

## **AKC Personal Conduct Policy (May 2024 Board meeting; amended May 2025)**

It is a privilege to be part of the American Kennel Club. Everyone who participates in the sport must refrain from conduct detrimental to the integrity of and public confidence in the sport of dogs and the AKC. This includes everyone that participates in any way in AKC events from exhibitors, judges, superintendents, show secretaries, club members, stewards, vendors, handlers, or anyone that uses AKC services.

Conduct by anyone in the sport that is irresponsible, dangerous, violent, or illegal puts others at risk, damages the reputation of others in the sport, and undercuts public respect and support for the AKC. We must endeavor at all times to be people of high character, show respect for others inside and outside our sport, and conduct ourselves in ways that favorably reflect on ourselves, our dogs, and the AKC.

This zero-tolerance policy is issued pursuant to the *Charter and Bylaws of the American Kennel Club, Inc.* as it relates to conduct prejudicial to the best interest of purebred dogs, purebred dog events or the AKC.

### **Expectations and Standards of Conduct:**

As participants in our sport, we must hold ourselves to a higher standard and conduct ourselves in a way that is responsible, promotes the values of the AKC, and is lawful.

Those convicted of a crime or subject to a disposition of a criminal proceeding (“Disposition” as defined in this Policy) are subject to discipline. Even if the conduct does not result in a criminal conviction, those found to have engaged in any of the following conduct will be subject to discipline. Prohibited Conduct includes but is not limited to the following\*:

- Assault and/or battery
- Sexual assault or other sex offenses;
- Violent or threatening behavior toward another individual;

- Inappropriate comments, conduct and/or contact regarding but not limited to race, color, religion, disability, national origin, age, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or are sexual in nature (“Harassment”);
- Illegal possession of a gun or other weapon (such as explosives, toxic substances, and the like);
- Crimes of dishonesty such as blackmail, extortion, fraud, money laundering, embezzlement, or racketeering (could be subject to the AKC’s *Unauthorized Use of Club Funds* Policy);
- Theft-related crimes such as burglary, robbery, or larceny;
- Crimes against law enforcement, such as obstruction, resisting arrest, or harming a police officer or other law enforcement officer;
- Conduct that poses a genuine danger to the safety and well-being of another person; and
- Conduct that undermines or puts at risk the integrity of the AKC, AKC clubs, club officials, AKC approved judges, AKC personnel, or anyone that participates in any way in AKC events. Judges conduct would also be subject to the *Integrity of Judges and Judges Misconduct*

\*Penalties for specific offenses as outlined in the *AKC Discipline Guidelines* shall be applicable.

When AKC becomes aware of a possible violation of this Policy and pursuant to the *Charter and Bylaws of the American Kennel Club, Inc*, AKC may undertake an investigation, the timing and scope of which will be based upon the circumstances of the matter. Any such investigation may be conducted by AKC personnel, independent parties, or a combination of the two. In cases that are also being investigated by law enforcement officials, the AKC may continue its separate investigation, and will work to cooperate with law enforcement to avoid any conflict or interference with the law enforcement proceedings. A failure to cooperate with an investigation or to be truthful in responding to inquiries will be separate grounds for disciplinary action. An accused’s refusal to speak to an AKC investigator under such circumstances will not preclude an investigation from proceeding or discipline from being imposed.

Upon receipt of information that a person has been charged or accused with misconduct pursuant to this policy, the AKC will notify the person that the privileges of the AKC may be withheld (“temporary referral”) in accordance with the, *Charter and Bylaws of the American Kennel Club, Inc*, Article XII,

Section 4. Further, AKC may consider the restrictions and terms placed on an individual pursuant to pretrial release conditions by the Court (“Pretrial Release” as defined herein) in evaluating information that a person has been accused of Prohibited Conduct under this policy (e.g. no contact with minors or no possession of animals, etc.). Accordingly, AKC will notify the person that they have been placed on temporary referral. Temporary referral affects all dogs registered with the AKC as owned or co-owned by that person. The temporary referral means that the person should not breed, sell, or transfer dogs with the expectation AKC paperwork will be provided. Additionally, awards will not be recorded for any dogs owned or co-owned by the individual that participates in any AKC events.

If AKC determines that no violation has occurred and no action will be taken to cause a suspension of privileges, the temporary referral will be removed, and all pending applications processed.

If the Prohibited Conduct is substantiated, AKC will follow the disciplinary process as set forth in the *Charter and Bylaws of the American Kennel Club, Inc.* In matters involving the violations of this policy, AKC *may* remove the individual from AKC registrations as a co-owner. This is not removal of legal title of a dog, rather it is removal of the individual from AKC recorded registration. In addition, an accused, in certain circumstances, may be prohibited from being on the grounds of AKC approved events.

\*\* Definition of “Disposition” – includes conviction, admission, finding of guilt, plea to a lesser included offense, plea of no contest, *nolo contendere*, best interest plea or similar type plea, the acceptance of or into a diversionary program, deferred adjudication, disposition of supervision or similar arrangement.

\*\* Definition of “Pretrial Release” – includes, but is not limited to, bond, conditional release, recognizance, etc.

This policy may be updated at any time and is effective immediately.