

# ICF Ethical Guidelines

The ICF is the leader in developing a definition and philosophy of coaching, as well as establishing a set of ethical standards that ICF members pledge to uphold. The International Coach Federation ("ICF") is committed to high ethical standards for coaches.

The ICF Code of Ethics ("Code") includes a Philosophy and Definition of Coaching, Standards of Ethical Conduct, and a Pledge by which all ICF members and ICF credentialed coaches make a commitment to uphold the Code. The purpose of the Code is to promote professional and ethical coaching practices, and to raise the awareness of people outside the 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 the public can bring complaints about alleged unethical conduct 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 of Ethics. To effect this policy, ICF has implemented an Ethical Conduct Review (ECR) process, which is intended to:

- serve as a 'model of excellence' for all practicing professional coaches for fair review and resolution of complaints concerning the ethical conduct of ICF member and ICF credentialed coaches; and
- be responsive to complaints from the public concerning experiences believed to be violations of the ICF Code of Ethics by ICF members and ICF credentialed coaches.

For more information on the ECR process, including procedures to file a complaint, please go to <http://coachfederation.com/ICF/For+Current+Members/Ethical+Guidelines/>

## The ICF CODE OF ETHICS

### Part One: The ICF Philosophy of Coaching

The International Coach Federation adheres to a form of coaching that honors the client as the expert in his/her life and work and believes that every client is creative, resourceful, and whole. Standing on this foundation, the coach's responsibility is to:

- Discover, clarify, and align with what the client wants to achieve
- Encourage client self-discovery
- Elicit client-generated solutions and strategies

- Hold the client responsible and accountable

## **Part Two: The ICF Definition of Coaching**

Professional Coaching is an ongoing professional relationship that helps people produce extraordinary results in their lives, careers, businesses or organizations. Through the process of coaching, clients deepen their learning, improve their performance, and enhance their quality of life.

In each meeting, the client chooses the focus of conversation, while the coach listens and contributes observations and questions. This interaction creates clarity and moves the client into action. Coaching accelerates the client's progress by providing greater focus and awareness of choice. Coaching concentrates on where clients are now and what they are willing to do to get where they want to be in the future. ICF member coaches and ICF credentialed coaches recognize that results are a matter of the client's intentions, choices and actions, supported by the coach's efforts and application of the coaching process

## **Part Three: The ICF Standards of Ethical Conduct**

### **Professional Conduct At Large**

As a coach:

- 1) I will conduct myself in a manner that reflects positively upon the coaching profession and I will refrain from engaging in conduct or making statements that may negatively impact the public's understanding or acceptance of coaching as a profession.
- 2) I will not knowingly make any public statements that are untrue or misleading, or make false claims in any written documents relating to the coaching profession.
- 3) I will respect different approaches to coaching. I will honor the efforts and contributions of others and not misrepresent them as my own.
- 4) I will be aware of any issues that may potentially lead to the misuse of my influence by recognizing the nature of coaching and the way in which it may affect the lives of others.
- 5) I will at all times strive to recognize personal issues that may impair, conflict or interfere with my coaching performance or my professional 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).
- 6) As a trainer or supervisor of current and potential coaches, I will conduct myself in accordance with the ICF Code of Ethics in all training and supervisory situations.

7) I will conduct and report research with competence, honesty and within recognized scientific standards. My research will be carried out with the necessary approval or consent from those involved, and with an approach that will reasonably protect participants from any potential harm. All research efforts will be performed in a manner that complies with the laws of the country in which the research is conducted.

8) I will accurately create, maintain, store and dispose of any records of work done in relation to the practice of coaching in a way that promotes confidentiality and complies with any applicable laws.

9) I will use ICF member contact information (email addresses, telephone numbers, etc.) only in the manner and to the extent authorized by the ICF.

### **Professional Conduct With Clients**

10) I will be responsible for setting clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries that govern any physical contact that I may have with my clients.

11) I will not become sexually involved with any of my clients.

12) I will construct clear agreements with my clients, and will honor all agreements made in the context of professional coaching relationships.

13) I will ensure that, prior to or at the initial session, my coaching client understands the nature of coaching, the bounds of confidentiality, financial arrangements and other terms of the coaching agreement.

14) I will accurately identify my qualifications, expertise and experience as a coach.

15) I will not intentionally mislead or make false claims about what my client will receive from the coaching process or from me as their coach.

16) I will not give my clients or prospective clients information or advice I know or believe to be misleading.

17) I will not knowingly exploit any aspect of the coach-client relationship for my personal, professional or monetary advantage or benefit.

18) I will respect the client's right to terminate coaching at any point during the process. I will be alert to indications that the client is no longer benefiting from our coaching relationship.

19) If I believe the client would be better served by another coach, or by another resource, I will encourage the client to make a change.

20) I will suggest that my clients seek the services of other professionals when deemed appropriate or necessary.

21) I will take all reasonable steps to notify the appropriate authorities in the event a client discloses an intention to endanger self or others.

### **Confidentiality/Privacy**

22) I will respect the confidentiality of my client's information, except as otherwise authorized by my client, or as required by law.

23) I will obtain agreement from my clients before releasing their names as clients or references, or any other client identifying information.

24) I will obtain agreement from the person being coached before releasing information to another person compensating me.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

25) I will seek to avoid conflicts between my interests and the interests of my clients.

26) Whenever any actual conflict of interest or the potential for a conflict of interest arises, I will openly disclose it and fully discuss with my client how to deal with it in whatever way best serves my client.

27) I will disclose to my client all anticipated compensation from third parties that I may receive for referrals of that client.

28) I will only barter for services, goods or other non-monetary remuneration when it will not impair the coaching relationship.

## **Part Four: The ICF Pledge of Ethics**

As a professional coach, I acknowledge and agree to honor my ethical obligations to my coaching clients and colleagues and to the public at large. I pledge to comply with the ICF Code of Ethics, to treat people with dignity as independent and equal human beings, and to model 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 loss of my ICF membership and/or my ICF credentials.