

Whistleblower Protection and Anti-Retaliation Policy

Purpose

This Whistleblower Policy (the “Policy”) is intended to support a strong culture of integrity and ethical conduct at the USA Softball by encouraging, valuing, and protecting good faith reporting by athletes, directors, officers, employees, members, committee members, task force members, hearing panel members, and volunteers (“Affiliated Individuals”) of USA Softball of any alleged violation of any applicable law or policy or any potential ethics issue.

The freedom to speak up means being able to raise concerns in whatever way is most comfortable and effective and feeling free to cooperate in investigations that follow. It also means that USA Softball has zero tolerance for retaliation of any kind against people who speak up in good faith.

Violations Covered by this Policy

This Policy is for use where there may be a violation of:

- any applicable law, rule or regulation
- any USA Softball policy
- principles of ethics
- accounting or financial practices (e.g., fraud)

If an Affiliated Individual is unsure about whether a matter might be a policy violation or is unsure about their reporting responsibility for a particular type of matter, please start by reviewing the particular policy involved. USA Softball staff should refer to the Employee Handbook or reach out to the Chief of Staff for more information.

Also, keep in mind that some violations **must** be reported. Specifically, please be familiar with the requirements in the Safe Softball Handbook. And of course, if an Affiliated Individual suspects any criminal activity against a person or property, they should report this directly to law enforcement immediately.

Nothing in this Policy changes or replaces any mandatory reporting obligations under the SafeSport Code for the Olympic and Paralympic Movements – talk to USA Softball’s Chief of Staff if you have any questions about those obligations.

Reporting

No Retaliation

USA Softball has an open-door policy and encourages Affiliated Individuals to share questions, concerns, suggestions or complaints in the way and to the people with which they are most comfortable. This means Affiliated Individuals have options for how to report any concern about a potential ethical, policy, financial or legal violation.

USA Softball has zero tolerance for retaliation against people who make good faith reports of potential ethical, policy, financial or legal violations, or who cooperate with investigations of those reports. That means no Affiliated Individual may threaten, harass, discriminate against, or take any negative employment (where applicable) or participation related action (e.g., discharge, demotion, suspension, non-assignment, negative review) on that basis.

Any such retaliation can be reported as described above in the same way as any other policy violation. It will be treated as a violation this Policy and USA Softball’s Code of Conduct, and may lead to serious consequences including termination of employment or participation for anyone involved in retaliation.

How to Report

Affiliated Individuals may always report to an USA Softball staff member or their supervisor (if applicable). Or, the Affiliated Individual can make a report to the Chief of Staff. This person can also discuss the concern and help make sure it is addressed. Affiliated Individuals can also make reports to the Chair of Ethics Committee, Board member or other governance lead as designated by USA Softball.

Please remember that as a reporter, Affiliated Individuals do not need to (and should not) investigate the matter of concern or determine fault or how to fix it. The Affiliated Individual does his or her part by making it known so the right people can take action. Investigations or of reports are discussed below.

Acting in Good Faith

Just as we need to make sure that no one in our community is fearful of speaking up, we also need to make sure that no one in our community is fearful about false reports that might harm them.

With that in mind, anyone reporting a perceived ethical, policy, financial, or legal violation must be acting in good faith and have some basis for believing there may be a violation. Anyone that makes a false report knowing that it is false or that it has no basis is violating this Policy and the USA Softball Code of Conduct in the same way as someone retaliating against a good faith reporter. Such a violation may itself be reported under this Policy and it may lead to serious consequences, including termination of employment or participation.

Investigation

Once a report is made in one of the ways described above, the person receiving the report is responsible for getting it to the person who can best address the concern, based on the matter reported and in keeping with other appropriate policies. In all cases, USA Softball is committed to ensuring that no good faith report goes unheard or ignored.

The Chief of Staff is responsible for coordinating among these people so that reporters can be confident that reported concerns get to the people best positioned to act on them. The Chief of Staff will report regularly to the USA Softball Ethics Committee.

Confidentiality

In many cases, a reported matter will need investigation in order to reach the right resolution. Cooperation as a reporter or otherwise may be very helpful and much appreciated. Reports will be treated as confidentially as possible; some information may have to be disclosed to certain parties in order to conduct a thorough investigation, to comply with the law, and to provide accused individuals access to due process.

If a matter is reported anonymously and the reporter chooses to remain anonymous as it is investigated, USA Softball will respect that.

Follow Up

If an Affiliated Individual reports an alleged violation of ethics, USA Softball policy, or applicable laws, USA Softball will report back to the Affiliated Individual on the progress and investigation results as appropriate. And of course, the Affiliated Individual is always free to follow up to learn more from the person they reported to. Confidentiality and legal obligations may affect the details available.

For additional applicable policies, refer to the Safe Softball Handbook and/or Bylaws to review how follow ups to complaints will be handled under the auspices of the appropriate policy (Conflicts of

Interest, Code of Conduct, etc) and those policies have appropriate investigation procedures and appropriate checks to ensure that conflicted individuals are not involved in the decision making process.

If the investigation of a report that was made in good faith is not to the satisfaction of the reporter, then the reporter may report that, too.

Thank you for helping to ensure that USA Softball is a safe zone for speaking up in good faith on important matters.