



(Approved by the AYCO/ACE Board of Directors November 2022.)

AYCO/ACE is a nonprofit 501(c)3 membership organization for circus students and educators, and does not require a background check to join. Instead, we require all members to follow our [Code of Conduct](#). We encourage all members of our community to file a grievance if you experience harassment or other violations of our code of conduct. However, as a membership organization we are limited in the ways in which we can respond to such reports. Please also seek support from relevant law enforcement or victim support service agencies, especially if you are concerned about potential retaliation. AYCO/ACE is not a judicial body and does not have the authority or capacity to investigate and stop criminal activity.

We respond seriously to all reported grievances, following our Grievance Procedure. Please report violations to our Code of Conduct by emailing report@americanyouthcircus.org. A member of our staff will respond to you to discuss the process moving forward.

Grievance Procedure

This Policy applies to all members and prospective members of AYCO/ACE.

Violations of our Code of Conduct will not be tolerated. Members in violation of the Code of Conduct will be subject to remedial and/or disciplinary action (e.g., suspension or termination of membership).

Grievances must be reported to AYCO/ACE within two years of their occurrence.

No third-party reports of violations will be accepted under this policy. Violations against minors may be reported by a legal guardian.

AYCO/ACE will review reported Grievances and assess whether (a) the complaint is about a current or prospective member of AYCO/ACE, (b) the report is being made within the required 2-year timeframe, and (c) the complaint refers to conduct covered by this policy. If additional information is needed to make a determination, AYCO/ACE staff will request this information from the person filing the complaint.

AYCO/ACE may be required to disclose information contained in a report or learned

during an investigation. Reasons for disclosure include, but are not limited to, relevant state and/or federal law; and mandatory reporting related to Child Abuse and Sexual Misconduct.

Each person involved in the Process is responsible for understanding what legal confidentiality requirements, if any, apply to their conduct.

To officially file a grievance against a member or prospective member of AYCO/ACE, please email report@americanyouthcircus.org with the following information:

- Your full name and contact information
- Full name of the person accused of violating our Code of Conduct
- Description of the alleged misconduct including dates and locations
- What portion of the Code of Conduct is alleged to be violated
- Names and contact information for any non-minor witnesses of the alleged misconduct

Once a grievance is determined to be applicable under this policy, AYCO/ACE will notify the member or prospective member accused of misconduct via electronic mail.

AYCO/ACE may suspend membership while investigating a reported grievance, or if we are made aware of relevant law enforcement investigations or legal proceedings. In the case of ongoing law enforcement investigations or legal proceedings related to a reported grievance, we may delay our investigation pending the outcome of these proceedings.

Our investigative process will provide equal opportunity to be heard for the person reporting the grievance and the person accused of misconduct. AYCO/ACE staff will gather information from both parties and any relevant witnesses to determine whether a violation of our Code of Conduct is more likely than not. In reaching this decision, we will consider factors such as corroborating or conflicting details, plausibility and relevance of information provided, and good-faith participation in the process. This investigation will maintain confidentiality for all parties to the extent practical.

If a member or prospective member is determined to be in violation of our Code of Conduct, AYCO/ACE will take appropriate action, which may range from education to suspension or termination of membership. Both parties will be notified of the decision.

Appeals may be requested by either party in the case of deviations from the procedures outlined in this policy or the emergence of new evidence relevant to the reported Grievance. Dissatisfaction with the decision is not sufficient grounds for an appeal. Outside arbitration or mediation may be sought by either party, but will not be financially supported by AYCO/ACE.