

## CODE OF ETHICS

### A. Mission, Values and Basic Tenets

**Preamble:** The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) is committed to the highest standards of ethical conduct to carry out our mission and achieve our strategic goals with honesty, equity, inclusion and fairness. This code of ethics is intended to support ACSM's commitment to a culture of openness, transparency and trust; where all members, volunteers, staff, associates, and guests are treated respectfully and with dignity. To this end, it is essential that all conduct the business of ACSM with the highest ethical standards and require the participation and support of all members, volunteers, staff, associates and guests of ACSM in upholding these standards.

**The mission of ACSM:** to advance and integrate scientific research to provide educational and practical applications of all member interest areas related to exercise science and sports medicine.

#### **Our values include:**

- Conducting and disseminating the highest quality science and education to scientists, clinicians, practitioners, students and the public.
- Improving health and physical performance of athletes and non-athletes alike.
- Engendering trust in all communications and interactions.
- Promoting and maintaining integrity of competition and fair play.
- Promoting diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice in science, healthcare, professional practice, and sports.
- Inspiring passionate commitment and engagement of our members, volunteers and staff.
- Providing the highest degree of clinical and professional practice in the treatment, rehabilitation, and training of all people.
- Opposing the use of illegal performance enhancing drugs according to global and national standards.
- Promoting equal and equitable opportunities for all people to participate in and lead ACSM activities regardless of their sociodemographic characteristics.

The stated values are intended to aid members and associates of ACSM, individually and collectively, to maintain the highest level of ethical conduct, and are standards by which a member, or associate (e.g., vendor, volunteer, consultant, partner, meeting attendee, or guest) may determine the propriety of their conduct, relationship with colleagues, members of allied professions, the public, and all persons with whom a professional relationship has been established.

### **Basic Tenets Applying to Members and Associates:**

- Members and associates must maintain high professional and scientific standards and should not knowingly collaborate with or support anyone who violates these fundamental principles.
- Members and associates must safeguard the public and ACSM from members who do not demonstrate the highest ethical conduct in their professional work.
- The ideals of ACSM imply that improving the physical performance, health, and well-being of every individual with an emphasis on athletes and active people, regardless of demographic characteristics or access to resources is the responsibility of members and associates based upon their professional expertise and experiences.

### **B. Principles of Professional Ethical Behavior**

As advocates for physical activity, health and human/athletic performance all assume an obligation to train, treat, educate, and support all people with the highest ethical standards using evidence directed strategies and avoid inappropriate treatment and the appearance of inappropriate treatment of people. This Code of Ethics is a recognition that everyone affiliated with ACSM as a member or associate is responsible for practicing and promoting the values of ACSM to realize an organization that reflects our shared values and how we strive to operate and be seen by others. All should understand that departure from these principles of ethical behavior may result in sanctions by ACSM, including censure or loss of membership and banning from conference attendance, and may be subject to local laws.

Each person must adhere to the following ethical standards:

- Treat and/or train people to maintain honesty and integrity.
- Treat or train people with the utmost care and to the highest level of their professional competence.
- Maintain confidentiality and protection of personal medical information and other data as required by relevant laws, policies, and ethical standards.
- Be aware of and adhere to international doping control standards as determined by the List of Prohibited Substances and Methods published by the World Anti-Doping Agency or by the relevant anti-doping authority when treating or training active people.
- Provide appropriate care and/or train people based on their physical and/or medical conditions.
- Support research integrity and not support plagiarism, duplicate publication, slandering reputation, etc.
- Not harass or retaliate against anyone participating in ACSM activities.

### **C. Maintain Good-standing in Regulated Professions**

Any member or associate required by law to be licensed, registered, certified, or otherwise regulated by a government agency and/or professional body to practice their profession must remain in good-standing with that agency as a condition of continued membership in the ACSM. Any expulsion, suspension, probation or other sanction imposed by the government agency on any member is grounds for disciplinary action by the College.

## ***Scientific Misconduct***

ACSM members should fastidiously avoid any scientific misconduct or the appearance of such. Scientific misconduct includes fabrication, falsification, plagiarism or other questionable practices in any aspect of scientific research. ACSM members are expected to be ethical in all aspects of scientific research including humane treatment of human and non-human research participants/subjects.

### **D. Public Disclosure of Affiliation**

Only members of ACSM may disclose their affiliation with ACSM in any context; oral, written, video, or digital; provided the disclosure is truthful, accurate, and not for a commercial venture. In doing so, no member may imply ACSM endorsement in context with the disclosure, unless expressly authorized by ACSM. Disclosure of affiliation in connection with any commercial venture must expressly be authorized by the ACSM and must be made in a professionally dignified manner that is not false, misleading, or deceptive, and does not imply specialty, diploma, certification, or licensure status. Members who are currently ACSM Certified or Registered may disclose their certification status and Fellows may disclose their Fellow status. Membership or fellowship in ACSM is granted to an individual not to a firm, partnership, or corporation, and disclosure of affiliation and/or use of the initials ACSM is not allowed. Violation of this article may be grounds for disciplinary action, including loss of membership and fellowship status.

### **E. Conflicts of Interest and Management Plan for Potential Conflict of Interest**

General Guidelines: No ACSM member or associate should serve the College with an ongoing, avoidable conflict of interest. Information acquired by any individual while serving in an ACSM capacity is confidential and proprietary until ACSM makes the information available in the public domain. Every individual is expected to disclose for the records any potential, real, or perceived financial, personal or other conflict of interest (see below) and recuse themselves from any discussion or decision making for any meeting agenda items. The decision to consider and disclose actual or unavoidable conflict of interest is the responsibility of the given individual; however, if the individual does not recuse themselves, the chair of the committee has the responsibility to do so if they are aware of the existing conflict.

Declaration of Conflict of Interest: All ACSM committee and Board members and associates should be made aware of the ACSM Conflict of Interest guidelines when considered for committee or Board service or other ACSM activity in which they are participating, and they are required to disclose any potential conflict of interest (see ACSM Conflict of Interest form). Included in this provision are guidelines for recusal from discussion and material review where a potential, real or perceived conflict of interest exists.

Examples of Conflict of Interest: Receipt of royalties, consultancies, funding by a research grant, receiving travel, gifts, or honoraria for educational services or any other relationship (such as material management or leadership responsibilities) with a corporation, company or institution that provides sufficient reason for disclosure. Examples, but not an exhaustive are provided [here](#).

Recusal Procedures: An ACSM committee member who discloses a conflict of interest is expected to recuse themselves from a committee or Board issue which is viewed as competitive with the external entity in which the member is involved or a financial benefit that the member may receive. Recusal may occur in two ways: 1) The individual may remove themselves from the meeting when discussions occur concerning the area of potential conflict. 2) The committee chair, with majority support from the committee, reserves the right to excuse a committee or Board member who discloses a conflict of interest.

Breach of Conflict of Interest and Recusal: When an individual does not disclose a conflict of interest intentionally, does not recuse themselves voluntarily or at leadership request, or shares sensitive, proprietary information with a competitive external entity, or benefits financially from a decision in which they were involved, the individual should be referred to the ACSM Ethics and Professional Conduct Committee by the committee chair, for potential disciplinary action(s) outlined in the operating code of the Ethics and Professional Conduct Committee.

## **F. Confidentiality**

It is the policy of ACSM that members or associates will not disclose confidential information belonging to or obtained through their affiliation with ACSM to any person, including their relatives, friends, business and professional associates, or other organizations, unless ACSM has authorized disclosure. This policy is not intended to prevent disclosure where disclosure is required by law. All are cautioned to demonstrate professionalism, good judgment, and care to avoid unauthorized or inadvertent disclosures of confidential information.

## **G. Fraud**

Fraud is defined as any intentional act or omission designed to deceive others, resulting in the victim suffering a loss and/or the perpetrator achieving a gain, including but not limited to:

- Misappropriation of funds, securities, supplies or other assets.
- Impropriety in the handling or reporting of money or financial transactions.
- Profiteering from insider knowledge of ACSM plans or activities.
- Disclosing confidential and proprietary information to outside parties.
- Falsely representing or concealing a material fact to induce another to act upon the material fact to procure an advantage, benefit, or gain.
- Accepting or seeking anything of material value from contractors, vendors or persons providing services/materials to ACSM more than what is allowed in the [Conflict of Interest](#) statement.
- Destruction, removal, or unauthorized use of records, furniture, fixtures, and equipment.

## **H. Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment is unethical, unprofessional, and threatening and involves the asymmetric use of power by members. The term "sexual harassment" may be used to describe a wide range of behaviors and includes, but is not limited to: generalized sexist verbal, physical, or visual behavior; requests for sexual favors; sexual advances, whether linked to reward, or accompanied by threat of retaliation; the use of authority to emphasize the sexuality or sexual identity of a member in a manner which prevents or impairs that person's full enjoyment of ACSM benefits, climates, or opportunities; and sexual assaults. Such behaviors are forms of unprofessional conduct which seriously undermine the atmosphere of trust essential to ACSM's mission and may

constitute criminal violations. Condoning sexual harassment or disregarding complaints of sexual harassment from members, staff, colleagues, or affiliates allows sexual harassment to persist within the organization and undermines the atmosphere of trust essential to ACSM.

Amorous relationships that might be appropriate in other circumstances are inappropriate between members of the profession and any student or subordinate for whom they have a professional responsibility or supervisory role. Professionalism requires those in positions of authority recognize that relationships with students and subordinates always involve an element of power. It is incumbent upon members of the profession not to abuse, nor seem to abuse, the power with which they are entrusted, since relationships between members of the profession and students are always fundamentally asymmetric in nature. Such relationships may have the effect of undermining the atmosphere of trust among members on which the ACSM mission depends.

Members are encouraged to inform the harasser directly that the conduct is unwelcome and must stop. Members should report sexual harassment on the [web portal](#) as soon as it is discovered to prevent its escalation.

ACSM expects that members structure all programs and activities to be conducted without fear of harassment or retaliation, and without regard to sociodemographic characteristics or other non-merit criteria.

#### **I. Duty of members to report code of ethics violations**

Members and associates have a duty to report when there are reasonable grounds to suspect unethical conduct or harassment at an ACSM location or sponsored event or a violation of this code of conduct related to any ACSM activities.

#### **J. Process for receiving complaints and investigating ethical breeches or harassment charges**

ACSM has an online portal for reporting unethical conduct or violation of this code of conduct by a member or associate at an ACSM sponsored event or activity. [Access the form here.](#)

All reported allegations will be reviewed by the ACSM Ethics and Professional Conduct Committee. The committee may determine the need for more facts before rendering a decision regarding additional investigation. ACSM will maintain anonymity where possible to ensure a proper resolution of all reports of misconduct.

#### **K. Disciplinary Procedure**

Any member or associate of ACSM may be disciplined, suspended, or expelled for conduct which the Board of Trustees (Board) determines violates the code of ethics. A vote to expel a member or associate of ACSM requires two-thirds (2/3) of the members of the Board present at a regular or a special meeting to support the motion, and the motion can only be brought forward to the Board from the Ethics and Professional Conduct Committee after the individual has been informed in writing of the charges against them, an investigation has been conducted and the individual has been given an opportunity to respond to the allegations in writing. The Ethics and Professional Conduct Committee may recommend other disciplinary actions such as reprimand, probation, or censure to the Board and disciplinary action may be ordered following the

affirmative vote of two-thirds of the members of the Board present at a regular or special meeting or by electronic (digital) ballot provided a quorum of the Board returns the ballot.