

Houston Area Road Runners Association (HARRA) Behavioral Code of Conduct



Approved by HARRA Board, 24-June-2026
REV D | 14-June-2026

About HARRA

Established in 1979, the Houston Area Road Runners Association (HARRA) is an umbrella running organization serving the Greater Houston area. HARRA is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation in the state of Texas and a chapter of the Road Runners Club of America (RRCA).

HARRA's mission is to empower and inspire all individuals across the Greater Houston Area to participate in the sport of running for enjoyment, health, well-being, and personal growth. HARRA fosters community connections, advocates for the welfare of runners, and supports inclusivity through our pillars of competition, charity, community, and commitment to safety.

Why This Code of Conduct Exists

This Behavioral Code of Conduct (the “Code of Conduct”) establishes the principles of respect, responsibility, and accountability that allow every participant to pursue their running goals in a safe, welcoming, and positive environment. It applies at all HARRA events and official activities and sets a shared standard for how we treat one another, engage online, and represent our community.

Our Community at a Glance

These four commitments summarize what HARRA expects of every participant. If you read nothing else, read this:

HARRA's Four Core Commitments

- Treat every person at every HARRA event with respect and basic human dignity.
- Run safely, follow the rules of the road, and compete with integrity.
- Speak up — report safety concerns and conduct violations to a HARRA representative.
- Represent HARRA and the Houston running community with pride.

Definitions

The following terms are used throughout this Code of Conduct:

Members: All dues-paying individual members, family members, and member clubs as defined under the HARRA Membership Policy.

Member Clubs: Running clubs or organizations that maintain an active HARRA club membership. Member Clubs are expected to support the standards of this Code when participating in any HARRA event or activity.

Guests of HARRA: Non-dues-paying individuals who attend or participate in a HARRA event as a guest of a HARRA member (adult or minor). Guests are expected to follow this Code but are not required to sign the member waiver unless otherwise required for a specific event. HARRA members are responsible for the conduct and safety of their guests, especially minors.

HARRA Events: Any activity, event, program, or function organized, hosted, sponsored, or officially supported by HARRA, including all phases from planning through post-event activities officially designated by HARRA. Informal gatherings, personal travel, and activities not organized or designated by HARRA are not considered HARRA Events.

HARRA Representatives: Any individual acting in an official capacity on behalf of HARRA, including board members, officers, committee members, and event coordinators.

Minors: Individuals under the age of 18. Parents or guardians are responsible for the safety, supervision, and conduct of all minors attending or participating in HARRA events.

Covered Participants: All persons subject to this Code, including HARRA members, member clubs, guests, volunteers, HARRA representatives, and any other individual participating in or attending a HARRA event or official activity. This Code uses 'participants' to refer to all covered participants.

Official HARRA Communications: Any communication made through a HARRA-managed channel, including its website, social media accounts, email, newsletters, and event platforms.

Standards of Conduct

The following standards apply to all covered participants at all HARRA events and activities.

1. **Treat everyone with respect.** Interact with others courteously, fairly, and with basic human dignity at all HARRA events and activities.
2. **Foster an inclusive, welcoming environment.** Conduct yourself in a way that makes all participants and community partners feel welcome, regardless of background, identity, or ability level.
3. **Keep it family-friendly.** Dress appropriately and avoid language or behavior that is abusive, offensive, or inappropriate for a family setting.
4. **Supervise minors in your care.** Parents and guardians are responsible for the safety, supervision, and conduct of any minor attending a HARRA event. Minors may participate only as permitted by applicable event rules and with appropriate adult supervision.
5. **Follow safe training practices.** During any official HARRA training activity or group run, follow event leader instructions, stay aware of others in the group, and make reasonable efforts to ensure no participant is intentionally left behind.
6. **Follow all traffic and pedestrian laws.** Do not take unnecessary risks with your safety or the safety of others while participating in HARRA activities.
7. **Be visible in low-light conditions.** During dawn, dusk, or nighttime activities, wear reflective or light-colored clothing or gear so you can be clearly seen.
8. **Respect all who support HARRA events.** Show appreciation for volunteers, officials, and partners who give their time to make HARRA events possible.

9. **Demonstrate good sportsmanship.** Recognize and encourage the efforts of all participants and competitors. Represent HARRA and your member club positively at all times.
10. **Compete with integrity.** Follow the rules of any event in which you participate or assist. Do not cheat or seek an unfair competitive advantage, particularly when wearing HARRA or member club branded apparel.
11. **Use social media and digital channels responsibly.**
 - a. Content posted on any official HARRA channel must not be abusive, threatening, discriminatory, harassing, or derogatory.
 - b. Members using personal social media are not acting on behalf of HARRA unless expressly authorized. Do not use HARRA's name, logo, events, or platforms to harass others, misrepresent HARRA, or damage the reputation of HARRA or the Houston running community.
12. **Do not harass or discriminate.**
 - a. Harassment or discrimination based on any protected status recognized under federal or Texas law will not be tolerated.
 - b. Do not yell at, taunt, or threaten physical violence against any member, volunteer, or spectator.
13. **Sexual harassment is strictly prohibited.**
 - a. Sexual harassment is prohibited, including unwanted sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and unwanted conduct of a sexual nature — whether visual, verbal, written, or physical.
 - b. Members found to be listed on a sex offender registry, convicted of a sex crime, or caught possessing, creating, or distributing child sexual abuse material will be immediately and permanently barred from membership and all HARRA activities.
14. **Handle alcohol responsibly.** Alcohol may be available at certain HARRA events. Adults who choose to drink must do so in moderation and must not allow their conduct to jeopardize their own safety, the safety of others, or the reputation of HARRA. Alcohol must never be provided to minors.
15. **Address safety concerns promptly.** If you observe a safety concern at a HARRA event, notify a HARRA representative or event official immediately.
16. **Report violations of this Code.** Violations may be reported in writing to prez@harrarunning.org or through [HARRA reporting form/link]. All reports will be handled with appropriate discretion.
17. **Ensure your guests comply.** HARRA members are responsible for ensuring their guests understand and follow this Code while attending HARRA events.
18. **Sign required waivers.** Members must sign an event waiver whenever one is presented — electronically or in person — in order to participate in HARRA events.

Enforcement & Disciplinary Framework

Reporting a Violation

Violations of this Code should be reported in writing to the HARRA President at pres@harra.org or through [HARRA reporting form/link]. If the President is the subject of a complaint or has a conflict of interest, the matter shall be referred to another officer or board member designated by the Board.

HARRA reserves the right to take immediate temporary action, including removing an individual from an event, when necessary to protect the safety of participants while a matter is under review.

Disciplinary Tiers

The table below outlines the range of corrective actions available to the Board, organized by the nature and severity of the violation. The Board retains full discretion in determining the appropriate response and is not required to proceed through tiers sequentially.

Tier	Applies To	Possible Actions
Tier 1 — Minor or First Offense	Minor, isolated, or first-time violations (e.g., inappropriate language, minor sportsmanship issues).	Written warning. Documented reminder of community standards.
Tier 2 — Moderate or Repeated	Pattern of behavior, moderate severity, or repeat violations after a prior warning.	Temporary removal from event(s). Restriction from HARRA communication channels. Probationary status with zero-tolerance conditions. Forfeiture of race series standings or awards.
Tier 3 — Severe	Serious violations involving safety, harassment, retaliation, discrimination, criminal conduct, or repeated violations after prior warnings.	Suspension of membership privileges. Permanent revocation of HARRA membership. Ban from HARRA events. Referral to law enforcement where applicable.

Criminal & Statutory Conduct — Mandatory Referral

Conduct that may violate local, state, or federal law falls outside HARRA's investigative authority and will not be handled as an internal matter alone. HARRA shall refer such matters to the appropriate authorities promptly and is not required to conduct an independent internal review before doing so.

Administrative Suspension

If a participant is under active law enforcement investigation or facing criminal charges related to conduct that poses a direct safety risk to HARRA participants, the Board may issue an immediate administrative suspension of all membership privileges pending resolution of the legal matter.

This suspension is a protective measure only. It does not constitute a finding of guilt, a final disciplinary determination, or a substitute for the legal process.

Jurisdiction Boundary Summary

The table below is a quick reference for which authority leads on different types of conduct and what HARRA's immediate role is in each case.

Violation Category	Primary Authority	Immediate HARRA Action
Criminal & Statutory Acts <i>(conduct violating local, state, or federal law)</i>	Law Enforcement / Courts	Immediate referral to appropriate authorities. Administrative suspension of membership privileges pending legal outcome. No independent HARRA investigation required prior to referral.
Online & Social Media Abuse <i>(on official HARRA channels or using HARRA's name)</i>	HARRA Board / Communications Committee	Removal of offending content. Restriction from HARRA communication channels. Written warning or disciplinary action per tier framework.
Competition & Event Integrity <i>(cheating, rule violations, abuse of officials)</i>	Race Officials / HARRA Board	Disqualification from event. Forfeiture of race series points. Temporary or permanent event ban.
Harassment & Discrimination <i>(all protected classes, bullying, intimidation)</i>	HARRA Board	Disciplinary process per tier framework. Law enforcement referral if conduct rises to criminal level.

Scope & Limitations

HARRA is a volunteer-based running organization. It does not routinely monitor, investigate, or conduct background checks on the private lives or personal histories of its members, unless otherwise required by law or adopted HARRA policy.

This Code applies to conduct at HARRA events, official HARRA activities, and official HARRA communications. Conduct occurring entirely outside these contexts is generally beyond the scope of this Code and remains the responsibility of the individuals involved and, where applicable, the appropriate legal authorities.

HARRA will consider reported outside conduct only when a report includes credible, specific information demonstrating a reasonable connection to HARRA events, activities, or communications.

A HARRA review under this Code is not a criminal, civil, or legal proceeding. HARRA does not determine criminal guilt or civil liability. Nothing in this Code limits HARRA's ability to contact appropriate authorities when there is an immediate safety concern, legal obligation, or significant organizational risk.

Finality of Board Determinations

When the Board has issued a final written determination on a complaint, that determination is binding on all parties. Subsequent complaints arising from the same facts, incident, or circumstances that were the subject of a prior Board determination will not be reopened or reinvestigated.

The sole exception is if a complainant presents material new evidence, i.e., information that was not reasonably available at the time of the original review and that is directly relevant to the prior determination. The Board has sole discretion to decide whether submitted information constitutes genuinely new evidence sufficient to warrant reopening a matter. A new complaint that substantially restates previously reviewed allegations, or that adds only context or interpretation rather than new facts, will not qualify.

This provision applies regardless of who brings the subsequent complaint. It is intended to protect the integrity of the Board's process, ensure fairness to all parties, and prevent the repeated re-litigation of settled matters.

Complaint Process

HARRA's complaint process follows the framework set out in the RRCA's *Steps for Addressing a Code of Conduct Complaint*, which is incorporated by reference and available through the RRCA. That framework will serve as a best practice guide when reviewing a complaint, but HARRA is not bound to its precise procedural mechanics where a simpler or more proportionate approach achieves the same outcome.

Non-Negotiable Principles

Regardless of how the process is administered in a given matter, the following principles apply in all cases:

- **Notice.** The accused will be informed of any credible complaint and the specific Code provisions alleged to have been violated before any final determination is made.
- **Opportunity to respond.** The accused will have a reasonable opportunity to submit information in their defense before any high-severity corrective action is taken.
- **No retaliation.** No party may retaliate against the reporting party, any witness, or any HARRA representative involved in the review. Retaliation is itself a violation of this Code.
- **Confidentiality.** Reports and reviews will be shared only with those who need to know in order to evaluate and resolve the matter.
- **Recordkeeping.** The Board will record its final determination in the meeting minutes. If membership is revoked, the individual must immediately cease all HARRA involvement. If probationary status is issued, HARRA will provide the member with written requirements for continued good standing.
- **Enforcement.** If a removed individual continues to attend HARRA events, HARRA representatives may alert local law enforcement as appropriate.

Member Release and Waiver

Electronic signature accepted via HARRA website and all HARRA-relevant online registration pages.

HARRA promotes healthy, safe running habits. We urge all members to take their time, be careful, and know their limits. Most of all, exercise common sense and be safe. All members must read and accept these terms of membership before participating in HARRA events.

This is an important legal document that may have significant consequences for you or those related to you. Read carefully and make sure you understand it before signing.

I agree that I am a member of HARRA, and I understand that running in and volunteering for organized group runs, social events, and races with this club are potentially hazardous activities that could cause injury or death. I will not participate in any club-organized events, group training runs, or social events unless I am medically able and properly trained. By my electronic acceptance — which serves as my signature — I certify that I am medically able to perform all activities associated with the club, am in good health, and am properly trained.

I agree to abide by all rules established by the club, including the right of any official to deny or suspend my participation for any reason.

I assume all risks associated with being a member of this club and participating in club activities, including falls, contact with other participants, effects of weather (including high heat and/or humidity), traffic, and road conditions, all such risks being known and appreciated by me. I understand that bicycles, skateboards, baby joggers, roller skates, rollerblades, animals, and personal music players are not permitted in club-organized activities unless otherwise indicated, and I agree to abide by this rule.

Having read this waiver and knowing these facts, and in consideration of your accepting my membership, I — for myself and anyone entitled to act on my behalf — waive and release HARRA, the City of Houston, the Road Runners Club of America, all club sponsors, their representatives and successors from all claims or liabilities of any kind arising out of my participation with the club, even though that liability may arise from the negligence or carelessness of the persons named in this waiver.

I grant permission to all of the foregoing to use my photographs, motion pictures, recordings, or any other record for any legitimate promotional purposes for the club.

I HEREBY AFFIRM THAT I HAVE READ AND FULLY UNDERSTOOD THE ABOVE STATEMENTS.

Participant Signature: _____

Date: _____

Signature of legal guardian (if participant is a minor): _____

Annual Renewal

This Code of Conduct shall be reviewed by the HARRA Board no less than once per calendar year. The review shall be completed no later than the last regular Board meeting of each year.

Review & Approval Process

Each annual review shall include the following steps:

- **Designation of reviewer.** The Board shall designate a committee or individual responsible for conducting the review and presenting recommended changes.
- **Substantive review.** The reviewer shall assess whether the Code remains current with applicable RRCA guidance, relevant law, and HARRA's operational experience since the last adoption.
- **Board vote.** Any proposed amendments shall be presented to the full Board for a vote. Adoption of amendments requires a majority vote of Board members present at a duly noticed meeting.
- **Publication.** Following adoption, the revised Code — clearly marked with its effective date and revision number — shall be published on the HARRA website and communicated to members within 30 days.
- **Record.** Each annual review — including the outcome, any amendments adopted, and the effective date — shall be documented in the Board meeting minutes and reflected in the Revision History table of this document.

Interim Amendments

Nothing in this section limits the Board's authority to amend this Code at any regular or special meeting when circumstances require an earlier update. Any interim amendment is subject to the same majority vote requirement and publication obligations described above and shall be incorporated into the next scheduled annual review.

Revision History

Date	Rev	Committee	Summary of Key Revision
1-May-2026	A	Chadwick H., Hans W., Susan C.	Original issue
11-May-2026	B	Susan C.	Revisions to preamble language and scope definitions
17-May-2026	C	Chadwick H.	Revised: TL;DR core values added; active language throughout; enforcement tier matrix; jurisdiction boundary table; redundant language removed throughout; complaint process restructured
14-June-2026	D	Terence B., Chadwick H.	Legal review, updated behavior framing and mitigated gaps on retaliation and review

Questions about this Code of Conduct should be directed to the HARRA President at prez@harra.org.