

## **USA Gymnastics' position on misconduct toward minors/athletes in general and the Infante case in particular**

USA Gymnastics is a national membership organization with approximately 90,000 athlete members and 17,000 instructor and professional members. These individuals take part in gymnastics programs nationwide. The organization also selects teams that represent the United States in international competition, sanctions domestic gymnastics competitions and promotes participation in the sports of artistic gymnastics, rhythmic gymnastics, acrobatic gymnastics, and trampoline and tumbling. USA Gymnastics does not own nor operate any gymnastics clubs or conduct any local programs.

USA Gymnastics expects its professional members and clubs to provide a positive and healthy environment for youngsters who participate in our sport. USA Gymnastics provides an education program, has a strong code of ethics and requires completion of a safety-certification program for professional members. The organization has also added a requirement for background checks as a condition of professional membership and renews background checks every two years.

As part of its commitment to children and families participating in our sport, USA Gymnastics takes seriously any allegation of misconduct or inappropriate behavior. The organization's bylaws include provisions for processing allegations and spell out the types of discipline, including termination of membership, which may be administered by the organization.

When USA Gymnastics terminates the membership of a coach or other professional member, that individual is permanently ineligible for membership in USA Gymnastics. This lifetime ban means the individual does not have any of the rights or privileges associated with membership in USA Gymnastics, including but not limited to participation in any event conducted or sanctioned by USA Gymnastics. In addition, USA Gymnastics makes such terminations public by posting a complete list of terminated members on USA Gymnastics' Web site. The list of terminated members also is published in official publications at least once a year and when someone is added to the list.

Because USA Gymnastics is a membership organization and not a licensing organization, termination of membership, the public display of that termination and a lifetime ban on participation in sanctioned events is the most serious action available to us. USA Gymnastics' jurisdiction does not extend to the business affairs of gymnastics coaches or clubs. Moreover, USA Gymnastics recommends that in choosing a gymnastics program or club, parents follow the same steps they would when selecting any activity for their children: talk to the owners and coaches, take a tour of the facility, observe several sessions, watch the interaction between coaches and athletes, and talk to other families who have their children in that club.

Unlike the situation that often occurs in medical and educational settings, USA Gymnastics is typically not notified of inappropriate behavior in person and immediately after the fact, when quick investigation might uncover critical evidence or prevent recurrence of dangerous acts. Instead, the organization is more likely to learn of an offense well after (sometimes years after) an alleged event occurred. Therefore, while we have urged, and will continue to urge, victims to contact legal authorities directly, we have not made such notification on their behalf and without their consent.

### **The Infante matter**

In the case of Stephen Infante, USA Gymnastics received a complaint in 1997 from adults who, years earlier, had been athlete members of our organization. That complaint was thoroughly investigated by USA Gymnastics, which hired a retired FBI agent to look into the charges. The investigation resulted in termination of Mr. Infante's professional membership, public notice of that termination and a lifetime ban on participation in sanctioned competitions and events. Since at least April 1998, Mr Infante's name has been continuously included on the published list of members terminated by USA Gymnastics.

USA Gymnastics' termination of Infante's membership has not prevented him and, regrettably, does not prevent him, from continuing to be involved in a gymnastics business. He remains on USA Gymnastics' list of terminated professional members and will continue to be. But beyond that, restrictions on his activities are dependent on the outcome of legal proceedings such as those now underway in Massachusetts. USA Gymnastics has cooperated fully by sharing its investigative file with prosecutors and it will continue to do so.

There are more than 107,000 professional and athlete members of our organization who do not want their industry tainted by a few bad apples. When such rare cases occur, the entire sport falls victim, as well as those directly affected. We hurt for those victims, and for our sport, and we will, therefore, continue to take every punitive action available within our jurisdiction, and cooperate fully with police and prosecutors if and when cases rise to that level.

**Links to referenced documents**

USA Gymnastics Code of Ethics (<http://www.usa-gymnastics.org/publications/technique/1996/9/ethics.html>)

USA Gymnastics Bylaws, Articles 9-10 (<http://www.usa-gymnastics.org/organization/2007/usag-bylaws.pdf>)

USA Gymnastics list of terminated members (<http://www.usa-gymnastics.org/membership/memship-noticeto.html>)