

International Debate Education Association (IDEA) Code of Ethics

Introduction

The International Debate Education Association (IDEA) is dedicated to promoting youth development through debate and educational activities. This Code of Ethics outlines the principles and standards of conduct for all IDEA members, including staff, volunteers, and participants. It serves to ensure a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment that fosters personal growth, critical thinking, and active citizenship.

Purpose

The purpose of this Code of Ethics is to:

- Provide clear guidelines on the ethical standards expected of all IDEA members.
- Ensure the safety and well-being of all participants, especially minors.
- Foster an environment of respect, integrity, and professionalism.
- Promote the values of inclusion, diversity, and equality.
- Serve as a foundation for ethical decision-making within IDEA.

Scope

This Code of Ethics applies to all individuals involved in IDEA activities, including:

- IDEA staff
- IDEA volunteers (coaches, trainers, adjudicators, etc.)
- External contracted staff
- Participants in IDEA activities
- Any other individuals involved in IDEA activities

Ethical Principles

Respect for Individuals

IDEA values the inherent dignity and worth of every individual. All members must respect the rights, cultural diversity, and personal dignity of others. This principle is fundamental to creating an inclusive and supportive environment where every participant feels valued and respected.

- **Dignity and Worth:** All interactions must recognize and respect the inherent dignity and worth of each individual, ensuring respect and empathy.
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** The cultural, social, and individual diversity of participants must be respected. Actions perceived as disrespectful or discriminatory must be avoided.
- **Inclusive Language:** Inclusive language that respects and acknowledges the diversity of participants must be used. Language that could be seen as exclusive, biased, or prejudicial is prohibited.
- **Conflict Resolution:** Conflicts must be addressed promptly and fairly, ensuring that all parties feel heard and respected. Mediation and dialogue must be used to resolve conflicts and maintain a positive environment.

Integrity and Honesty

Integrity and honesty are the cornerstones of IDEA's operations. Members must conduct all activities with the utmost honesty, transparency, and integrity. This involves being truthful in all communications, accurately representing IDEA's capabilities, and avoiding conflicts of interest.

- **Truthfulness:** All communications and representations must be truthful and accurate. Making false claims or misleading statements about IDEA's programs, capabilities, or achievements is prohibited.
- **Transparency:** All actions and decisions must be transparent, providing clear and honest information to participants, stakeholders, and the public. Decision-making processes must be open and accountable.
- **Accountability:** Responsibility for one's actions and decisions must be accepted. Decisions must be explained and justified, and accountability for outcomes must be accepted.
- **Conflict of Interest:** Conflicts of interest that could compromise ethical judgment must be avoided. Any potential conflicts of interest must be disclosed to the appropriate authorities within IDEA.

Commitment to Excellence

Excellence in IDEA's activities is achieved through continuous improvement, dedication, and a commitment to the highest standards of quality and performance. Members should strive to exceed expectations, seek feedback, and engage in ongoing professional development.

- **Continuous Improvement:** Reflective practices and feedback must be sought to continuously improve skills, knowledge, and performance. Excellence must be strived for in all activities and programs while at the same time being aware of the personal wellbeing of all participants.

- High Standards: High standards for oneself and others must be set, fostering an environment of excellence and achievement. Participants must be encouraged to aim for the highest levels of performance and personal growth.
- Innovation: A culture of creativity and innovation must be fostered, encouraging new ideas and approaches to enhance IDEA's programs and activities.

Safety and Well-being

The safety and well-being of participants, especially minors, are paramount. IDEA has a zero-tolerance policy for any form of abuse, harassment, or exploitation. Members must prioritize the physical and emotional safety of all participants.

- Zero Tolerance for Abuse: All activities must be conducted in a safe and supportive environment. Concerns regarding abuse, harassment, or exploitation must be reported immediately.
- Preventive Measures: Preventive measures to protect the safety and well-being of participants must be implemented. This includes clear behavioral guidelines, regular safety audits, and training on recognizing signs of distress or abuse.
- Emotional Support: Emotional support must be provided to participants, recognizing the importance of mental health and well-being. Resources and referrals to professional support services must be offered as needed.
- Safety Protocols: All relevant safety guidelines and protocols must be followed, ensuring that activities are conducted in a safe and secure manner. Preparedness to respond to emergencies and incidents appropriately is required.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is crucial for building trust and maintaining the privacy of participants. Members must respect the confidentiality of personal information and ensure that data is collected, stored, and used in compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

- Respect for Privacy: The privacy of participants must be respected, and the confidentiality of personal information must be maintained. Confidential information must not be disclosed without proper authorization.
- Data Protection: Personal data must be collected, stored, and used in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and other relevant regulations. Data must only be accessible to authorized personnel.
- Secure Communication: All forms of communication, including digital correspondence, must be secure and confidential. Secure methods for storing and transmitting personal information must be used.
- Informed Consent: Informed consent must be obtained before collecting or using personal information. Participants must understand how their data will be used and have the opportunity to opt-out if they choose.



Inclusion and Non-Discrimination

Inclusion and non-discrimination are fundamental values of IDEA. Members must promote an inclusive environment where all individuals feel welcome and valued, and actively work to eliminate barriers to participation.

- **Equal Opportunities:** All participants must have equal opportunities to engage in IDEA activities. Discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or any other characteristic is prohibited.
- **Eliminating Barriers:** Efforts must be made to remove barriers that prevent participation. This includes providing accommodations for disabilities, language support, and culturally relevant programming.
- **Promoting Diversity:** A diverse and inclusive environment must be fostered by celebrating the unique contributions of all participants. The participation of underrepresented groups must be encouraged, and initiatives that promote diversity must be supported.
- **Addressing Discrimination:** Immediate action must be taken to address any form of discrimination or exclusion. Incidents of discrimination must be reported to the appropriate authorities within IDEA.

Professional Conduct

Professionalism is demonstrated through respectful communication, punctuality, preparedness, and adherence to organizational policies. Members should model positive behavior, maintain appropriate boundaries, and uphold the highest standards of conduct in all activities.

- **Respectful Communication:** Communication must be respectful and professional in all interactions. Language or behavior that could be perceived as disrespectful, offensive, or inappropriate must be avoided.
- **Punctuality and Preparedness:** Punctuality and preparedness for all activities and events are required. Materials and resources must be ready, and activities must be well-organized.
- **Adherence to Policies:** All organizational policies and guidelines, including this Code of Ethics, must be followed. Actions and decisions must be in line with IDEA's mission and values.
- **Role Modeling:** Positive behavior must be modeled for participants, demonstrating the values and principles of IDEA. Positive behavior in others must be encouraged and supported.

Alcohol and Substance Use

The consumption of alcohol during IDEA activities that involve minors is prohibited unless expressly authorized at specific event. Participants must not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs during IDEA activities. The use of illegal substances is strictly prohibited. Providing alcohol or illegal substances to others is prohibited. Concerns regarding substance use must be reported to IDEA staff.



Romantic Relationships

Romantic or sexually-based relationships between minors or any person acting as participants and adults or any person acting as coach, organiser or adjudicator involved in IDEA activities are strictly prohibited. Romantic relationships between staff and volunteers are discouraged to avoid conflicts of interest, and should be reported to the executive. Any concerns about inappropriate relationships must be reported to IDEA executive. Professional boundaries must be maintained at all times. Allegations of inappropriate relationships will be investigated thoroughly.

Responsibilities

Responsibilities of IDEA Staff and Volunteers

IDEA staff and volunteers play a critical role in upholding the principles and standards outlined in this Code of Ethics. They are responsible for creating a positive and supportive environment, ensuring the safety and well-being of participants, and maintaining the highest standards of professionalism.

- **Adherence to Ethics:** All staff and volunteers must adhere to the principles and standards outlined in this Code of Ethics. Ethical behavior must be modeled in all interactions and activities.
- **Training and Development:** Staff and volunteers must participate in training sessions on ethics, child protection, and professional conduct. Ongoing professional development to enhance skills and knowledge is required.
- **Reporting Concerns:** Any breaches of this Code of Ethics must be reported to the appropriate authorities within IDEA. Concerns must be addressed promptly and appropriately.
- **Support and Guidance:** Support and guidance must be provided to participants, helping them navigate challenges and achieve their goals. Staff and volunteers must be available to answer questions and offer assistance as needed.
- **Collaboration and Teamwork:** Staff and volunteers must work collaboratively with colleagues and other stakeholders to achieve IDEA's mission and goals. A culture of teamwork and mutual support must be fostered.

Responsibilities of Participants

Participants in IDEA activities also have responsibilities to ensure a positive and respectful environment. They are expected to adhere to the principles outlined in this Code of Ethics, treat others with respect, and report any unethical behavior or safety concerns.

- **Respect for Others:** All participants must treat other participants, staff, and volunteers with respect and courtesy. Behavior that could be perceived as disrespectful or harmful must be avoided.
- **Adherence to Rules:** Participants must follow the rules and guidelines of IDEA activities. Actions and decisions must align with the principles and values of IDEA.
- **Reporting Concerns:** Any unethical behavior or safety concerns must be reported to IDEA staff or volunteers. Concerns must be addressed promptly and appropriately.
- **Active Participation:** Participants must engage actively in IDEA activities, contributing to a positive and supportive environment. The participation of others must be encouraged and supported.

Operational Guidelines

Interaction with Participants

Interactions with participants should be conducted in a supportive and encouraging manner. IDEA staff and volunteers must maintain appropriate boundaries and ensure that all interactions are respectful and professional.

- **Supportive Environment:** A supportive and encouraging environment must be fostered where participants feel valued and respected. Constructive feedback and encouragement must be provided.
- **Appropriate Boundaries:** Appropriate boundaries in all interactions with participants must be maintained. Behavior that could be perceived as inappropriate or overly familiar must be avoided.
- **Equal Treatment:** All participants must be treated equally, avoiding favoritism or bias. Equal opportunities for participation in activities must be ensured.
- **Conflict Resolution:** Conflicts must be addressed promptly and fairly, ensuring that all parties feel heard and respected. Mediation and dialogue must be used to resolve conflicts and maintain a positive environment.

Data Protection and Privacy

Data protection and privacy are critical components of IDEA's operations. Members must ensure that personal data is collected, stored, and used in compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

- **Compliance with GDPR:** Personal data must be collected, stored, and used in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and other relevant regulations. Data must only be accessible to authorized personnel.
- **Secure Storage:** Personal data must be stored securely, using appropriate technical and organizational measures to protect against unauthorized access, loss, or disclosure.
- **Informed Consent:** Informed consent must be obtained before collecting or using personal information. Participants must understand how their data will be used and have the opportunity to opt-out if they choose.
- **Data Minimization:** Only the data necessary for the purposes of IDEA activities must be collected. Excessive or irrelevant information must be avoided.

Conflict of Interest

Conflicts of interest can undermine the integrity and credibility of IDEA's operations. Members must avoid situations where personal interests could conflict with professional duties and disclose any potential conflicts of interest.

- **Disclosure:** Any potential conflicts of interest must be disclosed to the appropriate authorities within IDEA. Decisions must be made transparently and in the best interest of IDEA and its participants.

- **Avoidance:** Situations where personal interests could conflict with professional duties must be avoided. Actions and decisions must be based on the principles and values of IDEA.
- **Impartiality:** Impartiality in all actions and decisions must be maintained. Personal interests must not influence professional judgment or decision-making.
- **Ethical Decision-Making:** Ethical decision-making frameworks must be used to guide actions and decisions. The potential impact on participants, stakeholders, and the organization as a whole must be considered.

Use of Social Media

Social media is a powerful tool for communication and engagement, but it must be used responsibly and professionally. Members must ensure that their social media use does not compromise the confidentiality, reputation, or integrity of IDEA.

- **Professional Use:** Social media must be used responsibly and professionally. Posts and interactions must reflect the values and principles of IDEA.
- **Confidentiality:** Confidential information must not be disclosed on social media. Personal data must be protected and privacy respected.
- **Appropriate Content:** Inappropriate or offensive content must not be posted. Social media use must be respectful and in line with IDEA's standards of conduct.
- **Positive Engagement:** Social media must be used to positively engage with participants, stakeholders, and the public. Relevant information must be shared, IDEA activities promoted, and constructive dialogue encouraged.

Training and Awareness

Training Programs

Training programs are essential to ensure that all members are informed about best practices in ethics, child protection, and professional conduct. Training for staff of IDEA must be completed within the first month of engagement and repeated annually, while other stakeholders of IDEA events must be made aware of key ethics and safekeeping document.

- **Ethics Training:** Comprehensive training on ethics, including the principles and standards outlined in this Code of Ethics, will be provided. Members must understand their responsibilities and the importance of ethical conduct.
- **Child Protection Training:** Specialized training on child protection, including recognizing signs of abuse, reporting concerns, and implementing preventive measures, must be provided.
- **Professional Conduct Training:** Training on professional conduct, including communication skills, conflict resolution, and maintaining appropriate boundaries, must be provided. IDEA staff and volunteers must be equipped to create a positive and respectful environment.
- **Ongoing Training:** Training must be repeated annually and updated regularly to reflect emerging trends and best practices. Opportunities for continuous learning and professional development must be provided.

Continuous Learning and Development

Continuous learning and professional development are critical for maintaining high standards of performance and ensuring that IDEA staff and volunteers are equipped to meet the challenges of their roles. IDEA must provide access to resources and opportunities for skill enhancement.

- **Access to Resources:** Resources and materials that support continuous learning and professional development must be provided. This includes online courses, workshops, and conferences.
- **Reflective Practice:** A culture of reflective practice must be fostered, encouraging members to critically evaluate their performance and identify areas for improvement. Opportunities for peer feedback and mentoring must be provided.
- **Recognition of Achievements:** Achievements in professional development must be recognized and celebrated. Incentives and rewards for continuous learning and excellence must be provided.

Enforcement

Reporting Violations

Any suspected violations of this Code of Ethics must be reported to the IDEA Board of Directors or designated complaints officers. Reports can be made confidentially and will be taken seriously.

- **Reporting Mechanism:** A clear and accessible mechanism for reporting violations must be provided. Members must know how to report concerns and feel confident that their reports will be addressed appropriately.
- **Confidential Reporting:** Reports can be made confidentially, protecting the identity of the reporter. Members must be encouraged to report concerns without fear of retaliation.
- **Serious Consideration:** All reports must be taken seriously and investigated promptly and thoroughly. Feedback must be provided to the reporter on the outcome of the investigation.

Investigation Procedures

The IDEA Board of Directors will investigate all reported violations impartially and confidentially. All parties involved will have the opportunity to present their case.

- **Impartial Investigation:** Investigations must be conducted impartially, ensuring that all parties are treated fairly. Bias or preconceived judgments must be avoided.
- **Confidentiality:** The confidentiality of the investigation process must be maintained. Information must only be shared with those who need to know.
- **Opportunity to Respond:** All parties involved must be provided with the opportunity to present their case. They must understand the allegations and have a chance to respond.
- **Thorough Investigation:** A thorough investigation must be conducted, gathering all relevant evidence and information. The investigation must be comprehensive and objective.

Disciplinary Actions

Disciplinary actions may include written warnings, temporary or permanent exclusion from IDEA activities, and reporting to relevant authorities. The severity of the disciplinary action will depend on the nature and seriousness of the violation.

- **Proportional Response:** Disciplinary actions must be proportional to the nature and seriousness of the violation. The impact on the individual and the organization must be considered. First line of reporting are the equity officers at any given IDEA event. They should, if appropriate raise the complaint to the level of IDEA executive. IDEA executive should, if appropriate raise the complaint to the level of IDEA Board of Directors.
- **Range of Actions:** A range of disciplinary actions is provided by IDEA statutes, IDEA Code of Conduct and IDEA Child safekeeping policy. The actions range from written warnings to exclusion from activities. Actions must be appropriate to the specific circumstances. All equity officers at IDEA events are at liberty to perform any temporary action based on their assessment and in line with best interest of event participants. All such action must be reported to the Executive. All permanent actions must be confirmed by the Board of Directors.
- **Reporting to Authorities:** Serious violations must be reported to relevant authorities, including law enforcement or regulatory bodies, as required by law. All actions must be compliant with legal requirements.
- **Support for Affected Parties:** Support must be provided for affected parties. The well-being of all individuals involved must be considered.

Right to a Fair Hearing

Individuals accused of violating this Code of Ethics have the right to a fair hearing. They will be informed of the allegations and given an opportunity to respond. Hearings will be conducted by an impartial panel.

- **Fair Hearing Process:** The hearing process must be fair and transparent. Clear information about the process and the rights of the accused must be provided.
- **Notification of Allegations:** The accused must be informed of the allegations and provided with sufficient time to prepare a response. They must understand the nature of the accusations.
- **Opportunity to Respond:** The accused must be provided with an opportunity to respond to the allegations. They must be allowed to present evidence and call witnesses if necessary.
- **Impartial Panel:** The hearing must be conducted before an impartial panel, ensuring that there are no conflicts of interest. The panel must include individuals with appropriate qualifications and experience.
- **Confidentiality:** The confidentiality of the hearing process must be maintained. Information must only be shared with those who need to know.

Cultural Interpretation of Events and Complaints

Recognising IDEAs global reach and cultural differences between members the IDEA Board of Directors has the discretion to interpret events and complaints through a cultural lens. This means considering cultural differences and sensitivities when evaluating verbal interactions and communications and allowing



for different conclusions based on those differences. However, this cultural consideration does not extend to violations involving relationships with minors and participants, or physical violence. Such cases will be judged strictly based on the established Code of Ethics, without cultural interpretation, to ensure the safety and well-being of all participants.



Review and Amendments

This Code of Ethics will be reviewed annually by the IDEA Board of Directors. Amendments can be proposed by any member of IDEA and must be approved by the Board of Directors. All members will be informed of any changes to the Code of Ethics.

Annual Review

An annual review of the Code of Ethics must be conducted by the IDEA Board of Directors to ensure that it remains relevant and effective. Feedback from members and stakeholders must be considered during this review process to ensure the Code addresses current needs and concerns.

Proposing Amendments

Any member of IDEA can propose amendments to the Code of Ethics. Proposed amendments must be submitted in writing to the IDEA Board of Directors. The Board must ensure that all proposed amendments are thoroughly considered and evaluated for their potential impact on the organization and its members.

Approval Process

All amendments to the Code of Ethics must be approved by the IDEA Board of Directors. The approval process must be transparent and accountable, ensuring that decisions are made in the best interest of the organization and its members. Once approved, all members must be promptly informed of any changes to the Code of Ethics.

By adhering to this structured review and amendment process, IDEA ensures that its Code of Ethics remains a living document that evolves to meet the changing needs of the organization and its members. This commitment to regular review and inclusive amendment procedures reinforces IDEA's dedication to ethical conduct and continuous improvement.

Handling Ambiguity

There is no way for a document like this to anticipate every situation, so this section explains the process in cases of ambiguity where the interpretation of the Code of Ethics is unclear. The IDEA executive can act on any such issue, after which the following steps will be taken:

- Consultation: The issue should be referred to the IDEA Board of Directors for clarification.
- Discussion: The Board will discuss the ambiguous situation in detail, considering the context and potential implications.
- Guidance: The Board may seek guidance from relevant experts or advisors to inform their decision.
- Decision: The Board will decide based on the principles and values outlined in this Code of Ethics, ensuring consistency and fairness.
- Documentation: The decision and the rationale behind it will be documented and communicated to the involved parties.
- Precedent: The decision will serve as a precedent for handling similar ambiguous situations in the future, ensuring consistency in interpretation.