



**BC ATHLETICS**  
**OFFICIALS ETHICS AND**  
**GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCT**

JANUARY 2018

© January 2018 by BC Athletics

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means: graphic, electronic or mechanical, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except for reviewers, who may quote brief passages. Any request for photocopying, recording, or storage on information retrieval systems of any part of this work shall be directed in writing to the publisher.

The Publisher

BC Athletics  
#2001B - 3713 Kensington Ave.  
Burnaby, BC V5B 0A7

Ph: 604-333-3556  
Fax: 604-333-3551

[www.bcatletics.org](http://www.bcatletics.org)

**Table of Contents**

Section 1: Introduction to Ethics and Guidelines	Page 2
Section 2: Groups who deserve care by Athletics officials	Page 2
Section 3: Ethics and Guidelines for Athletics Officials	Pages 3-11
Be a Benefit and Cause No Harm	Page 3
Be Accurate and Responsible	Page 5
Be supportive of other participants and loyal to our Sport organizations	Page 5
Act with integrity	Page 6
Act with Fairness	Page 7
Show Respect for Participants' Rights and Dignity	Page 7
Exhibit Professionalism	Page 8
Promote Safety	Page 10
Model Appropriate Health Habits	Page 10
Adhere to Legal Standards	Page 11
Protect Vulnerable Persons	Page 11
Section 4: BC Athletics Harassment Policy	Page 12

## **Introduction**

Because Athletics officials have a significant impact on athletes and the track and field community more generally, officials are in a position both to help and hinder different parties involved in the sport. To this end, officials will subscribe to and behave in accordance with the following values. They will strive to be a benefit to athletes and other parties and not harm anyone. They will perform their duties in a professional, responsible, fair, and accurate manner. Officials will show integrity in their decision-making during competitions, making decisions based on objective observations and a thoughtful understanding of the rules. They will respect the dignity of identifiable minority groups and vulnerable individuals. They will make appropriate accommodations with respect to vulnerable athletes within the bounds of the competition rules. Although officials will show loyalty to the Athletics community and its constituent members generally, they will be alert to conflicts of interest where their judgment as officials may be impaired by their specific loyalties to athletes or clubs. Further, officials will be alert to their own biases or personal psychological or health characteristics that may interfere with the quality or fairness of their official duties.

This document was first prepared for the BC Athletic Official Committee in 2011 by Bill Koch, and edited by committee members at that time and again in 2017 and 2018. Source documents included Codes of Conduct and Ethics in use by both sports and professional organizations. The values statements and guidelines are consistent with BC Athletics and Athletics Canada policies and codes of conduct.

## **Groups who deserve care by Athletics officials**

Athletics officials provide a service to several different groups. In any case where there are different groups whose interests must be considered, those interests will sometimes conflict and the officials must be thoughtful and consistent in how they balance these different interests. Groups are listed below in descending order of presumed priority. The priority of these different groups is important because officials will occasionally find themselves in situations where the interests of two groups such as athletes and spectators conflict (e.g., providing the best sight lines to spectators versus avoiding distractions for athletes).

---

## **BC Athletics Officials Ethics and Guidelines for Conduct**

---

1. Athletes. Their well-being during competition is the first priority for officials.
2. Coaches. Because athletes often depend on their coaches' on-site advice and support, officials should prioritize the access of coaches to their athletes while ensuring that athletes are not competitively disadvantaged or placed in danger because of accommodations to coaches.
3. Spectators. Because Athletics will grow to the extent that there is a base of spectators and because those spectators are often the supportive family and friends of athletes, officials must make the individual events spectator-friendly while ensuring that athletes are not competitively disadvantaged or placed in danger.
4. Non-official Volunteers. Because Athletics events cannot occur without a substantial volunteer base, officials must facilitate the enjoyment of volunteers and the growth of their understanding and volunteer skills while ensuring that athletes are not harmed. Officials have a duty to non-official volunteers to model ethical conduct as well as to diplomatically correct non-ethical conduct among non-official volunteers.
5. Clubs and Schools. Because community clubs and school teams are the bedrock of recruitment of athletes, officials must encourage the efforts of clubs and schools and help them to improve both their athletes and their sponsored meets.
6. Other Officials. Because a reasonable body of officials is necessary to maintain and build the sport, each official owes an obligation to make other officials' work rewarding and reasonably pleasant.
7. Sports Organizations. Officials represent BC Athletics and other organizations such as the National Officials Committee, Athletics Canada, and the IAAF. Officials must be positive representatives who reflect well on these organizations. As part of this representation, officials must not consume psychoactive substances such as alcohol or appear to have done so during competitions and must avoid recommending or providing medications to athletes.

### **Ethics and Guidelines**

When we register as officials, and volunteer to work at events, we agree to uphold these values, and follow the related guidelines listed in each section.

#### **A. Be a Benefit and Cause No Harm**

A primary value of officiating is to provide a benefit to those with whom one interacts in the competition area (athletes, coaches, spectators, volunteers, and other officials). A related value is to do no harm.

---

## **BC Athletics Officials Ethics and Guidelines for Conduct**

---

Officials will....

1. Conduct the event according to the rules with the welfare of the athlete in mind.
2. Strive to benefit each athlete in events he/she officiates. This includes helping very young athletes to understand relevant rules (e.g., correct starting stance in sprints), helping with equipment (e.g., starting blocks, throwing implements) and helping athletes at all ages achieve their best possible results.
3. Warn and strive to educate athletes in a polite manner if he/she witnesses athletes engaged in illegal or dangerous activity (e.g., unsafe throwing style or illegal starting position) during warm-ups for an event.
4. Extend the benefit of their experience to the less experienced officials and volunteers whenever the opportunity arises. This includes gently advising them about rules or about ways to perform their duties more efficiently and accurately.
5. Without hindering their own duties or the welfare of athletes, help spectators enjoy the event through suggestion of the best and safest observation areas, explain rules when asked, and otherwise act to enhance the entertainment value of the event.
6. Be respectful of and cordial to but not intimate with athletes, coaches, other officials, volunteers, meet organizers, and spectators.
7. The official shall work as part of a team, rather than emphasizing one's own knowledge or authority.

Officials will not.....

1. Intentionally disadvantage an athlete because of previous bad experiences with the athlete, his/her coach or parent.
2. Intentionally advantage an athlete because of either a pre-existing relationship as coach or parent, or because of previous favourable experience with that athlete.
3. Disqualify an athlete from an event without serious consideration of alternatives (e.g., warnings).
4. Needlessly distract, or otherwise interfere with athletes during their competition (e.g., through unnecessary conversation).
5. Unduly restrict the activities of coaches or spectators unless such activities constitute a rules violation or would harm the welfare of athletes.

### B. Be Accurate and Responsible

These values mean that officials should strive for accuracy and consistency in their officiating actions, as well being dependable and trustworthy in their work as officials. The latter implies that officials should accept the responsibility for their errors that may affect competitions, and work to increase or sustain others' (athletes, coaches, spectators, other officials) trust.

Officials will....

1. Arrive in good time for the competition and report immediately to the official in charge.
2. Be fully prepared to do the job assigned to them.
3. Be ready at appropriate start times for individual events they are to officiate.
4. Draw all the necessary equipment for the running of the event and ensure that it is returned upon completion of the competition.
5. Maintain up to date knowledge of measurement (e.g., timing systems) devices and procedures necessary in their specialty.
6. Correct their errors (e.g., measurement errors, mistaken calls) promptly and consult appropriately with other officials or supervising officials in the event of errors.
7. Complete all necessary officiating tasks before leaving the competition area.
8. Educate themselves on a regular basis about rule changes that may affect their specialty (e.g., false start rules).

Officials will not.....

1. Purposely evade responsibility for officiating errors.
2. Alter competition records to reflect inaccurate results.
3. Negligently destroy or lose competition equipment.
4. Needlessly delay competitions.
5. Leave competitions early without appropriate arrangements being made with the host organizing committee.

### C. Be supportive of other participants and loyal to our Sport Organizations.

Officials should exhibit loyalty and politeness towards BC Athletics, Athletics Canada, and other organizations to which the official belongs or is representing in the context of a competition. They should extend such loyalty and politeness to individuals involved in athletics at all levels.

---

## BC Athletics Officials Ethics and Guidelines for Conduct

---

Officials will.....

1. Speak to and about athletes, other officials, volunteers, coaches and representatives of sport organizations with customary politeness.

Officials will not.....

1. Publically disparage athletic organizations (e.g., clubs, schools, BC Athletics, Athletics Canada) or other participants.

### D. Act with Integrity

Integrity refers to firm adherence to an ethical code as well as to the absence of impairment or disability. This implies that officials will (a) not allow their judgment to be adversely influenced by personal loyalties or personal gain, (b) will adhere whenever possible to the specifics of this ethical code, and (c) will avoid officiating when their mental or physical competence may be impaired (e.g., through physical illness, emotional distress, or some other personal limitation).

Officials will....

1. Recognize when he/she has a conflict of interest in an event he/she is officiating and will take reasonable steps to eliminate such conflicts (e.g., have a different official start a race in which his/her own family member or athlete is performing).
2. Will recognize when his/her personal weaknesses (e.g., personal or family stress, proneness to irritability) may interfere with officiating and will take steps to prevent such interference.

Officials will not.....

1. Act to the advantage of athletes or clubs to which he/she has a personal connection.
2. Purposefully act against any of the values listed in this code of conduct.
3. Knowingly officiate in an event when he/she is intoxicated on any substance.

### E. Act with Fairness

Fairness refers to performing one's duties in an unbiased manner. This implies that officials will act in a manner that does not create advantage or disadvantage to any athlete or club.

Officials will....

1. Perform evaluations for other officials, when requested, in an objective way and without friendships or personal differences in mind.
2. Provide the same quality of advice or benefit of the doubt when dealing with athletes, independent of any friendships or other personal relationships.
3. Bear in mind their own possible biases when a potential conflict of interest presents itself (e.g., one's own athlete is competing in an event one is officiating).
4. When feasible, turn over their duties to another similarly qualified official when a conflict of interest presents itself and the stakes appear high.

Officials will not.....

1. Knowingly, and with available alternatives, make critical decisions in an event in which they have a personal stake (e.g., an athlete for whom the official is a coach or family member). This recognizes that at times there will be no other alternative – i.e., only one chief judge or starter available for an event in which one's own athlete is competing.

### F. Show Respect for Participants' Rights and Dignity

Officials have the duty to respect individual athletes or other parties at competitions, independent of cultural, ethnic, gender, age, or other characteristics of the individual that may set the other person apart from the official's own background and sense of familiarity. Although this is usually meant to prevent discrimination on the basis of gender, ethnicity, or disability (all areas of human diversity that are associated with human rights legislation), it also applies to areas of diversity such as age or experience in the athletic event or officiating task. Thus, it applies to treating very young (and thus immature) athletes and less experienced (and thus less competent) officials or volunteers in a dignified and respectful manner.

Officials will....

1. Respect the dignity of athletes, other officials and volunteers, coaches,

and spectators.

2. Work in a spirit of cooperation with other officials and not interfere in any way with their responsibilities.
3. Criticize in a constructive manner, and at an appropriate time, directly to the official concerned.
4. Understand that some athletes, officials, or volunteers, by reason of their youth, possible disabilities, or inexperience may require enhanced instruction or guidance, within the limits expressed in Rule 144 (Assistance to Athletes)
5. In such cases of youth, inexperience, or disability, provide instruction in a polite and considerate manner.
6. Treat athletes with equal respect and dignity independent of their ethnicity, gender, age, religion, nationality, or other personal characteristics unrelated to the athletic event.
7. Uphold the BC Athletics Harassment Policy (see Pages at the end of this booklet).

### Officials will not.....

1. Harass others (officials, athletes, coaches, etc.). Harassment involves engaging in any improper behaviour toward another person that one knows or ought to know would be unwelcome. Harassing behaviours can include written or verbal abuse or threats, unwelcome jokes, remarks or taunts.
2. Use the occasion of a rules infraction as an opportunity to publically embarrass or chastise an athlete.
3. Use the occasion of an officiating error as an opportunity to publically embarrass or chastise an official.

### G. Exhibit Professionalism

Professionalism means exhibiting a courteous, conscientious, and generally businesslike manner in the workplace (including volunteer workplace).

### Officials will....

1. Conform to reasonable technical standards of their area of practice (e.g., starter, track umpire, throws judge) as well as to any ethical standards that govern them.
2. Be conscientious and business-like (as opposed to cavalier) in carrying out their duties.
3. Conduct the event that they are officiating in an efficient and non-abrasive manner.

## **BC Athletics Officials Ethics and Guidelines for Conduct**

---

4. Arrive at the assigned competition area in a timely manner and not leave until the competition is completed and the competition area has been tidied.
5. Ensure that competition results are delivered to the meet secretary.
6. Be courteous (not irritable, not dismissive or insulting) to athletes, coaches, spectators, as well as other officials and volunteers.
7. Wear the accepted uniform as outlined by the National Officials Committee or by the organizing committee for the individual competition.
8. Wear the approved name tag to identify oneself.
9. Treat complaints, questions, concerns, or appeals raised by others (e.g., athletes, coaches, spectators, other officials) with consideration and politeness.
10. Act in a manner that will bring credit to the Athletics community and themselves, both within and outside the competition area and/or arena.

Officials will not.....

1. Talk unnecessarily to athletes, coaches, other officials, volunteers, meet organizers, or spectators.
2. Interfere with or distract athletes, including shouting across a competition area.
3. Coach athletes while officiating. (Officials who also coach or who are an athlete's parents must be especially aware of the need to demonstrate impartiality.)
4. Give technical advice to athletes beyond that required for a safe and fair competition.
5. Use profane, insulting, harassing or otherwise offensive language in the conduct of their duties.
6. Dismiss appeals, questions, or complaints from athletes, coaches or spectators in a dismissive or cavalier manner.
7. Target any other official, athlete, volunteer, coach, or spectator as an object of ridicule, harassment, or malicious gossip.
8. Use electronic devices, such as cell phones, for any purpose other than officiating in the field of play. Urgent matters that must be handled right away should be dealt with outside the field of play. (Cell phones are fine for time and meet e-schedules but not for personal photos of or with athletes other than for evidence for potential protests, future training purposes and other direct officiating uses. If in doubt, check with your Chief or Referee.)
9. Wear clothing advertising an individual club or other organization unless that clothing is part of a meet package issued to all officials.

10. Curse or smoke or drink alcohol especially in competition areas and preferably not anywhere at the event venue. (Officials should not have traces of tobacco or alcohol on their breath.)

H. Promote Safety

Officials will use their judgement and past experience to promote the safe conduct of competitions—safety to themselves, their officiating team, athletes, coaches, observers and others who may be at any safety risk.

1. The official contributes to providing a safe competition area in collaboration with the host organizing committee, coaches, athletes, and spectators.
2. The official shall pay attention to where she is in relation to competition areas and competing athletes to avoid interfering with or endangering athletes or herself. Referees, chiefs and team leaders will do the same for the officials on their team.

I. Model Appropriate Health Habits

This value presumes that athleticism is part of a generally healthy lifestyle, and that BC Athletics and Athletics Canada encourage not only athletic competition, but enhanced health in their members and in the general public.

Officials will....

1. Exhibit a polite and relaxed manner when conducting their duties.
2. When stressed or distracted by personal issues, seek help from other officials to ensure the event proceeds smoothly and their own distress does not disrupt the athletic event.
3. Seek appropriate professional help if their personal or emotional difficulties begin to routinely interfere with their officiating performance.

Officials will not.....

1. Allow their own emotional distress (e.g., irritability, feelings of time pressure, personal problems outside the athletic arena) to impact on their officiating behaviour.
2. Use tobacco products within the competition arena and/or competition area.
3. Enter the competition area and/or arena under the influence of alcohol or other mind-altering drugs.

### I. Adhere to Legal Standards

This means obeying the law (e.g., criminal code of Canada, human rights codes, and IAAF or other rules of competition).

Officials will....

1. Willingly and promptly consent to a criminal records search as required by the sport organization.

Officials will not.....

1. Provide underage athletes with alcohol
2. Provide an athlete with illegal substances.
3. Advocate or condone the use of drugs or other banned performance enhancing substances, classes, or methods.

### J. Protect Vulnerable Persons

In our society, we now recognize that some individuals (e.g., persons with disabilities) are more vulnerable to poor treatment because of their relative youth, mental or physical disability, or other characteristics that place them at a disadvantage. This code of conduct recognizes that such individuals may require special attention.

Officials will....

1. Use methods that maximize the understanding of rules and competition procedures of persons of diminished capacity. This may include repetition of instructions at the beginning of an event, including the guardian or coach of a vulnerable athlete in the instructions, within the limits of competition rules.
2. Be particularly cautious in establishing the understanding of rules and procedures with persons of diminished capacity.
3. Make reasonable accommodations to handicapped persons (e.g., providing visual commands for hearing-impaired track athletes).

Officials will not.....

1. Discriminate against vulnerable persons (e.g., Special Olympics athletes) either verbally or through their actions in a competition area.
2. Disparage or patronize vulnerable persons in any way.

### BC Athletics Harassment Policy

BC Athletics has adopted policies and procedures to ensure a safe and harassment free environment for all its activities, and those of its member organizations. The full document is available from the BC Athletics Association Office, and on the Association's web page, under policies (an abridged version appears below). All members, employees and volunteers are responsible for active support of this objective by:

- taking assertive action should they feel that they are being subjected to harassment.
- fostering an environment free of harassment by attempting to stop incidents of harassment whether there is a complaint or not.

### Questions and Answers on Harassment

Q: What is harassment?

A: Harassment is any improper behaviour by any person towards another, which a person knows or ought to know would be unwelcome. It may include written or verbal abuse or threats, or even unwelcome jokes, remarks or taunts.

Q: What should I do if I am harassed?

A: You may make your feelings known to the person responsible for the behaviour, or contact a BC Athletics Harassment Advisor (see contacts on the BCA web page).

Q: What if I am a minor?

A: A minor may be represented at all stages by a responsible Adult.

Q: What if I am wrongfully accused of harassment?

A: Wrongful or malicious accusation is itself a form of harassment. You should contact a BC Athletics Harassment Advisor

Q: What will a BC Athletics Harassment Advisor do if I complain about harassment?

A: The Advisor will meet with you, and may attempt to resolve the conflict informally. Other options, such as formal complaint will be discussed with you.

**BC Athletics Harassment Policy (Abridged)**

3.1 Harassment: Improper behavior by any person towards another which a person knows or ought to know would be unwelcome. This behavior includes comments, conduct or gestures which is insulting, intimidating, humiliating, hurtful, malicious, degrading, or otherwise offensive to an individual or group of individuals or which creates an uncomfortable environment, or which might reasonably be expected to cause embarrassment, insecurity, discomfort, offense, or humiliation to another person or group, including, but not limited to:

- a) written or verbal abuse or threats;
- b) physical assault;
- c) unwelcome remarks, jokes, innuendoes, or taunting about a person's body, sexual orientation, attire, age, marital status, ethnic or racial origin, religion, etc.;
- d) displaying of sexually explicit, racist or other offensive or derogatory material, sexual, racial, ethnic or religious graffiti;
- e) practical jokes which cause awkwardness or embarrassment, endangering a person's safety or negatively affecting performance;
- f) hazing or initiation rites;
- g) leering or other suggestive or obscene gestures;
- h) intimidation;
- i) condescension, paternalism, or patronizing behavior which undermines self-respect or adversely affects performance or working conditions
- j) conduct, comments, gestures or contact of a sexual nature that is likely to cause offense or humiliation or that might, on reasonable grounds, be perceived as placing a condition of a sexual nature on employment or any opportunity for selection, training or advancement;
- k) false accusations of harassment motivated by malice or mischief, and meant to cause other harm, is considered harassment;
- l) sexual harassment, as further described in section 3.2

3.2 Sexual Harassment: One or a series of incidents involving unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, or other verbal conduct of a sexual nature:

- a. when such conduct might reasonably be expected to cause embarrassment, insecurity, discomfort, offense, or humiliation to another person or group;
- b. when submission to such conduct is made either implicitly or explicitly a condition of employment/sport related activity;
- c. when submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as a basis for any employment/sport decision (including, but not limited to, matters of promotion, raise in salary, job security, benefits affecting the employee, team selection);

## **BC Athletics Officials Ethics and Guidelines for Conduct**

---

- d. when such conduct has the purpose or the effect of interfering with a person's work/sport performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work/sport environment.



BC Athletics  
#2001B - 3713 Kensington Ave.  
Burnaby, BC V5B 0A7

Ph: 604-333-3556  
Fax: 604-333-3551

[www.bcatletics.org](http://www.bcatletics.org)