



CORE PROTECTION POLICY

Competition Integrity and Safeguarding Policy

Standards for honest competition, participant protection, reporting, and accountable response

A result is only worth trusting when the process and the people are protected.

This policy joins two responsibilities that cannot be separated in credible competition: protecting the integrity of rules, scoring, advancement, and official records, and protecting participants from abuse, exploitation, coercion, harassment, neglect, retaliation, and unsafe concentrations of power.

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FAIR PLAY STARTS WITH TRUST.

1. Purpose and Scope

The Open Competition Alliance requires sanctioned competition and OCA-connected activity to be conducted honestly, transparently, and with appropriate safeguarding. This policy applies to competitors, organizers, adjudicators, panel chairs, scorekeepers, scrutineers, safeguarding leads, staff, volunteers, contractors, coaches, mentors, vendors, media personnel, and other people whose role can affect participants or competitive outcomes.

Integrity and safeguarding are treated together because competition creates both incentives and power. Scores, placements, invitations, credentials, reputation, access, travel, money, and authority can all become sources of pressure when systems are unclear or unchecked.

CORE PRINCIPLE

Protect the competition. Protect the people. Neither responsibility excuses failure in the other.

2. Competition Integrity Standard

Every OCA-sanctioned competition must use a competitive procedure that can be understood, applied consistently, and defended afterward. The format may be conventional, highly specialized, or newly invented. The standard is not sameness; it is procedural credibility.

- Eligibility and entry rules must be defined well enough to administer.
- The competitive task, judging criteria, measurement method, or opponent structure must be clear.
- Scoring, ranking, voting, recall, proficiency, or other decision methods must be documented.
- Advancement, ties, penalties, disqualifications, withdrawals, and DNS situations must be addressed.
- Official roles and decision authority must be defined.
- Results must be verified before announcement and corrected when a genuine administrative error is established.

3. Prohibited Competition Manipulation

No person may knowingly manipulate the competitive process or official record. Prohibited conduct includes, without limitation:

- Altering or fabricating scores, ballots, brackets, advancement, eligibility, identities, qualifications, or result records.
- Offering, requesting, accepting, or arranging an improper benefit intended to influence a competitive decision.
- Pressuring an adjudicator, scorekeeper, scrutineer, organizer, or official to produce a preferred outcome outside an authorized procedure.
- Coordinating scores where the format requires independent adjudication.
- Concealing known scorekeeping, entry, eligibility, advancement, or result errors in order to preserve a preferred outcome.
- Interfering with result verification, audit records, protest procedures, or legitimate correction processes.
- Using retaliation, threats, assignments, access, or future opportunities to punish a good-faith competitive decision or report.

THE RESULT MATTERS. THE METHOD MATTERS TOO.

A competition loses credibility when participants cannot trust how the outcome was produced.

4. Published Rules and Consistent Application

Organizers must provide the rules and material competition procedures participants need to understand what game they are entering. Material rules should not be invented after the outcome is known.

Emergency changes may be necessary to protect safety or preserve the viability of an event. They must be narrow, documented, and communicated to affected competitors and officials before application whenever practical. Emergency authority must never become a tool for manipulating outcomes.

5. Qualified and Independent Officials

Adjudicators must have enough discipline-specific knowledge to evaluate the activity they are assigned to judge and must understand the applicable rubric, criteria, format, and scoring system. General adjudication training supports fair process but does not create technical expertise in every discipline.

Scorekeepers and scrutineers are custodians of the competitive record. They calculate and verify what the authorized system requires; they do not replace an adjudicator's substantive good-faith judgment because a result seems surprising.

- Judges should remain attentive and apply published criteria consistently.
- Independent panels should not coordinate scores unless the format expressly requires deliberation.
- Administrative corrections should preserve an audit trail.
- No official should use their role to obtain favors, private access, personal loyalty, or unrelated benefit from a participant.

6. Conflicts of Interest

Material conflicts of interest must be disclosed and managed. A conflict does not automatically require recusal in every small or interconnected competitive community, but hidden conflicts are unacceptable when they could reasonably call impartiality into question.

- Family or romantic relationships.
- Current or recent coaching, mentoring, or instructional relationships.
- Employment, ownership, business, sponsorship, or financial interests.
- Close personal friendships or active personal disputes.
- Direct competitive rivalry.
- Any other relationship that could reasonably affect or appear to affect impartiality.

7. Score, Ballot, Data, and Result Integrity

Competition data must be collected, stored, tabulated, verified, and published in a manner appropriate to the format. Submitted marks should not be casually edited after another score or aggregate result becomes known.

A judge may correct a clear entry error, omission, or wrong-ballot submission through an authorized correction process. A legitimate substantive judgment should not be rewritten after the judge sees how the field scored.

8. Result Verification and Corrections

Before official announcement, the designated result authority should confirm required ballots or measurements, calculations, penalties, tie procedures, advancement, and known corrections. High-stakes results should receive second-person verification when practical.

If a genuine error is discovered after publication, the official record should be corrected promptly. The correction should be documented and, where the public result changed, communicated clearly. Embarrassment is not a reason to preserve a false result.

9. Safeguarding Standard

OCA-sanctioned events must take reasonable, proactive steps to protect participants from abuse, exploitation, grooming, harassment, neglect, boundary violations, retaliation, and other significant safeguarding harms. Participant safety and dignity are conditions of sanctioning, not optional enhancements.

Safeguarding includes event design before an incident occurs: access control, supervision, communication channels, private spaces, travel, lodging, media practices, reporting routes, staff authority, and the concentration of power around participants.

10. Minors and Required Safeguarding Lead

For this policy, a minor is any person under 18 years of age. Every OCA-sanctioned event that permits participation by minors must designate at least one Safeguarding Lead who has successfully completed the OCA Safeguarding Youth & Vulnerable Adult Competitors course and assessment before serving in that role.

The Safeguarding Lead must be reachable during the event, understand the event's reporting and escalation process, know how to respond to disclosures and immediate safety concerns, and understand when outside authorities or emergency services must be involved.

11. Visibility, Supervision, and One-to-One Contact

Adult-minor interactions should ordinarily be visible, observable, and reasonably interruptible. Events should avoid unnecessary isolated one-to-one contact between minors and unrelated adults acting in event roles.

Privacy can still be preserved. Sensitive feedback may occur out of earshot while remaining in view of others. Legitimate exceptions for emergencies, accessibility, family relationships, personal care, or unavoidable logistics should use the least-isolating and most transparent reasonable option.

12. Communication, Photography, Private Spaces, and Touch

Communication with minors for event purposes should remain professional, role-related, and transparent. Secretive or sexualized messaging, requests to delete messages, routine private late-night contact, or attempts to move communication away from accountable channels may create safeguarding concerns.

Changing areas, restrooms, personal-care spaces, lodging rooms, and other privacy-sensitive areas require heightened access controls. Photography and recording must not occur where participants reasonably expect privacy.

Role-appropriate physical contact may be legitimate in many disciplines. Touch should have a legitimate purpose, be no more intrusive than necessary, and respect the participant's ability to object to unnecessary contact.

13. Travel, Lodging, and Event-Connected Social Activity

Travel and overnight settings increase isolation and dependency. When an event arranges or materially controls youth transportation or lodging, safeguards should address supervision, rooming, private meetings, adult-minor transport, alcohol exposure, emergency contact, and schedule changes.

Calling an activity “unofficial” does not automatically remove safeguarding concerns when event personnel organize it, promote it through event channels, or use authority created by the event to bring participants into the setting.

14. Vulnerable Adult Participants

For OCA safeguarding purposes, a vulnerable adult is an adult who may face increased risk of abuse, exploitation, coercion, neglect, or difficulty protecting their interests because of disability, dependency, impaired capacity, temporary circumstance, power imbalance, communication barriers, or another factor. This is an operational OCA definition and not a substitute for definitions in applicable law.

Safeguarding vulnerable adults must preserve dignity, autonomy, and adult status. Staff should speak directly to the participant when possible, use accessible communication, support decision-making, and avoid automatically treating a caregiver or support person as the participant’s owner or sole voice.

15. Prohibited Safeguarding Conduct

The following conduct is incompatible with OCA-sanctioned activity:

- Sexual or romantic conduct with minors.
- Grooming, deliberate boundary erosion, secrecy, or exploitation of authority or dependency.
- Sexualized harassment, unwanted sexual attention, or targeted sexual comments toward minors.
- Bullying, hazing, intimidation, coercion, threats, or retaliation.
- Exploitation of disability, age, money, transportation, housing, care, access, credentials, scoring authority, or reputation.
- Photography, recording, synthetic media, or image sharing that violates event rules, privacy, consent, safeguarding standards, or law.
- Pressure intended to prevent a person from reporting a concern or obtaining help.

16. Responding to a Safeguarding Concern

A safeguarding disclosure is not an invitation to conduct an amateur investigation. Event personnel should focus on immediate safety, factual documentation, appropriate escalation, and preserving the participant’s dignity.

Do not promise absolute secrecy, demand unnecessary detail, confront an accused person impulsively, stage a forced mediation, or require the reporting person to prove the concern before protective steps are taken.

OCA RESPONSE RULE

Protect. Listen. Document. Report.

17. Internal and External Reporting

Every sanctioned event that permits minors must maintain a documented safeguarding reporting process, including an alternate route when the concern involves the primary safeguarding contact or organizer.

OCA incident reporting is organizational. It does not replace reports required by law or immediate emergency action. Organizers and event personnel remain responsible for understanding and complying with applicable reporting obligations in the jurisdiction where the event and conduct occur.

18. Good-Faith Reports and Non-Retaliation

Good-faith reporting of competition-integrity, safeguarding, misconduct, credential, or retaliation concerns is protected. A report does not become misconduct merely because an allegation is ultimately unsubstantiated.

Retaliation includes threats, blacklisting, harassment, adverse judging, loss of assignments, exclusion, credential pressure, denial of opportunities, social intimidation, or other punitive treatment connected to a good-faith report, correction request, protest, appeal, or review participation.

19. Interim Protective and Integrity Measures

OCA or an event may take proportionate interim action while a serious concern is being evaluated. Measures may include changing an assignment, separating parties, restricting access, preserving ballots or data, holding a result, pausing competition, replacing an official, or temporarily removing a person from a role.

An interim safeguard is not necessarily a final finding of guilt. Its purpose is to prevent further risk or preserve the fairness of an ongoing process while facts are clarified.

20. OCA Notification and Possible Consequences

Serious integrity or safeguarding incidents connected to a sanctioned event must be reported to OCA when required by sanctioning terms, event reporting requirements, or other OCA policy. OCA may request information necessary to evaluate participant safety, credential status, event sanctioning, or future eligibility.

Possible responses may include guidance, corrective action, required education, formal warning, event conditions, role restrictions, credential suspension or revocation, sanction suspension or withdrawal, future ineligibility, referral to another appropriate authority, or other proportionate action.

21. Context, Proportionality, and Good Faith

Not every mistake, close call, awkward interaction, scoring disagreement, or poor decision is automatically an integrity or safeguarding violation. OCA considers context, severity, role, risk, pattern, impact, corrective action, available evidence, and intent where relevant.

At the same time, “no harm was proven” is not a reason to ignore a structurally unsafe pattern, and “everyone knows this person” is not a substitute for transparent competition or safeguarding controls.

22. Relationship to Other OCA Policies

This policy operates alongside the OCA Code of Conduct, Event Sanctioning Guide, Sanctioned Activity Safety Policy, event rules, credential requirements, and applicable law. More specific discipline or event procedures may govern technical details, but they may not be used to defeat OCA baseline integrity or safeguarding expectations.

Related OCA Materials

- OCA Code of Conduct.
- OCA Safeguarding Youth & Vulnerable Adult Competitors training.
- OCA Event Sanctioning Guide.
- Sanctioned Activity Safety Policy.
- Applicable protest, appeal, correction, incident-reporting, credential, registry, and discipline rules.

FAIR PLAY. SAFE PARTICIPATION. TRUSTWORTHY RESULTS.

This policy establishes OCA baseline competition-integrity and safeguarding expectations. It does not replace applicable law, mandatory-reporting duties, venue requirements, professional obligations, or more specific event and discipline rules.