is ‘fit for purpose’
- ☐ Respect everyone’s culture and background regardless of their race, gender, sexual orientation or ability
- ☐ Not post content on the internet (online forums, social media platforms, etc.) that may bring the association into disrepute
- ☐ Not be aggressive or display abusive or bullying behaviour
- ☐ Help to make our various events and activities welcoming to everyone
- ☐ Read the various policies and procedures from the governing body/association such as fire evacuation, health and safety at work, volunteering times, etc.

Administrator – Sample Code of Conduct

As an administrator with (insert governing body/association name), we require you to:

- ☐ Comply with our safeguarding policy and procedures, if applicable
- ☐ Provide opportunities for players/athletes to be involved in planning, leadership, evaluation and decision-making related to their activity
- ☐ Create pathways for players/athletes to participate not just as a player/athlete but also as a coach, referee, administrator etc.
- ☐ Ensure that rules, equipment, length of games and training schedules are modified to suit the age, ability and maturity level of players/athletes
- ☐ Ensure quality supervision and instruction for players/athletes
- ☐ Remember that players/athletes participate for their enjoyment and benefit and not over emphasize winning
- ☐ Help coaches and officials highlight appropriate behaviour and skill development, and help to improve the standards of coaching and officiating
- ☐ Ensure that everyone involved in sport emphasizes fair play, and not winning at all costs
- ☐ Distribute a code of conduct to players/athletes, coaches, officials and parents and encourage them to follow it
- ☐ Not use bad language, nor harass players, coaches, officials or spectators

- ☐ Respect the rights, dignity and worth of all people involved in the game, regardless of their gender, ability or cultural background
- ☐ Promote adherence to anti-doping policies.

Coach – Sample Code of Conduct

As a coach with (insert governing body/association name), we require you to:

- ☐ Comply with our safeguarding policy and procedures
- ☐ Remember that players/athletes participate for enjoyment and winning is only part of the fun
- ☐ Be reasonable in your demands on players'/athletes' time, energy and enthusiasm
- ☐ Operate within the rules and spirit of the game and teach my players/athletes to do the same
- ☐ Give all players/athletes equal attention and opportunities, and ensure they have a positive experience
- ☐ Ensure that equipment and facilities meet safety standards and are appropriate to the age and ability of all players/athletes
- ☐ Display control, respect and professionalism to all involved with the sport including opponents, referees, coaches, officials, administrators, the media, parents and spectators.
- ☐ Follow the advice of a physician when determining whether an injured player/athlete is ready to recommence training or competition
- ☐ Obtain appropriate qualifications and keep up to date with the latest coaching practices and the principles of growth and development of young players/athletes
- ☐ Respect the rights, dignity and worth of all people involved in the game, regardless of their gender, ability or cultural background
- ☐ Promote adherence to anti-doping policies

Athlete/Player – Sample Code of Conduct

As an athlete with (insert governing body/association name), we require you to:

- ☐ Always play by the rules
- ☐ Comply with anti-doping policies.
- ☐ Respect the rights, dignity and worth of all participants regardless of their gender, ability, cultural background, or religion
- ☐ Not undertake verbal abuse of officials or other athletes/players, nor deliberately distract or provoke an opponent
- ☐ Work equally hard for yourself and your team, and cooperate with your coach, teammates and opponents
- ☐ Not undertake unfair advantage of another competitor
- ☐ Bring to the attention of the governing body, your coach or captain any behaviour or decision which you believe to be unsporting
- ☐ Display graciousness towards your sport and others within your sport on social media