

american *CAMP* association®

Complaint Resolution Program

It is incumbent upon American Camp Association (ACA) members to make an ethical commitment to this mission. The association has assumed a responsibility to assist the public and members by publishing a Code of Ethics and developing a system for handling complaints alleging a violation of the Code.

Each new member is sent a copy of the Code of Ethics. If, after reading the Code, a member wishes to withdraw his/her membership, he/she may do so at that point without penalty. The association deems by renewing and/or accepting ACA membership in the proper category each year, the member renews adherence to the Ethics of the association. The Code may be modified from time to time by the ACA Council of Delegates.

The American Camp Association is a community of camp professionals and is dedicated to enriching the lives of children and adults through the camp experience.

The Process

The process for resolving complaints against ACA members or ACA-accredited camps may involve two levels or types of procedures. First, the complaint is reviewed by the local ACA Section which holds the membership of the person against whom the complaint is lodged. The ACA Section will review the matter, determine if ACA involvement is appropriate, and assign the complaint to the appropriate committee or persons for review. The intent of this process is to help the parties resolve the matter.

If resolution does not occur within the prescribed period of time, the complainant may drop the complaint, or may file a formal affidavit with the National Ethics Commission. An affidavit may only be filed once informal attempts at resolution have occurred at the Section level. The National Ethics Commission will determine if they believe the complaint alleges a violation of the ACA Code of Ethics. If so, a Review Panel will be formed, information will be gathered, a hearing will be held, and recommendations for action will be forwarded to the appropriate ACA governing body.

Ethics involve values and principles on which there is a range of opinions.

The ACA process **cannot** resolve financial matters or allegations of illegal behavior. Legal remedies exist to address such issues. On the other hand, there are situations where ACA receives primary notification of abuse allegations. ACA places a high value on child protection and will notify proper authorities when such action has not been taken and it is appropriate to do so.

Resolution of the alleged ethical violation may involve decisions in favor of either the complainant or the camp. The National Review Panel may assess penalties ranging from censure to fines, or may recommend to the National Ethics Commission that accreditation be removed.

Procedures for the Review of Complaints

1. All written, signed complaints received by ACA shall be referred to the Complaint Resolution Chair (hereinafter, "the chair") of the appropriate section.
2. Upon receiving a signed, written complaint, the section chair will classify the complaint as possibly affecting ethics, standards, public law or regulation, or general. Only general complaints and those that appear to be matters addressed by ACA's Code of Ethics will be processed through the Complaint Resolution Program of ACA.
 - If a complaint is an alleged violation of law, the complainant should be advised to notify proper authorities in the state where the camp is located.
 - If the complaint involves potential violations of ACA standards by an accredited camp, section standards personnel will be notified and appropriate action will be taken.
 - If legal action is pending or imminent in the matter, such action will prevail. Note that ACA has no investigatory authority granted by state or federal officials to make determination of matters covered by courts of law.
3. Each written complaint will receive a timely, courteous written response.
4. Copies of complaints, not requesting anonymity, will be sent to the member along with an explanation of steps taken to date.
5. If the matter is in the purview of the section chair, he/she shall encourage an informal effort at reconciliation between the member and the complainant. If this is accomplished to the satisfaction of both parties within 45 days, the case shall be closed. It is the responsibility of the complainant to notify the chair if resolution has not been achieved.
6. If the chair hears nothing within 45 days, the case will be considered closed. If after 45 days the complainant indicates the issue has not been resolved, the Section Complaint Resolution Chair or a designated member of the Complaint Resolution Committee shall attempt to resolve the situation through discussions with both parties within 30 days. If this results in a resolution the case shall be closed.
7. If after informal discussions the situation cannot be resolved, the Section Complaint Resolution Chair will give the complainant an opportunity to file a notarized affidavit.
8. Upon receipt of an affidavit, the Section Complaint Resolution Chair will mail the affidavit and all documentation to ACA's Chief Executive Officer.
9. Upon receipt of an affidavit by ACA's Chief Executive Officer, it shall be forwarded along with all correspondence to the National Ethics Commission, who will determine its validity as an ethics complaint. If it is determined the complaint falls outside ACA's Code of Ethics, the case shall be closed.
10. If it is determined to be a valid ethics violation, the National Ethics Chair shall appoint a Review Panel. All documentation on the case will be sent to the Review Panel Chair. A date will be set for a hearing.
11. A hearing shall be conducted following the approved Review Panel Procedures.
12. The Review Panel will confer and reach a decision. Decisions regarding penalties made by the Review Panel are final. However, if the decision involves removal of affiliation, the decision will be forwarded to the National Ethics Commission for final action. The Review Panel Chair shall notify all parties of the decision made.

ACA CODE OF ETHICS

Exemplary Ethical Practices for All Members of the American Camp Association

A Code of Ethics identifies those behaviors and attitudes the profession believes to be minimum acceptable commitments to the well being of others. It is not possible for a code to identify or include all such practices or concepts. The existence of a Code of Ethics cannot guarantee that all persons will behave in ways deemed ethical by all other persons. A code is built on a commitment to integrity, truthfulness, and fairness to all persons. To that end, the members of the American Camp Association agree, by their membership, to uphold the following:

1. I shall conduct myself in a manner consistent with the association's mission to serve organized camps, affiliated programs, and the public by promoting better camping for all.
2. I shall recognize my responsibility for the welfare of others in my care.
3. I shall abide by and comply with the relevant laws of the community.
4. I shall be a member in the proper ACA classification as currently defined by the ACA National Board of Directors; and I shall disclose my affiliation with ACA only in a manner specifically permitted by the association.
5. I shall speak for the association only when specifically authorized to do so and will otherwise make clear that my statements and actions are those of an individual member.
6. I shall respect the confidences of ACA members, camps, and other constituents within the camp community; however, I shall accept responsibility to pass on to the appropriate ACA official, information I deem reliable that will help protect the camp community against unethical practices by any individual.

Exemplary Ethical Practices for Camp Owners, Directors, and Executives

The association recognizes the camp owner, director, and executive as the primary professional persons assuming the greatest responsibility for actual camp practices. Therefore, in addition to the Code of Ethics for all members, any member operating a camp accredited by or affiliated with the American Camp Association agrees to subscribe to the following:

7. I shall endeavor to provide an environment conducive to promoting and protecting the physical and emotional well being of the campers and staff.
8. I shall seek to instill in my staff and campers a reverence for the land and its waters and all living things, and an ecological conscience which reflects the conviction of individual responsibility for the health of that environment.
9. I shall follow equal opportunity practices in employment and camper enrollment.
10. I shall endeavor to employ persons based upon factors necessary to the performance of the job and the operation of the camp.
11. I shall be truthful and fair in securing and dealing with campers, parents/guardians, and staff.
12. I shall provide a written enrollment policy for all camper/family applicants including fees, payment schedules, discounts, dates of arrival and departure, together with a clearly stated refund policy.
13. I shall provide for each staff member a written job description and employment agreement including period of employment, compensation, benefits, and exceptions.
14. I shall promptly consult with parents or guardians of any camper or minor staff member as to the advisability of removing him/her from camp should it be clear that he/she is not benefiting from the camp experience or the camper's or minor staff member's actions have created this need.
15. I shall make arrangements with the parents or guardians for the return of their camper(s) or minor-age staff member(s).
16. I shall pay the correct national and section fees as established by the ACA National Board of Directors and the ACA Section Board of Directors.
17. I, or my agent, will promptly respond to any and all complaints received by me and make a good faith effort to resolve all such complaints in accordance with generally accepted good business practices and the ACA Code of Ethics.

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