



IRISH FOSTER CARE ASSOCIATION (IFCA)

Members & Volunteers Code of Conduct

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IRISH FOSTER CARE ASSOCIATION (IFCA) MEMBERS AND VOLUNTEERS CODE OF CONDUCT

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1. Introduction

The Irish Foster Care Association (IFCA) is a national organisation that supports foster families and the wider fostering community. Membership is broad based and includes foster and relative carers, social workers, childcare workers, academics and others with an interest in or who are involved in foster care.

The intention of this code is not to unreasonably restrict the rights of any member or volunteer, but rather to ensure that all members and volunteers are treated with dignity and respect in the course of their involvement with IFCA, and that all members conduct themselves in line with the principles of this code.

This Code of Conduct should be read in conjunction with IFCA's Constitution and other organisation policies and guides as may be applicable.

2. Principles and Purpose

This code is informed by IFCA's values of:

- The rights of the child.
- The role of the family in a child's life.
- Respect, compassion and kindness.
- Effective partnerships & open communication.
- Innovation and research.

This code seeks to underpin an environment where everyone is treated with dignity, fairness, and respect and where members and volunteers display integrity and honesty in their engagement with other members, volunteers, and employees.

The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to set out standards of behaviour expected from members and volunteers of IFCA and outline how witnessed misconduct will be addressed.

All members (including all board trustees) and volunteers should ensure that they have read and comply with this Code of Conduct.

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3. Conduct and Behaviour

Members and volunteers should maintain high standards of conduct and behaviour in their interactions with other members, volunteers, and employees through ensuring the following:

- Treat others with fairness, equality, dignity and respect.
- Act in a way that is in line with the purpose and values of the organisation.
- Act honestly, responsibly and with integrity.
- Communicate respectfully and honestly at all times.
- Never use abusive or vulgar language, or make racial, ethnic or gender-related slurs or derogatory comments at IFCA events of any kind.
- Never make unwanted sexual or physical contact with other members.
- Follow the organisation's policies and procedures.
- Seek authorisation from IFCA senior management before communicating externally on behalf of IFCA.

Members are expected **NOT** to:

- Bring the organisation into disrepute (including through the use of email, social media and other internet sites, engaging with media etc.).
- Issue a materially false or misleading statement, declaration, document, record or claim in respect of IFCA, its members, employees, or volunteers.

Where an individual is found pursuant to the Constitution of IFCA to be in material breach of the standards outlined in this Code of Conduct this can result in the member's membership being withdrawn.

4. Misconduct

Misconduct, for the purposes of this Code of Conduct, is the improper interference, in a material way, with the proper functioning or activities of IFCA, or those who work or volunteer for the organisation or any action which otherwise is disruptive or damaging in a material way to IFCA.

Subject to the definition above, the following shall constitute misconduct:

- Disruption of, or improper interference with, the administrative, social or other activities of IFCA.

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- Disrespecting any person in the organisation, directly or indirectly. This includes, through email correspondence, social media posts and other internet sites, and/or in engaging with media etc.).
- Obstruction of or improper interference with the functions, duties or activities of any fellow member, volunteer, or employee.
- Disorderly, disruptive, threatening or offensive behaviour or language whilst attending meetings as a member or representative of IFCA.
- Fraud, deceit, deception or dishonesty in relation to IFCA or its employees or in connection with holding any office in the organisation or in relation to being a member of IFCA.
- Sexual, racial or any other form of personal harassment or discrimination of any fellow member, volunteer, employee or trustee.
- Submission of vexatious and/or malicious complaints.

This list is indicative and not exhaustive.

5. Addressing Misconduct

In the first instance, witnesses to misconduct are encouraged, where suitable, to address it at the time the incident or behaviour occurs by drawing the persons attention to it and respectfully reminding them of this Code of Conduct, and expectations of behaviour. In most instances, it is expected that such an approach will amicably address the matter and serve as a reminder of the standards of behaviour expected.

6. Complaints Procedure

Complaints regarding persistent or serious misconduct of any member or volunteer should be set out in writing and submitted to IFCA senior management who will arrange for the examination of any such complaints received and determine an appropriate course of action in line with the IFCA Constitution.

APPENDIX 1

Disciplinary Procedure (Breach of Code)

Informal Discussion

Where IFCA identifies that a member (including for this procedure any board trustee or volunteer) has breached the IFCA Member's Code of Conduct (the "Code"), they will be notified by the Manager for Membership and Volunteers, where the issue will be discussed informally with them at a meeting.

Where an IFCA member identifies that the Code has been breached, they will have the opportunity to put their concern in writing and to contact the Manager for Membership for Volunteers.

The issue of concern will be outlined to the member, and they will be requested to adhere to IFCA's Code of Conduct for members. The member is entitled to bring a support person, with them. A written record of the meeting will be kept and given to those in attendance.

Formal Procedure (Stage 1)

Where the informal procedure outlined above fails to resolve the issue to the party's satisfaction, and the relevant members non-adherence to the Code continues, the CEO will write to that member, informing them of IFCA's concerns regarding their non-adherence to the Code of Conduct for members, setting out the breach/es of the Code, and a formal written warning will be issued to the member.

Formal Procedure (Stage 2)

1. If following the issuing of a formal written warning to the member, the non-adherence to the Code by the member, continues, the matter will be brought to the IFCA board of directors (the "Board"). The Board will make a decision as to the status of the relevant membership, which may include, without limitation, revoking a member's membership status.
2. Any decision made by the Board will be proportionate to the breach of the Code.

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3. The Chairperson of the Board will not be present during the Board's determination on this issue.
4. The member will be informed of the matter being put before the Board for decision, and will be invited to make a written submission, to the Board.
5. Following the Board's meeting, a prompt decision will be provided to the member.
6. The member will be offered the opportunity to appeal the decision of the Board to the Chairperson of the Board within one month of being informed of the Board's determination. The member will have the opportunity to make a further written submission directly to the Chairperson.
7. The Chairperson will consider the appeal and any written submissions made by the member and make a final determination on issue.
8. The member will be informed of the Chairperson's decision within one week of the Chairperson's decision being made.
9. Any decision made by the Board and/or the Chairperson will be made pursuant to IFCA's Constitution and proportionate to the breach of the Code.
10. The decision reached according to the above process will be final and binding on all parties.

7. Implementation and Review

This Members and Volunteers Code of Conduct was adopted by the Board of Trustees on [X] 2024

The Board of Trustees, through the Governance Sub Committee, will review the Code at 3 year intervals or as appropriate from time to time.