



## ICF CODE OF ETHICS

The ICF Code of Ethics consists of five (5) main parts.

1. INTRODUCTION
2. KEY DEFINITIONS
3. ICF CORE VALUES AND ETHICAL PRINCIPLES
4. ETHICAL STANDARDS
5. COMMITMENT

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The ICF Code of Ethics describes the core values of the International Coach Federation (ICF Core Values), as well as the ethical principles and standards of ethical behaviour for all ICF professionals (see definitions). Adherence to these ICF ethical standards of behaviour is the first of the ICF's Key Coaching Competencies (ICF Key Competencies). This means *"Demonstrates ethical practice Definition: Understands and consistently applies the ethical and coaching standards."*

The ICF Code of Ethics serves to uphold the integrity of the ICF and the coaching profession worldwide by :

- Establishing standards of conduct consistent with ICF core values and ethical principles
- Guiding ethical reflection, teaching and decision-making
- Determining and maintaining ICF coach standards through the *Ethical Conduct Review* (ECR) process
- Providing the foundation for ICF ethics training in ICF accredited programs

The ICF Code of Ethics applies when ICF professionals refer to their ICF membership as such in any type of coaching interaction. This is true regardless of how the coaching relationship (see definitions) was established. This Code sets out the ethical obligations of ICF professionals in their various roles as coaches, coach supervisors, coach mentors, coach trainers or trainees, or in leadership roles within the ICF, as well as support staff (see definitions).

Although the Ethical Conduct Review (ECR) process applies only to ICF professionals, like the Ethical Commitment, ICF staff are also committed to ethical conduct and to the core values and ethical principles that underlie this ICF Code of Ethics.

Working ethically inevitably leads ICF coaches to face situations that require them to answer unexpected questions, resolve dilemmas or problems.

This Code of Ethics aims to support the professionals bound by it by orienting them to the range of ethical factors that may need to be taken into account, and by helping them to identify the different ways of approaching ethical behaviour.

ICF professionals who commit to the Code of Ethics make every effort to be ethical individuals, even if this means making difficult decisions or acting with courage.

## **2. KEY DEFINITIONS**

- "Client" - the person or team/group being coached, the coach being mentored or supervised, or the coach or student in training.
- "Coaching" - partnering with clients in a creative and challenging process that inspires them to maximise their personal and professional potential.
- "Coaching relationship" means a relationship established by the ICF Professional and the client(s)/sponsor(s) under an agreement or contract defining the responsibilities and expectations of each party.
- "Code" - ICF Code of Ethics
- "Confidentiality" - protection of any information obtained during the coaching engagement, unless consent to disclosure is given.
- "Conflict of interest" - a situation in which an ICF Professional is involved in multiple interests in which serving one interest may conflict with or be in conflict with another. This may be financial, personal or otherwise.
- "Equality" - a situation in which all people experience inclusion, access to resources and opportunities, regardless of race, ethnicity, nationality, colour, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, religion, immigration status, mental or physical disability and any other differentiating criteria.
- "ICF Professional" - individuals who declare their status as an ICF member or accreditation holder, including, by way of example, coach, coach supervisor, coach mentor, coach trainer and coaching student.
- "ICF Staff" - ICF staff recruited by the Management Company who provide professional management and administrative services on behalf of ICF.
- "Internal coach" - a person who is employed in an organisation and provides part-time or full-time coaching to employees of that organisation.
- "Sponsor" - the entity (including its representatives) that funds and/or organises, or defines the coaching services to be provided.
- "Support function": anyone working with an ICF coach
- "Systemic equality" - gender equality, racial equality and other forms of equality institutionalised in the ethics, core values, policies, structures and cultures of communities, organisations, nations and society.

## **3. ICF CORE VALUES AND ETHICAL PRINCIPLES**

The ICF Code of Ethics is based on the ICF Core Values and the actions that flow from them. All values are equally important and mutually reinforcing. These values are aspirational and should be used to understand and interpret the standards. All ICF professionals are expected to promote and disseminate these values in all their interactions.

#### **4. ETHICAL STANDARDS**

The following ethical standards apply to the professional activities of all ICF professionals:

##### **Section I - Liability to customers**

As an ICF professional :

1. I explain and ensure that, before or at the first meeting, my coaching clients and sponsors understand the nature and potential value of coaching, the nature of confidentiality and its limits, the financial terms and any other terms of the coaching contract.
2. I define an agreement/contract with my clients and sponsors on the roles, responsibilities and rights of all parties involved prior to the start of the coaching service.
3. I observe the strictest levels of confidentiality with all parties as agreed above. I am aware of and agree to comply with all applicable laws regarding personal data and communications.
4. I clearly understand how information is exchanged between the parties involved during coaching interactions.
5. I clearly understand, together with clients and sponsors or stakeholders, the conditions under which information will not be kept confidential (e.g. illegal activity, if provided for by law, as a result of a court order or valid subpoena; imminent or potential danger to self or others, etc.). If I reasonably believe that any of the above circumstances exist, I may be required to notify the appropriate authorities.
6. As an internal coach, I manage potential or existing conflicts of interest with my clients and sponsors through coaching agreements and ongoing dialogue including the definition of organisational roles, responsibilities, relationships, records, confidentiality and other reporting requirements.
7. I maintain, store, and destroy all records, including electronic files and communications created in the course of my professional interactions, in a manner that maintains confidentiality, security, and privacy in accordance with applicable laws and agreements. In addition, I seek to make appropriate use of emerging and developing technological tools used in coaching (technology-assisted coaching) and to be aware of the various ethical standards associated with them.
8. I remain alert to signs of a change in coaching performance. If this is the case, I modify the service or encourage the client(s)/sponsor(s) to seek another coach, professional or resource.
9. I respect the right of all parties to terminate the coaching relationship at any time, for any reason, during the coaching process, subject to the provisions of the contract.

10. I am sensitive to the consequences of multiple contracts and relationships with the same client and sponsor simultaneously, in order to avoid conflict of interest situations.
11. I am aware of and actively manage any power or status differences between myself and the Client that may be caused by cultural, relational, psychological or contextual issues.
12. I inform my clients of any compensation or other benefits I may receive for referring my clients to third parties.
13. I guarantee a consistent quality of coaching, regardless of the amount or form of remuneration agreed.

## **Section II - Responsibility for the practice of the trade**

As an ICF professional :

14. I adhere to the ICF Code of Ethics in all my interactions. If I become aware of a possible violation of the Code of Ethics or if I identify unethical behavior by another ICF professional, I respectfully raise the issue with the individuals involved. If this does not resolve the issue, I refer it to an official authority (e.g. ICF Global).
15. I require all support staff to adhere to the ICF Code of Ethics.
16. I am committed to excellence through continuous personal, professional and ethical development.
17. I am aware of personal limitations or circumstances that may conflict with, interfere with, or impair my performance or professional relationships. I will seek external support to determine what action to take. If necessary, I will promptly seek appropriate professional support or suspend or terminate my coaching.
18. I resolve any existing or potential conflict of interest by addressing the issue with the parties concerned, seeking professional assistance, or suspending the professional relationship temporarily or permanently.
19. I respect the privacy of ICF members and use ICF member contact information (email addresses, phone numbers, etc.) only after being authorized to do so by ICF or the ICF member concerned.

## **Section III - Responsibility for Professionalism**

As an ICF professional :

20. I accurately describe my coaching credentials, skill level, expertise, experience, training and ICF Certifications.
21. I make accurate and precise verbal and written statements about what I offer as an ICF Professional, what is offered by ICF, about professional coaching and the potential value of coaching.
22. I communicate and educate those who may need to know about the ethical responsibilities defined by this Code.
23. I take responsibility for being aware of and setting clear, appropriate and culturally sensitive boundaries regarding interactions, physical or otherwise.
24. I do not have a sexual or emotional relationship with the client(s) or sponsor(s). I will always ensure that the level of intimacy is appropriate for the

coaching relationship. I will take appropriate action to resolve the problem or terminate the engagement.

#### **Section IV - Liability to the company**

As an ICF professional :

25. I avoid discrimination by maintaining fairness and equality in all activities and operations, while respecting local cultural rules and practices. This includes, but is not limited to, discrimination based on age, race, gender expression, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, disability or military status.

26. I acknowledge and respect the contributions and intellectual property of others, claiming sole ownership of my own work. I am aware that any violation of this rule could expose me to legal action by a third party.

27. I am honest and respect accepted scientific standards, applicable guidelines and the limits of my competence when conducting or communicating on research.

28. I am aware of the influence that I and my clients have on society. I adhere to the philosophy of 'doing good' as opposed to 'avoiding evil'.

#### **5. THE ETHICAL COMMITMENT OF THE ICF PROFESSIONAL :**

As an ICF Professional, in accordance with the rules of the ICF Code of Ethics, I acknowledge and agree to honour my ethical and legal obligations to my clients, sponsors, colleagues and to the public at large.

If I violate any part of the ICF Code of Ethics, I agree that the ICF, in its sole discretion, may hold me accountable. Further, I agree that my liability to the ICF for any violation may include sanctions, such as a requirement for additional coaching or other training, or the loss of my ICF membership and/or ICF Certifications.

For more information on the Ethical Conduct Review process, or for links in case of complaints, please click on the button below.

*Adopted by the ICF Global Board in September 2019*