

ICF SELF-REGULATION AND ADVOCACY HANDBOOK

United Kingdom

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Introduction

Since the creation of the International Coach Federation in 1995, ICF leadership, Members and staff have been active proponents of the self-regulation of professional coaching. ICF's rigorous standards and credentialing and accreditation programs represent expertise and discipline in an industry that is frequently targeted for piecemeal regulation or wholly misunderstood by parliamentarians and regulators unfamiliar with the profession.

The goals of this handbook are to:

- Communicate basic, broadly held tenets regarding the regulation and monitoring of coaches, as espoused by ICF and its membership
- Look at the regulatory process and how ICF Members can help shape the landscape of industry regulation to promote and maintain industry quality
- Look at recent, real-world examples of instances where laws and regulations could have had a significant impact on ICF Members and their clients
- Show how you can become a resource to regulatory officials who are unfamiliar with coaching and how you can work with them to create the best regulatory landscape for both members and clients

Why Self-regulation?

There are 1447 MPs in the United Kingdom. Add to this number 400 councils and regulatory staff and the number of stakeholders in the governing and regulatory process grows exponentially.

These people are faced with being subject-matter experts on many topics in a given day. Constituents often bring up topics for action about which the official has little to no knowledge.

That's why associations like ICF are so important. ICF has strict standards and self-regulatory guidelines in place which makes it a tremendous source of instant expertise and guidance for elected officials. According to the 2016 ICF Global Coaching Study, 52 percent of coach practitioners said they believed that coaching should be regulated. Among those respondents (including both coaches and managers/leaders using coaching skills) not ruling out the prospect of regulation, 84 percent said that professional coaching associations were best positioned to regulate the industry.

Over the past 20 years, ICF has grown into a global organization, with more than 27,000 professional, personal and business coaches in 135-plus countries. Globally, more than 23,000 coaches hold an ICF Credential. ICF also has more than 130 Chapters in more than 70 countries.

ICF is dedicated to advancing the coaching profession by setting high standards, providing independent certification and building a worldwide network of accredited coach training programs. States, cities and other governmental units looking at a successful self-regulatory model should look to ICF rather than creating a hodgepodge of regulatory frameworks that may differ from locality to locality and country to country.

For any questions or concerns you may have about ICF regulatory issues, please contact ICF Assistant Executive Director Todd Hamilton either by email (todd.hamilton@coachfederation.org) or by phone (+1.859.226.4205).

Section 1: Why advocacy is important to ICF

ICF believes there is a solid, compelling case to be made for self-regulation of ICF Members and ICF-credentialed coaches.

ICF's foundations for self-regulation of coaching are based on:

- ▶ Core Competencies that define a professional coach's required skills and establish the foundation for the professional credentialing examination and accreditation for coach-training programs
- ▶ A strictly enforced Code of Ethics to which coaches pledge commitment and accountability to standards of professional conduct
- ▶ Professional oversight through an Ethical Conduct Review (ECR) process, which allows the public to report concerns and to be confident of objective investigation, follow-up and disciplinary action (including termination of ICF Membership or Credential) by an Independent Review Board (IRB)
- ▶ Professional coach credentialing, entailing a stringent examination and review process in which coaches must demonstrate their skills, proficiency and documented experience in application of the ICF Core Competencies
- ▶ Continuing education requirements for periodic renewal of coaching credentials to ensure continued professional growth and development
- ▶ Professional coach training accreditation, in which coach-training programs submit to review and continuing oversight to demonstrate their commitment to the highest standards for curricula and alignment with defined core competencies, faculty, structure, proficiency and ethics to support excellence in coach training
- ▶ Ongoing self-regulatory oversight initiatives to track the needs and concerns of individual and organizational clients on an international basis and to demonstrate an active commitment to meaningful, professional self-governance

In a 2011 article on the professionalization of coaching, David Gray of the United Kingdom's University of Surrey notes that "professional work is defined and redefined through the continuous struggle between different occupational groups. If successful, society (the State) grants professional groups a degree of autonomy in exchange for self-regulation—a promise that the profession will set up and enforce standards of professional development and ethical practice."

Gray adds that groups like ICF can offer a solid alternative to a completely new, state-created regulatory apparatus:

It appears ... the existence of an association like the ICF, with its code of ethics, has given some surety to state legislators that self-regulation is taking place ... and that state regulation is unnecessary. However, the fact that several US states have considered the regulation of coaching suggests that continuing self-regulation is not guaranteed.

Indeed, several states have introduced legislation to regulate coaching, requiring mobilization of ICF staff and leadership resources. But in all instances, the most important component of ICF's regulatory action is you, the member and practitioner.

ICF has staff members who monitor and respond quickly to legislative and regulatory issues. But, as famed U.S. politician Thomas "Tip" O'Neill noted, all politics is local.

Letters from Lexington, Kentucky, USA, to elected officials in London, Belfast, Edinburgh or Cardiff are necessary and important but they don't carry the impact of a detailed, reasoned letter from a constituent. The ICF staff does not vote in state and local elections where members are located. In short, ICF speaks authoritatively, but doesn't have the impact of someone, in a local district who lives, works, pays taxes, and votes in that area. You matter to your elected officials, not a big, faceless organization. To help yourself, your profession and your colleagues, you need to be an advocate for ICF and the coaching profession. **You** matter to your elected officials, not a big, faceless organization. To help yourself, your profession and your colleagues, you need to be an advocate for ICF and the coaching profession.

Examples of ICF Self-regulation

2016

6

cases were deliberated upon by the Independent Review Board.



Coaches were referred for remedial training.



Nearly **150** trademark and logo issues were addressed.

2017

10

cases were deliberated upon by the Independent Review Board.



Coaches were required to seek additional education, with credentials and membership also revoked.



More than **100** trademark and logo issues were addressed.

Section 2: Basic ICF positions/talking points on important issues

According to the best estimates available, nearly half of all coaches worldwide are members of ICF. This depth of membership allows ICF to be recognized as the global authority on the profession. As such, it is ICF's responsibility to ensure that professional coach practitioners have the best regulatory atmosphere available in which to practice their craft. There are some basic tenets that have emerged through ICF's advocacy efforts that have become building blocks of current and future advocacy efforts:

► Recognition of coaching as a distinct profession

ICF Members have presented testimony on this issue, most notably in the United States' District of Columbia. The main points of the testimony are:

- Coaching is not psychology
- Coaching is not backward-looking, but instead is rooted firmly in the present
- Coaching is **not** about pathology, or exploring past issues impacting current behaviors
- Coaching is about self-discovery, habits and the present tense
- A psychologist can be a coach, but a coach does not have to be a psychologist

Another fundamental tenet of ICF advocacy is that industry self-regulation is more effective, efficient and stringent than a patchwork of different state and local regulations. For example:

- Self-regulation is preferred to piecemeal and uninformed regulation by individual states
- Very few state lawmakers have experience with coaching, and less than a handful of coaches are lawmakers or have legislative experience.
- When tasked with discussing coaching and the regulation of coaches, lawmakers will be reliant on external stakeholders.
- As the saying goes, the squeaky wheel gets the grease, and those that are persistent in communicating their views set the tone for the regulatory discussion.
- ICF has a stringent, comprehensive system in place that exceeds the capacity and expertise of what states can create on their own.
- A system of individual regulatory systems will be confusing and duplicative and create a dual compliance system for ICF Members.

Other important points that ICF makes in communications with lawmakers include:

- Coaching supports personal and professional growth based on a self-initiated change in pursuit of specific, actionable outcomes.
- Coaching is distinct from psychology and requires highly specific education. ICF coaches have completed at least 60 hours of coaching education, with many exceeding 200 hours of education.
- ICF has taken measures to ensure that the public can rely on professional coaches.
- Coaching is taught separately from psychology at institutions such as the University of Portsmouth, University of East London and Northumbria University. The academic community recognizes the difference.

Section 3: Why ICF members should be involved in the advocacy process

In the past decade the United Kingdom seen a tremendous amount of government-sponsored activity to increase the involvement of people in decisions, policies and services in public life. For several reasons, the government of the UK has committed publicly to increase the involvement and empowerment of ordinary citizens. Supporting ICF policy initiatives is in keeping with this spirit of increased civic involvement.

By participating in the advocacy process, you will be viewed as:

- ▶ **A resource.** Someone to whom questions about the coaching profession can be directed by those not actively engaged in the profession.
- ▶ **A leader of your profession.** Speaking strongly and authoritatively about your profession positions you as an expert amongst your peers and potential clients. Advocacy and the attention it brings can have benefits that transcend the issue.
- ▶ **A subject-matter expert.** Being known as an authority on coaching and the self-regulation of the profession opens opportunities in industry education, consulting and thought leadership.

- ▶ **An agent to preserve the integrity of the coaching profession.** ICF's self-regulation system is comprehensive and strictly enforced. Coaches (those with the most expertise about the profession) are actively policing the profession and staying abreast of global trends. Piecemeal local regulations may result in the overall decline in industry quality and lead to a loss of public confidence in the coaching profession.

In 2007, the ICF Global Board of Directors approved the creation of the ICF Regulatory Liaison Network. Each ICF Chapter is encouraged to appoint a member as its Regulatory Liaison, serving as a point of contact and local eyes and ears for ICF on potential regulatory matters.

ICF Chapters have been encouraged to canvass their leaders and their members to identify those with an interest in, or knowledge of, regulatory matters. While it is beneficial to have the liaison be a leader in the local chapter, it's more important that they have knowledge and interest in regulatory matters as well as access to local, potential regulators.

As of 2018 the ICF Regulatory Liaison Network consists of nearly 70 members. The group has scheduled quarterly conference calls to share experiences and assist one another in addressing regulatory concerns.

Members of the Regulatory Liaison Network are encouraged to take a proactive stance by contacting their local legislators and potential regulators to raise their awareness of coaching as a profession and to explain the actions ICF has taken to ensure that high-quality services are provided.

For example, while there is no current effort to regulate coaching in Maryland, USA, an ICF Member who lives in the state wrote to his state senator and state delegate. His communication made them aware of what ICF does to maintain high professional standards. He also enlisted their help in monitoring and informing him of any future legislation that might impact the coaching profession. He found that representatives in the legislature were very responsive to his concerns and offered to be of help to him and ICF. He is a resource, a respected authority and a subject-matter expert for his local representatives and stands to have influence on issues that arise there.

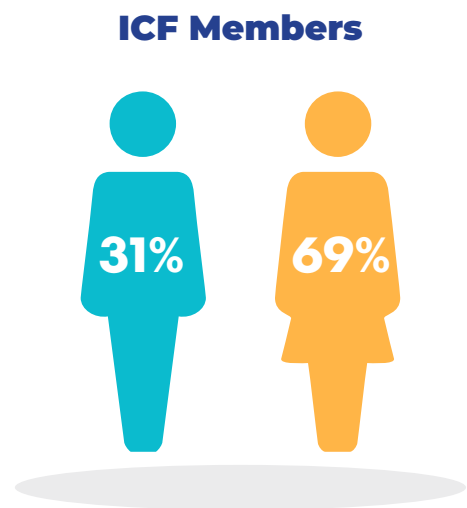
ICF urges each Chapter that has not yet appointed a Regulatory Liaison to do so as soon as possible and notify ICF Headquarters of the appointment. The new liaison will be invited to the quarterly calls and receive other pertinent information and materials.

Should any ICF Member become aware of legislative action or potential action pertaining to the regulation of the profession, they should contact their Chapter Leaders and ICF Headquarters. ICF Headquarters staff and the ICF Chapter will then coordinate their efforts to address the matter appropriately.

ICF Member Profile Information - Tell Your Parliamentarians About Your Industry

Age	ICF Members
34 years and younger	4%
35-39 years of age	9%
40-44 years of age	14%
45-49 years of age	18%
50-54 years of age	19%
55-59 years of age	16%
60-64 years of age	11%
65 years and older	7%

Highest Education Level Obtained	ICF Members
Primary level (i.e., completed education before university)	6%
Secondary level (i.e., hold a bachelor's degree)	29%
Third level (i.e., hold a more advanced degree such as a master's or a doctoral degree)	64%



Types of Clients Coached	ICF Members
High-potentials	76%
New hires	25%
Teams/workgroups	55%
Groups	28%
Government	17%
Nonprofit	26%
Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)	12%
I do not coach any of these types of clients	10%

Section 4: How a Bill becomes an Act

Most new laws passed by Parliament result from proposals made by the government. Proposals aim to or address problems. The process for a bill to become an act is generally as follows:

- ▶ **An issue or problem emerges on the government's agenda.**
The government's agenda is generally derived by the general election. Political parties compete for support from British voters by campaigning on their vision for the country and how they would change things. The political party that wins then forms the government and bases its legislative agenda on its election manifesto. However, where no single political party decisively wins the election—as happened in 2010—two or more parties may form a coalition government. They may have to negotiate a joint vision and agree on which new laws to pursue in the upcoming parliament.
- ▶ **Once in government, other events and influences also compete for ministers' attention**
Unexpected crises, such as an act of terrorism or a natural disaster, may require an urgent response. The UK's European Union commitments can (for now) lead to new legislation. Campaigning by special interest groups, private citizens or other politicians—often through the media—may raise the profile of causes or problems. More widely, the media's reporting on issues, government and Parliament all inform and influence Britain's political agenda.

▶ **Ideas for addressing an issue are considered**

Identifying an issue is one thing. Deciding what to do about it is another. Proposals for addressing goals or problems may come from a variety of sources. The political party is one. Governing and opposition parties are expected to have policies on a range of issues, such as taxation, health, and education. Recommendations for new laws may also come from public inquiries, civil servants or lobbyist and campaign groups. No matter where a policy idea originates, it normally won't get far without the backing of a government minister. This is because ministers can champion an idea to government colleagues.

▶ **Interested people and groups are consulted**

Even a minister's backing isn't enough to guarantee an idea will find its way to Parliament and become a law. Ministers normally - where time allows - shape and inform their proposals by consulting with experts, interest groups and people likely to be affected by the plans. Often, these interested parties are asked to comment on a 'green paper' - an initial outline of an idea. Sometimes a white paper will be produced, which is a firmer statement of the government's intentions.

▶ **Cabinet ministers must agree on which proposals to take forward**

Having consulted on a proposal, government ministers then aim to persuade colleagues to support the idea. The merits of various policies are debated in cabinet committees, made up of ministers from across government and chaired by a senior member of the cabinet. Even with approval from a cabinet committee, a proposal must still be selected by the committee responsible for drawing up the government's legislative program. The Legislation Committee makes the final decision as to whether a proposal will be presented to Parliament for scrutiny by MPs and peers.

▶ **Proposals are made into bills**

After a proposal is consulted on and approved by the cabinet, the minister responsible draws up instructions for what should go into the bill. Highly specialized lawyers - called parliamentary counsel - work to translate the principles outlined in the government's proposal into detailed legislation. All the bills the government intends to introduce in a parliamentary session are announced in the Queen's (or King's) Speech—the main feature of the near-yearly State Opening that opens each new session of Parliament.

▶ **Parliament considers and scrutinizes bills**

The Houses of Parliament consider proposals, called bills, most of which are introduced by the government. To become law, a bill must be approved by both MPs in the House of Commons and peers in the House of Lords. Bills go through a very similar process in both Houses.

PARLIAMENTARY STAGES

A bill may begin its journey in either the Lords or the Commons chambers. Any bills that relate to taxation begin in the House of Commons.

First reading

The bill's title is simply read out in the chamber. The bill is then made available to all members of Parliament.

Second reading

MPs or peers discuss the main principles of a bill. MPs may vote at the end of this stage, particularly if a bill is controversial. A bill in the House of Lords passes to the next stage without a vote.

Committee stage

A bill is then considered line by line by committees of MPs or peers. Amendments are proposed and voted on. Commons bill committees normally consist of around 20 MPs. The entire House of Lords often takes part at this stage.

Report stage

The bill, with amendments or changes, is reported to the House. All members can review the amended bill. Those not involved at the previous stage may suggest further changes.

Third reading

MPs debate and vote on the bill in its final form. In the Lords, further amendments may still be introduced.

A bill approved by one chamber is considered by the other

If a bill begins in the House of Commons—and is approved—it is then sent to the House of Lords, where it goes through the same stages. If the Lords were to make changes to the bill, it would return to the Commons for MPs to consider the Lords' amendments. Both the Commons and Lords must agree on the final shape of a bill before it can become law.

The Monarch's assent turns a bill into an act

With approval from the Lords and the Commons, a bill will also receive formal approval by the monarch, called royal assent. The monarch bases their approval on the advice of ministers.

A bill then becomes law and is described as an Act of Parliament.

Section 5: How to Influence your Parliamentarians

You've learned of an issue involving the regulation of coaching and alerted your ICF Chapter Leader, who has, in turn, contacted the Regulatory Liaison Network and ICF staff. After quickly researching the issue, you are asked to be one of ICF's advocates on the issue.

Key opportunities for lobbying and influencing are:

1. **Consultation:** Government often puts changes in policy or proposals for legislation out for consultation. Where there is a public consultation, the consultation document should explain to whom responses must be sent and by when. Often the consultation document will pose specific questions for consideration. When responding to a consultation it may be sensible to seek to provide responses to the set questions, but if these do not properly allow for a full response it is quite acceptable to go beyond these questions. This is also the stage where ICF involvement can be most effective.
2. **Pre-legislative scrutiny:** Sometimes the government may invite scrutiny on draft legislation.
3. **Parliamentarians:** Areas of concern may be raised directly with parliamentarians. Correspondence and/or meeting with constituency MPs in advance of the introduction of a bill provides a valuable means to highlight areas and level of concern to which MPs may need to react when the bill is introduced.
4. **Select Committees:** Select committees regularly review government policy and administration. Committees have pages on the parliamentary website giving information as to their future, current and past work. Providing evidence to a committee in the context of a

formal inquiry by that committee will usually be published, and the committee's report may influence current or future lawmaking.

5. **Prior to Second Reading:** The second reading debate of a bill will not discuss amendments. However, it is the time for parliamentarians to express significant areas of concern in relation to the bill. If a major issue is not raised at this stage, it may appear to be less of a concern if raised later.
6. **Public Bill Committee stage:** This is the first opportunity for parliamentarians to put forward and debate amendments to a bill. For any amendments to have real momentum behind them, it would be better if the area of concern (not the amendment) had been raised at second reading.
7. **Other stages of a bill's progress:** Amendments may be raised at later stages. However, after report there are restrictions on what matters may be returned to at third reading. Also, if areas of concern have not been pursued at earlier stages, these may have little or no momentum.
8. **House of Lords:** The foregoing comments on the stages of a bill's passage broadly apply to both Houses. However, since the government holds a majority in the House of Commons, it is often the House of Lords where the government may come under most pressure. Nevertheless, for reasons of momentum, concerns expressed in the Commons may prove helpful for peers who are interested in pursuing these or similar concerns in the Lords.
9. **Ministerial Statements:** Even where lobbying does not secure an amendment to the legislation, it may result in a statement by the minister. These statements may act as government commitments. In some instances, they may be used by courts to interpret legislation. In other instances, they may be useful for parliamentarians to return to in the future if the commitment has not been kept and there is a later opportunity to legislate. (Statements by front bench opposition spokespeople may sometimes also be important.)
10. **Other parliamentary procedures:** Other tools for lobbying government include parliamentary questions (PQs), early day motions (EDMs) and opposition or other debates.

Section 6: ICF Members in Action – Case Studies

Several times in the last few years, ICF Chapter Leaders, Members and staff have responded to inquiries from governmental bodies considering the regulation of coaching.

EU Charter

On June 29, 2011, ICF and the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) jointly filed with the EU a Professional Charter for Coaching and Mentoring as the benchmark standard for the coaching and mentoring professions. The Charter establishes ethical standards and forms the basis for the development of self-regulation. Since then, other coaching bodies have signed on to the initiative. View the Charter [here](#).

Portugal

Currently, work is ongoing in Portugal to help the psychological community better understand why coaching is distinct from those professions. ICF Portugal, in partnership with ICF Global, submitted our stance on the matter to the Portuguese Parliament. This should help better educate the parliament and the wider public on the distinction between the two professions and why there is room for both. No date for the formal hearing has been established but we will update that community as we received more information.

Italy

Over the last few years, ICF Italy has been working to establish professional norms for coaching. The first step was to establish norms for the profession (i.e., what coaching is); this was completed successfully. The next step is to establish norms for coach practitioners themselves (i.e., who is qualified to be a coach) and this is currently being deliberated. ICF Italy, ICF Global and other coaching organizations are collaborating on this effort.

France

ICF France, working with other coaching colleagues, established a definition of professional coaching within the country. This will assist with correct tax identification for coaches in France. They will no longer need to self-identify as trainers, consultants, etc.

Switzerland

In March 2015, the Swiss government approved a federal diploma for experienced coaching professionals. Depending on the success and the examination process of this diploma, it could become a valuable recruiting instrument for professional coaches in small and mid-size companies as well as government and administrative institutions. ICF Switzerland is working to ensure that the rollout of this diploma takes the ICF Core Competencies and definition of coaching into consideration.

Conclusion

Citizen advocacy is important for you, your practice, your clients and your colleagues. ICF provides you with support and tools necessary to interact with policymakers and ensure that you have the most favorable atmosphere in which to practice your profession.

The ICF Global community takes the ethics of professional coaching very seriously, and our robust system of professional self-governance ensures that ICF Members and Credential-holders meet high standards and that coaching consumers are well-protected.

ICF leaders and staff are ready to assist ICF Chapters and individual members in addressing concerns about potential or actual regulation. We hope that this handbook will be an additional resource for coaches in the USA to leverage in their pursuit of continued professional self-governance.