



USA BOCCIA CODE OF ETHICS

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USA Boccia Code of Ethics

Mission Statement

USA Boccia provides athletes with physical disabilities the opportunity to participate and compete in the sport of Boccia at the local, regional, national and international level.

USA Boccia seeks to promote and grow the sport of Boccia in the United States.

The Ethics Committee's primary concern is the safety of USA Boccia's membership

Purpose

This Code of Ethics is intended to provide standards of professional conduct for the Board, Executive Director, staff, committee, task force members, and volunteers together with the athletes, coaches, and associated team members (Ramp Operators, Physical Therapists, etc.), hereinafter referred to as USA Boccia Membership, who are expected to behave in accordance with this Code of Ethics.

This Code of Ethics is not intended to be an exhaustive list of rules for appropriate behavior in every situation, but instead establishes basic, ethical boundaries which all members are expected to honor.

This Code of Ethics provides both the general principles and specific values which cover most situations encountered by the USA Boccia membership. It has as its primary goal the welfare and protection of the individuals and groups who participate in the sport in any capacity. This Code of Ethics also provides a common set of values and ethical standards. It is the individual responsibility of each member to aspire to the highest possible standards of conduct and take appropriate precautions to protect the welfare of other members within the USA Boccia organization.

The USA Boccia Code of Ethics has been expanded by the specific Codes of Conduct and/or Guidelines which describe behavioral expectations related to each member group. Individual Codes of Conduct can be found in the appendices that accompany this Code of Ethics document.

During the yearly membership process all members of USA Boccia will be asked to sign the Code of Ethics Acknowledgement document which indicates agreement with the rules, guidelines, jurisdiction and procedures stated in the USA Boccia Code of Ethics.

Integrity

All USA Boccia members are honest, fair, and respectful of others. They do not make statements that are false, misleading, or deceptive. Members strive to be aware of their own belief systems, values, needs, and limitations and the effects of these personal characteristics on their performance and work within USA Boccia.

Members will commit to combat all forms of cheating, the manipulation of competition results in any way, and must undertake to refer any suspicion of such behavior to the USA Boccia Ethics Committee.

USA Boccia recognizes the rules, policies, and procedures of all International and National Sports Federations that govern Paralympic sports.

Dignity

All members respect the fundamental rights, dignity, and worth of all participants. Awareness of cultural, individual, and role differences, including, but not limited to, those due to age, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language, and socioeconomic status is important in recognizing and eliminating any biases. USA Boccia members will not knowingly participate in or condone unfair discriminatory practices.

Bullying behaviors (through social media / cyber bullying), emotional and/or physical misconduct, minor athlete abuse, hazing, or harassment of any participant or member will not be tolerated. Additionally, sexual misconduct, including, but not limited to, child abuse, sexual assault, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence, and/or stalking, are prohibited.

Any allegation of ethical violations, including allegations relating to sexual misconduct, will fall under the jurisdiction of the Ethics Committee. USA Boccia has the authority to implement necessary and/or appropriate measures, up to and including a suspension, to address any allegations of misconduct. However, the decision of the Ethics Committee shall not supersede any local, state, or federal reporting requirements or jurisdictions.

Responsibility

All members of USA Boccia are aware of their professional and personal responsibilities to the community and the society in which they work and live. Members should be concerned about their own ethical compliance and the ethical compliance of others within the organization. When speaking with the public or fellow members of USA Boccia they take reasonable precautions to ensure their statements are consistent with the actions and ideals set forth in the Code of Ethics.

USA Boccia has zero tolerance for retaliatory conduct by any USA Boccia member, employee, coach, referee/official, board member or any other official associated with USA Boccia who comes forward with a good faith complaint or issue. Retaliation for reporting an alleged violation shall constitute a violation of USA Boccia's rules and Code of Ethics and will be grounds for disciplinary actions. (USA Boccia Whistleblower Policy, April 2021).

The Role of the Ethics Committee

The USA Boccia Ethics Committee shall be considered one of the investigatory committees when an alleged ethical violation is reported. Its purpose is to establish if a violation of the Code of Ethics, Conflict of Interest or any other related policy has occurred. In the event that a violation is found, the Ethics Committee will inform the Judicial Committee and provide them with any documents utilized in the investigation. In its operations, the Ethics Committee may draw on precedents and principles already established by sports law, previous Ethics Committee decisions, and jurisprudence. The Judicial Committee will generally administer and oversee all verified Ethical Violation complaints and Conflict of Interest complaints. The Judicial Committee will be responsible to ensure that all complaints are heard in a timely, fair and impartial manner. Respondents will be afforded basic due process rights as described in the USA Boccia Complaint Procedures. The Ethics Committee is made up of independent and unbiased individuals and at least one Athlete Representative in good standing who has no substantiated violations against him/her/them and has no conflict of interest with the ruling. The person representing athletes on the Ethics Committee must be a current USA Boccia member and may be a current or former USA Boccia athlete.

Reporting Ethical Violations and the Process

If an alleged ethical violation occurs, a referral, written and/or verbal, shall be made to the USA Boccia Ethics Committee. (See Section A of the Code of Ethics). The USA Boccia Ethics Committee will review the alleged ethical violation, investigate where necessary, and determine if the issue violates the Code of Ethics or Conflict of Interest Policy. If the action violates the Code of Ethics, a report will be made to the Judicial Committee for further investigations and sanctions. In addition, pursuant to Section 9.13.2 of the USA Boccia Bylaws (August, 2023), the Ethics Committee, while keeping the specifics of the case anonymous, will periodically provide the Board of Directors with a report on the number of violations and where the committee stands in the review of the violation(s).

SECTION A

PROCEDURE FOR REPORTING AN ALLEGED VIOLATION OF THE CODE OF ETHICS

1. The Claimant is a person(s) who has/have experienced behaviors that could violate the Code of Ethics or person(s) who observed the incident. The Claimant should immediately report the situation in writing through the Ethics Committee link on the USA Boccia website, or in confidence, to a member of the USA Boccia Ethics Committee verbally and then follow-up with reporting the alleged violation through the Ethics Committee link on the USA Boccia website <https://usaboccia.org> or by sending an email to usaboccia.ethics.judicial@gmail.com. The chair of the Ethics Committee will monitor all Ethical Violation Reports.
2. If the alleged ethical violation occurs during a USA Boccia event, the alleged violation can be reported to a USA Boccia official, e.g. Executive Director, Board member, or the ranking member of the group: Head Referee, Head Classifier, Head Coach or the event coordinator. It is the responsibility of the person receiving the report to direct the person(s) who experienced or observed the alleged ethical violation to the Ethics Committee link on the USA Boccia website. Although the person receiving the complaint may not investigate the allegation, that person should assess the threat level and determine if the allegation requires immediate intervention and if so, take the appropriate next step in addition to referring the Claimant to the USA Boccia website for reporting.
3. The person(s) who experienced or observed the alleged ethical violation should complete the confidential online Ethical Violation Report Form. This form has clear directions regarding the documentation about the allegation (e.g. time at which the alleged violation happened, the exact situation, what ethical violation occurred, where did it occur, who was involved, what happened, who else observed the incident).
4. The person filing the Ethical Violation Report Form (Claimant) may request assistance from a person of their choosing in securing, reading, and completing the Ethical Violation Report Form. The person providing assistance (Representative) is strictly held to the principle of confidentiality. When an athlete representative or any other person agrees to work with someone reporting behavior(s) that could violate the Code of Ethics, the person(s) providing assistance is held to a high standard of confidentiality and agrees not to divulge any information to anyone. In turn, the reporting athlete may give written permission to the person providing assistance to speak with designated people.

5. The information within this report or filing is confidential between the person who is filing and the organization to whom the report is being submitted and should not be disclosed to any other person. The information should not be reproduced in whole, or in part, nor should any of the information contained therein be disclosed without the prior consent of the reporting individual.

The completed Ethical Violation report should be attached to an email and sent to usaboccia.ethics.judicial@gmail.com

6. a) Upon receipt of the completed report, the chair of the Ethics Committee will acknowledge receipt of the complaint to the Claimant. The chair will also contact any potential witnesses for the Claimant for their written statement.

b) The Ethics Committee chair will contact the Respondent (person(s) being accused of the alleged ethics violation). The Respondent will be asked to provide information about the alleged ethical violation and to provide any witnesses that could corroborate the Respondent's point of view.

The Respondent may request assistance from a person of their choosing in responding to the alleged ethical violation. The chair will also contact any potential witnesses for the Respondent for their written statement. If there is no response from the Respondent or his/her witnesses, a second attempt to contact the Respondent will be made by phone and/or certified mail. If after a reasonable amount of time (ten business days) there is no response to the second attempt, the Ethics Committee will move forward without the Respondent's participation.

7. a) Representatives from the Ethics Committee will convene within 15 business days after receiving information from the Claimant, the Respondent and the witnesses. The meeting will take place either in person, through an online meeting or by telephone conference. The committee's representatives will review all reports and determine if further information from the person(s) reporting the alleged violation, the person accused of the alleged violation (the Respondent), or any witnesses is required prior to making their decision. The Claimant, the Respondent and any witnesses may include, but not be limited to, detailed written testimony, social media video, photos, recordings and other documentation.

b) The committee will make every effort to reach a decision and complete a report within fifteen (15) business days after receipt of all the written statements. A decision will be determined by a majority of the Ethics Committee. The committee will use the clear and convincing evidentiary standard to determine if the Respondent violated the Code of Ethics. This means that the committee must determine whether it is highly probable that a violation of the Code occurred. The Ethics Committee's decision will be in writing and distributed to the involved parties promptly following a review by the Ethics Committee members. A written report detailing the committee's decision will be sent to the Claimant and the Respondent. Every effort will be made to assure the anonymity of all parties.

8. If the Ethics Committee determines an ethical violation has occurred, the Ethics Committee chair will send a written copy of the findings to the chair of the Judicial Committee for review and determination of appropriate disciplinary action against the Respondent. The Ethics Committee, if appropriate, may withhold the name of the Claimant and any witnesses if the committee determines anonymity is prudent or if the Claimant requested anonymity. If the Ethics Committee determines no ethical violation occurred, no report will be filed with the Judicial Committee.

The Ethics Committee will, independent of USA Boccia staff, evaluate the facts presented by the Claimant. While upholding the Claimant's confidentiality the Ethics Committee may liaise with the Executive Director or designee (see Section A #2) to provide the USA Boccia Board of Directors with information as to the number and category of reported violations and the progress the committee has made within the investigation. However, at no time, unless called as a witness, will a member of staff be present for the deliberations of the Ethics Committee.

SECTION B

FALSE ALLEGATIONS AND FRIVOLOUS CLAIMS

If, in the unanimous opinion of the USA Boccia Ethics Committee, a complaint is considered false, including those made anonymously, the Ethics Committee may recommend to the Judicial Committee to seek a sanction against the reporting party. A complaint is considered false when it is clearly intended to harm the reputation of the alleged offender with no basis in fact. A complaint is considered frivolous when it is based on the usual operation of the sport of Boccia and/or if it is designed to waste the time of the USA Boccia Ethics Committee.

SECTION C

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

USA Boccia is committed to sustaining an ethical workplace free of conflicts of interest and perceived conflicts of interest. Each Decision Maker has the responsibility to administer the affairs of USA Boccia honestly and prudently, and to exercise their best care, skill, and judgment for the sole benefit of USA Boccia. Those persons shall exercise the utmost good faith in all transactions involved in their duties, and they shall not use their positions with USA Boccia or knowledge gained therefrom for their personal benefit. The interests of the organization must be the first priority in all decisions and actions.

A **“Conflict of Interest”** or **“Conflict”** exists when a Decision Maker (as defined below) acts on behalf of USA Boccia in connection with a transaction to which USA Boccia is a party, where the Decision Maker's actions or relationships present the potential for improper personal gain or advantage, or for an adverse effect on the interests of USA Boccia, or where the Decision Maker's actions or relationships create the appearance that the Decision Maker will not be able to put USA Boccia's interests first.

A **“Conflict of Interest”** also exists in the context of athlete or team selection when a Decision Maker participates in a selection decision that involves or impacts an athlete with whom the Decision Maker

has a direct or indirect relationship, or when a Decision Maker participates in a benefits for services allocation decision that directly impacts the Decision Maker.

Conflict of Interest is applicable to all USA Boccia Decision Makers. Decision Makers include, but are not limited to, members of USA Boccia, members of USA Boccia Board of Directors, USA Boccia staff, committee members, task force members, hearing panel members, employees, and volunteers.

The Nominating and Governance Committee shall consult with the Ethics Committee with respect to vetting all nominations for potential conflict of interest or other problematic background issues.

For further information regarding Conflict of Interest, please refer to the USA Boccia Conflict of Interest Policy. Questions about perceived Conflict of Interest will be directed to the Ethics Committee for review. You may contact the Ethics Committee at usaboccia.ethics.judicial@gmail.com

SECTION D

NOTIFICATION TO MEMBERSHIP

The policy and procedures involved in the reporting of an ethical violation will appear on the USA Boccia website when the Code of Ethics is approved and each time it is updated.

As part of the annual membership application, new and existing members of USA Boccia will annually sign a document confirming their agreement to and compliance with the USA Boccia Code of Ethics.

In addition to the USA Boccia Code of Ethics which applies to any member of USA Boccia, listed below are the Codes of Conduct for individual member groups. Please locate and read the Code of Conduct that applies to you. **The most recent copy of the documents listed in the appendix below can be found on the USA Boccia website (usaboccia.org).** Any updates will be posted once the document receives Board approval.

Appendix

USA Boccia Background Check Policy and Procedures
USA Boccia Athlete Code of Conduct
USA Boccia Classifier Code of Conduct
USA Boccia Coaches Code of Conduct
USA Boccia Referees Code of Conduct
USA Boccia Complaint Procedures
USA Boccia Confidentiality Statement
USA Boccia Conflict of Interest Policy
USA Boccia Ethical Violation Report Form
USA Boccia Whistleblower Policy