



ISKF NORTHWEST REGION

1336 Bellevue Way NE #3, Bellevue, WA 98004, (425) 451-8722

Instructor Code of Conduct

This document is intended to explicitly define acceptable and unacceptable behavior for ISKF instructors with respect to their students. The goals are: (1) to guarantee that any student training in an ISKF dojo in the Northwest Region will be safe, (2) to protect the ISKF and the Northwest Region from liability, and (3) to confidently recommend training at all ISKF Northwest Region dojos to students who are traveling or relocating. In particular, we are committed to safeguarding children and young people, and we expect everyone who instructs and trains in our clubs to share this commitment.

Three instructor/student relationship issues are covered: sexual abuse, physical abuse, and verbal/emotional abuse.

It is the instructor's role to ensure the safety of all students in the dojo; therefore, the instructor needs to make sure that all assistant instructors and senior students understand and adhere to this code.

Background

The instructor/student relationship is complicated by the following factors:

Historical training methods. In the past, training methods that are clearly unacceptable by today's standards were common practice. There are stories of instructors hitting students for poor performance, or deliberately having senior students punish junior students for breaches of etiquette. These stories are still told and can cause confusion in students and instructors, causing them to wonder whether this behavior is acceptable today.

Hierarchical social structure. As a martial art, karate training is organized around a very hierarchical social structure. This power structure can lend itself to abuse, and the old stories and current popular media can also promote this socially unacceptable behavior.

Expanding limits and comfort zones. A benefit of karate training is that students are pushed out of their comfort zones. Good instructors can take students beyond their perceived physical and mental limits. However, it can be difficult to find the line between getting the best out of students and abusing them, as each student's perception of this experience is unique.

Sexual Abuse

Instructors are responsible for ensuring that the dojo is free from sexual abuse and harassment, whether perpetrated by instructors or by students in the dojo. Sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexually harassing nature.

This is especially an issue when there is a power differential between the individuals involved; i.e., the harasser is an instructor or a senior student. However, anyone consistently demonstrating this kind of harassing behavior can interfere with other students' performance and create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment.

Physical Abuse

Karate is a martial art, and it is understood that students will incur minor bumps and bruises along with sweat and sore muscles. However, students should never feel that they are in danger of injury from their instructors, or that pain or injury is being deliberately inflicted.

In no instance is an instructor to strike a student. To be clear, there is an old-fashioned practice of *toughening up* students so that they are accustomed to taking blows either for kumite or self-defense practice. This is not an acceptable dojo training method.

It is also not acceptable to use excessive training or conditioning exercises as a punishment.

Verbal/Emotional Abuse

Instructors need to impart strong feeling and motivation in the dojo. However, yelling at students or embarrassing or humiliating them is not acceptable or effective in the long term.

An instructor should not punish students physically or verbally for failures in results or even effort. Use of encouragement or creating a challenge or competition may better achieve the intended results. Ultimately, the level of effort expended is up to individual students who may be training for very different reasons.

When remedial actions need to be taken in the dojo; e.g., for breaches of etiquette, safety concerns, or disruptive behavior, especially for children, always be fair and respectful. An instructor should never act in anger.

Safeguarding Youth

All ISKF US Northwest Region instructors and assistants will complete the Boy Scouts of America online Youth Protection Training Course and retake it every 2 years. Completion of equivalent courses such as U.S. Center for Safe Sport, California Department of Social Services Child Abuse Mandated Reporter Training, and University of Washington Reporting Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect and Promoting Safe Interactions with Youth is accepted.

Classes where youth students train are open to parents and other adults involved in youth students' lives so that they can see how the instructor interacts with the students.

In addition to an instructor who is an adult, all youth classes will also have another adult present such as an assistant. If a second adult is not present, the adult instructor will talk with one of the parents/adults to have them present in the room during instruction.

Usually, corrections/adjustments can be achieved by the instructor's body language or a few quiet words. When touching is the best way to make a correction, the instructor will do this from in front of the student and gauge the student's response to their actions. Instructor will be observant when students prefer not to be touched.

Remediation

Suspected abuse or harassment by students or instructors is to be brought to the immediate attention of the Chief Instructor of the dojo, who will investigate and determine appropriate remedial action.

Such action may be as simple as pointing out the offending behavior to the offender and explaining how and why it is inappropriate. Conversely, it may be as severe as suspending or expelling a consistent offender from the dojo. If a student must be expelled for abusive behavior, the Northwest Region Board of Directors is to be informed so that other dojos can be warned.

Suspected abuse or harassment by the Chief Instructor of a dojo should immediately be brought to the attention of the Northwest Region Board Of Directors; the board will then investigate and determine appropriate remedial actions.

Approved: February, 2023

ISKF NW Region Executive Board of Directors:

Cathy Cline
Kris Haight
Joji Mercado
Beth Fournier
Stephan Mueller