

<https://coachforchange.com>

ICF Code of Ethics

The ICF Code of Ethics is a guiding star that helps coaches navigate their journey with integrity and purpose. It's there to help us determine the boundaries between what is acceptable and what isn't. When you live by this Code, you're doing more than just following guidelines — you are creating relationships that are rooted in trust and respect. And you are lifting the entire profession, keeping coaching as a powerful force for change in the world. Please note that the 2020 Code of Ethics is being used within the ICF Exams for the ACC, PCC and MCC.

Expectations of ICF Coaches

Watch the Video Series (<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLMBtOVpaN5Dgs-A3er-ELGCvLc53kcZSK>)

Every ICF member and credential-holder makes a pledge to uphold the ICF Code of Ethics. While it sounds impressive, you might wonder what it means in practice. Here's how ICF coaches bring their commitment to life every day.

- **Setting the Standard:** Acting ethically and responsibly in all professional interactions, ensuring integrity is at the core of their practice.
- **Continuous Growth:** Pursuing ongoing learning, self-awareness, and self-improvement to stay at the forefront of the coaching profession.
- **Leading by Example:** Upholding the highest standards, inspiring trust and respect in clients, peers, and the global coaching community.
- **Accountability:** Taking full responsibility for their professional decisions and actions as a member of ICF.
- **Being Present:** Fully engaging in every interaction, ensuring focus, care, and professionalism in each moment.
- **Celebrating Diversity:** Embracing inclusion and valuing the perspectives and contributions of stakeholders from around the world.
- **Abiding by the Rules:** Adhering to all applicable laws and regulations, wherever they practice.

To give you a greater understanding of how to put the ICF Code of Ethics into practice, check out our seven-part video series (<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLMBtOVpaN5Dgs-A3er-ELGCvLc53kcZSK>) highlighting each section of the ICF Code.

About the Code

Since ICF's early days, we have seen the need for a unifying ethical framework to guide coaches through complex and ambiguous situations. The ICF Code of Ethics was created to meet this need. But our work has not stopped there. To ensure relevancy and effectiveness for coaches worldwide, we conduct regular reviews of the Code. Our current ICF Code of Ethics went into effect on April 1, 2025.

In addition to the Code itself, you can consult the Insights and Considerations for Ethics (<https://coachingfederation.org/resource/insights-and-considerations-for-ethics/>) resource to help you develop your ethical critical thinking skills and how to apply the

Code in practice.

And if you want to see the exact updates to the most recent Code, explore the ICF Code of Ethics: Overview and Changes (<https://coachingfederation.org/resource/icf-code-of-ethics-overview-of-changes/>) resource for a detailed breakdown.

ICF Code of Ethics

Download PDF (<https://coachingfederation.org/resource/icf-code-of-ethics/>)

The International Coaching Federation (ICF) Code of Ethics is composed of five main parts and an appendix.

1. **Purpose**
 2. **ICF Core Values and Ethical Principles**
 3. **Commitments for All Within the ICF Ecosystem**
 4. **Ethical Standards for ICF Professionals**
 5. **The Pledge of Ethics**
 6. Appendix
 1. **Key Definitions of Terms Used in the Code**
 2. **Glossary of Other Terms**
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1. Purpose

The International Coaching Federation (ICF) is the world's leading coaching association.

The ICF is made up of six family organizations (FOs). Together, they form the ICF Ecosystem. The FOs are: ICF Professional Coaches, ICF Credentials and Standards, ICF Coaching Education, ICF Foundation, ICF Coaching in Organizations, and the ICF Thought Leadership Institute. The ICF Global Board provides strategic direction for and coordination of the complete ICF ecosystem.

Based on its mission and responsibility, ICF provides a code of ethics setting out ethical standards of professional conduct required to be adhered to by all within the ICF Ecosystem, whether acting as ICF professionals (see definition) or in any other capacity. The roles and responsibilities governed by the ICF Code of Ethics include ICF professionals, ICF staff (see definition), volunteers, members of ICF boards, leaders of ICF Communities of Practice, and members of ICF global committees, task forces, and core teams (whether they are ICF professionals or not).

The ICF Code of Ethics incorporates the core values of the International Coaching Federation (ICF Core Values) as a foundation to understanding the ICF Code of Ethics, ethical principles, and ethical standards of conduct.

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

Setting standards of conduct consistent with ICF core values and ethical principles.

- Guiding ethical reflection, education, and decision-making.
- Adjudicating and preserving ICF ethical standards through the ICF Ethical Conduct Review (ECR) process.
- Providing the basis for ICF ethics training in ICF accredited programs.

This Code of Ethics is intended to assist those persons subject to the Code by directing them to the ethical factors, values, and principles that need to be taken into consideration whenever they need to engage in ethical reasoning and ethical decision-making.

The ICF Code of Ethics applies when people represent themselves as belonging within the ICF ecosystem and/or ICF professionals in their professional interactions.

The challenge of working ethically means that those within the ICF ecosystem will inevitably encounter situations that require responses to unexpected issues, resolution of dilemmas, and solutions to problems.

People within the ICF ecosystem strive to be ethical, even when doing so involves acting courageously and making difficult decisions that uphold the “DO GOOD” principle when it comes to their stakeholders.

Part 4 of the Code articulates the ethical obligations of ICF professionals who are acting in their different roles as coach, coach supervisor, mentor coach, trainer, and student coach-in-training.

The ICF Independent Review Board serves to uphold this Code of Ethics through the Ethical Conduct Review (ECR) process, which is applicable to all ICF professionals.

ICF mandates that all credentialed ICF professionals have continuous ethical education and training. Furthermore, ICF accredited coaching education programs are required to provide ethics training as ICF considers ethics to be the foundational element of the coaching profession.

The ICF Code applies to all individuals or entities falling within the ICF ecosystem. No individual or entity falling within the ICF ecosystem may opt out of any section or part of the Code, nor are they permitted to delete, modify, or amend any provisions within the Code.

2. ICF Core Values and Ethical Principles

The Code of Ethics provides guidelines for implementing the core values and ethical principles and shows how they are put into practice. All values and principles are equally important, support one another, and are aspirational. All within the ICF ecosystem are expected to honor the core values and align with the principles in all their professional interactions.

The core values (<https://coachingfederation.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/ICF-Core-Values-1.pdf>) and the related ethical principles are listed on the ICF website and are reiterated below

Professionalism

Collaboration

Humanity

Equity

3. Commitments for All Within the ICF Ecosystem

The values are aspirational and a robust guide for ethical reasoning and decision-making. All within the ICF ecosystem are expected to honor and uphold these values in all their professional interactions.

We:

- Mindfully perform our duties with integrity and accountability by thinking globally, being courageous in our thoughts, actions, and speech, being aware of our impact, and bearing the responsibility of any consequences.
- Commit to excellence through continued personal, professional, and ethical development.
- Remain alert to cultural filters and demonstrate respect for cultures different from our own through open conversations about cross-cultural and multicultural differences.
- Maintain awareness of relationships and how they are influenced by factors including biases, power dynamics, and forms of systemic oppression, and actively address these factors through continuing education and open conversations.
- Cultivate our ethical growth and maturity through continuous self-reflection and increased self-awareness. If an ethical dilemma arises, we will pursue assistance where needed to resolve the matter.
- Respectfully attempt to communicate our concerns with others if we become aware of unethical conduct by them, and if necessary, seek ethical guidance for next steps.
- Communicate with those who need to be informed of the ethical responsibilities established by this Code by providing access to this Code of Ethics.
- Accept that behaving ethically means going beyond what is written in the Code of Ethics.

4. Ethical Standards for ICF Professionals

Meeting these ICF ethical standards of conduct is the first of the ICF core coaching competencies (ICF Core Competencies): “Demonstrates Ethical Practice: understands and consistently applies coaching ethics and standards.”

The following ethical standards are applied to the professional activities of ICF Professionals – regardless of an existing formal coaching relationship (see definitions) or not. These ethical standards are divided into five sections:

1. Agreements for Client and/or Sponsor Engagement.
2. Confidentiality and Legal Compliance.
3. Professional Conduct and Conflicts of Interest.
4. Commitment to Delivering Consistent Value.
5. Professional Integrity and Accountability.

Section 1: Agreements for Client and/or Sponsor Engagement

Section 2: Confidentiality and Legal Compliance

Section 3: Professional Conduct and Conflicts of Interest

Section 4: Commitment to Delivering Consistent Value

Section 5: Professional Integrity and Accountability

I understand that ICF may, at its discretion and according to the ECR process, hold me accountable for violations of the ICF Code of Ethics. I further agree that my accountability to ICF may include sanctions for any violation, such as mandatory additional coach education, mentoring, supervision, or loss of my ICF membership and/ or ICF credentials.

5. The Pledge of Ethics

While fulfilling any role within the ICF ecosystem, I promise to uphold my ethical obligations by adhering to the ICF Code of Ethics in all my professional interactions. I commit to doing my best to represent the integrity and professional reputation of coaching and the ICF.

Appendix

Key definitions of terms used in the Code.

Artificial Intelligence: Any algorithm or machine-based technology that enables computers and other digital devices to simulate human intelligence and problem-solving skills. (See Standard 2.5)

Client: The individual, team, or group member being coached, the coach being coached, mentored, or supervised, or the coach in training. (See Standards 1.1, 2.3, 2.5, 3.2, 3.6, 3.7, 3.8, 4.1, 4.3)

Coaching: Partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential. (See Part 4)

Coaching Agreement: A formal document established between an ICF professional and the client(s)/sponsor(s) that outlines the terms, expectations, and conditions of their coaching relationship. It typically includes details such as the goals of the coaching, the duration and frequency of sessions, confidentiality policies, payment terms, cancellation policies, and the responsibilities of both the coach and the client. (See Standards 1.1, 1.2, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1, 3.2)

Coaching Engagement: The structured interaction between an ICF professional and the client(s)/sponsor(s). This engagement encompasses the entire coaching process, including the initial assessment, goal setting, regular coaching sessions, progress tracking, and evaluation of outcomes. (See Standards 1.1, 2.2, 3.6)

Coaching Relationship: A relationship that is established by the ICF professional and the client(s)/sponsor(s) under an agreement that defines the responsibilities and expectations of each party. (See Standards 1.2, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.6, 4.2, 4.3)

Coach Supervisor: An experienced coach who engages in reflective dialogue and a collaborative process with a coach (or group of coaches) for personal, professional, and ethical development and learning. (See Parts 1 & 2)

Code: ICF Code of Ethics; this document, which includes the purpose, core values & ethical principles, commitments, standards, key definitions, glossary, and pledge.

Confidentiality: The protection of any information obtained in or around the coaching relationship unless there is a legal reason or requirement, a threat of harm, or written consent to release is given by the client. (See Standards 1.1, 2.1, 2.3, 2.4, 3.2)

Conflict of Interest: A situation in which an ICF professional is involved in multiple interests where serving one interest could work against or conflict with another. This could be financial, personal, intrinsic, professional, or a perceived conflict with a client, prospective client, or sponsor. (See Standards 3.1, 3.2, 3.3)

Core Competencies: Specific skills of professional coaches. (See Parts 1 & 2)

Equality: A situation in which all people experience inclusion and access to resources and opportunity, regardless of their race, ethnicity, national origin, color, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, religion, immigration status, mental or physical disability, and other areas of human difference. (See Part 2 and Standard 3.5)

ICF–Accredited Coaching Education: A program offered by an educational institution that has gone through a rigorous review process by the ICF and demonstrates that its curriculum aligns with the ICF definition of coaching, ICF Core Competencies, and ICF Code of Ethics. (See Part 1 and Standard 5.1)

ICF Credential: A professional certification indicating a person has met specific standards and requirements designed to develop and refine their coaching skills. ICF credential designations include Associate Certified Coach (ACC), Professional Certified Coach (PCC), and Master Certified Coach (MCC). (See Part 1 and Standard 5.1)

ICF Ecosystem: – ICF is made up of six family organizations. Together they form the ICF ecosystem. The family organizations are: ICF Professional Coaches, ICF Credentials and Standards, ICF Coaching Education, ICF Foundation, ICF Coaching in Organizations, and the ICF Thought Leadership Institute, all under the umbrella of the ICF Global Board of Directors. (See Part 1)

ICF Professional: – Individuals who represent themselves as an ICF member and/or ICF credential-holder, in roles including, but not limited to, coach, coach supervisor, mentor coach, coach trainer, coach in training, board member, volunteer, or leader. (See Parts 1, 2, & 4 and Standards 2.7, 5.2)

ICF Staff: Any person who is employed or contracted by ICF, or any management company contracted by ICF, to provide management and administrative services for ICF. (See Part 1)

Intellectual Property: Creations of the mind that are legally recognized as the property of their creator or owner. Intellectual property rights grant the creator or owner exclusive rights to use, produce, and distribute their creations, which are protected under laws against unauthorized use or infringement. (See Standard 2.6)

Legal: Compliance with the law(s) of the country where the coach practices. (See Part 4 and Standards 2.2, 2.5)

Mentor Coach: An experienced coach who provides a collaborative learning process (mentor coaching) through which feedback is provided to another coach based on observed or recorded coaching sessions, to further develop their unique coaching style and skills in alignment with the ICF Core Competencies. (See Parts 1 & 2 and Standard 3.7)

Sponsor: The entity (including its representatives) or individual paying for and/or arranging or defining the coaching services to be provided. This includes those having parental responsibility for minors. (See Part 2 and Standards 1.1, 2.3, 2.5, 3.2, 3.6)

Support Personnel: The people who work for ICF professionals and who have access to information about clients and/or coaches. (e.g. administrative assistants, marketing, accounting, etc.) (See Standard 2.6)

Systemic Equality: Gender equality, race equality, and other forms of equality that are institutionalized in the norms, language, images, beliefs, ethics, core values, policies, structures, laws, practices, and cultures of communities, organizations, professional associations, nations, and society. (See Part 2 and Standard 3.5)

Systemic Oppression: Systemic racism, colorism, sexism, and other forms of systemic inequality that are embedded in the norms, beliefs, language, images, ethics, core values, policies, structures, laws, practices, and cultures of communities, organizations, professional associations, nations, and society and that perpetuate widespread prejudicial and harmful treatment of people with marginalized identities and reward and benefit people with privileged identities. (See Parts 2 & 3)

Glossary of Other Terms

Additional definitions of terms used in the Code.

Coaching Platform: A coaching platform uses digital technology to enable an integrated and seamless coaching journey between coaches and clients at a large scale.

Coaching Platform Provider: An organization utilizing a coaching platform developed on their own or by a platform developer and branded as their own coaching technology platform.

Coaching Provider: A for-profit or nonprofit organization providing professional coaching services including but not limited to a corporation, limited liability company (LLC), nonprofit, or partnership.

Coaching Supervision: A dynamic and reflective process of collaboration, guidance, and support through which coaches develop their personal, professional, and ethical capacity and maturity.

DEIB: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Belonging: the combination of key concepts that support a range of similarities and differences, fair access and treatment, being welcoming, feeling a part of a group, and fairness.

Diversity: Race, color, caste, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, rank, socio-economic status, age, spiritual practice, national origin, ability, and other groups, classes, and categories of human differences, such as personality characteristics, appearance, communication styles, and leadership styles.

Equity: Actions that provide access to resources and opportunities and establish norms, actions, policies, infrastructure, and culture so that everyone can realize their full potential.

Inclusion: Action that includes and fully supports people from marginalized as well as privileged groups; by creating and maintaining processes, infrastructure, and culture; so their inclusion goes beyond assimilation and differentiation to integrating them in the life and work of the organization in a way that they participate in decision-making about what the organization's work is, and how the work gets done.

Belonging: Sustained sense of connectedness and involvement with the organization and its work by marginalized and privileged members of an organization, based on their experience that their presence, contributions, and inherent worth are truly valued and affirmed as demonstrated by the ongoing actions of the organization.

External Coach: A coach, hired from outside of an organization who is neither a part-time nor full-time employee of an organization, to coach employees of the organization.

Group Coaching: Coaching a group of individuals who have similar goals or interests, serving each to move forward in their progress, where the coach and other group members offer support and inspiration on individual abilities and potential.

ICF Assessor: A credentialed coach that has successfully completed ICF assessor training; ICF assessors review and assess the recorded coaching sessions for ACC, PCC, or MCC candidates.

ICF Certified: Indicates ICF credentialed and applies only to those with an ICF credential such as ACC, PCC, or MCC.

Internal Coach: An individual who is employed within an organization and coaches either part-time or full-time the employees of that organization.

Team Coaching: Partnering in a co-creative and reflective process with a team and its dynamics and relationships in a way that inspires them to maximize their abilities and potential in order to reach their common purpose and shared goals.

Get the ICF Code of Ethics in a Variety of Languages

Wherever you are in the world, the ICF Code of Ethics is here to guide you in making a meaningful difference through coaching that builds trust and empowers transformation. To ensure that this vital resource is accessible to coaches worldwide, the ICF Code of Ethics is available for download in multiple languages, including Arabic, Armenian, English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Spanish, and Turkish.

Download the Code (<https://coachingfederation.org/resource/icf-code-of-ethics/>)

Integrity in Action: Building Trust Through Ethical Coaching

Since all ICF members and credential-holders are bound by the ICF Code of Ethics, we are deeply committed to upholding these standards. The Ethical Conduct Review Process exemplifies ICF's belief that integrity and empowerment are more than ideals — they are

actionable principles that elevate the coaching profession and build trust between coaches and their clients.

Rooted in fairness and professionalism, the Ethical Conduct Review Process offers a transparent and respectful way to report and address ethical concerns. For coaches, it is a cornerstone of credibility, showcasing their dedication to ethical excellence. For consumers of coaching, it provides confidence that their well-being and trust are safeguarded in an environment of mutual respect and accountability.

Learn about the Process

(<https://coachingfederation.org/credentialing/coaching-ethics/complaints/>)

Got Ethics on Your Mind? Contact Us

We know ethics can be tricky. If you have a question, please contact us via the Ethics Assist Line. We're here to help!

Contact the Assist Line (<https://coachingfederation.org/resource/icf-ethics-assist-line/>)