Certification Compliance and Disciplinary Procedures

Purpose

The principal purpose of the Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers' Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics is to promote responsible, professional, and ethical behavior by CCPDT candidates and certificants, help protect the public, and reinforce the public's confidence in the dog training industry.

The Certification Compliance and Disciplinary Procedures outline the process the Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers follows when a candidate or certificant allegedly violates the CCPDT Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics and any of its Policies or Position Statements.

Glossary

A. Administrator: the CCPDT staff person tasked with the day-to-day administration of the CCPDT's operations.
B. Appeals Panel: CCPDT Board members who have not previously sat as triers of fact in the original Complaint and who did not participate in the Executive Committee decision under appeal.
C. CCPDT: Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers
D. CCC: Certification Compliance Committee
E. Chair: Certification Compliance Committee Chairperson
F. Complainant: The individual filing the Complaint
G. Complaint: The document containing the allegations and supporting evidence of one or more violations of the CCPDT Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics and any of its Policies or Position Statements
H. CRP: Complaint Review Panel, which serves as the trier of fact; the panel is composed of three CCPDT-certified subject matter experts
I. Procedures: Certification Compliance and Disciplinary Procedures
J. Respondent: The individual named who is the subject of the Complaint.

K. Notice of Complaint: The written summary of allegations and evidence presented to the Respondent

L. Notice of Decision: The written summary of facts and the conclusions presented to the Executive Committee for consideration.

M. SME: Subject Matter Experts, which may include board members, certificant volunteers, non-certificant volunteers deemed expert in their field and necessary to fulfill the purpose.

N. Summary of Allegations: the written summary of initial findings created by the CRP, which determines whether the evidence supports conducting a full inquiry.

Application of Policies

A. No individual is eligible to apply for or to maintain a CCPDT certification unless the individual complies with all CCPDT Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics, Policies, and Position Statements. Each individual bears the burden of demonstrating and maintaining compliance at all times.

B. The CCPDT reserves the right to suspend certification, revoke certification permanently, or to take other disciplinary action upon presentation of sufficient evidence to demonstrate that a candidate or certificant violated the CCPDT Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics or any CCPDT Policies or Position Statements, or made a material misrepresentation as part of their application for certification.

C. A certificant subsequently convicted of a felony is subject to immediate revocation of their certification without further hearing. An individual convicted of any offense enumerated in the CCPDT Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics, including cruelty, abuse, neglect of animals or humans; crimes against humanity; violence against animals or humans; or any crime directly related to their certification, is ineligible to apply for certification until release from confinement and completion of any probationary period.

D. The CCPDT Board of Directors appoints the CCC to consider and investigate alleged violations of any applicable CCPDT Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics, Policies, and Position Statements.

    1. The CCC is composed of the Chair and SMEs certified by the CCPDT. CCPDT Board members may serve on the CCC.
    2. The CCC may consult with SMEs not certified by the CCPDT when their individual experience and education lend necessary support to the Complaint.
    3. Board members and SMEs who have a demonstrable relationship, personal bias, or another actual or perceived conflict of interest regarding a party to any Complaint may not serve on a CCC review panel or consult with the CCC on that Complaint.

4. The Chair shall recuse themselves in the event of a perceived or real conflict of interest with respect to the Complaint, the matter(s) raised therein, the Complainant, or the Respondent.

E. The Chair will ensure that a record is kept of all proceedings related to the Complaint and serve as an advisory member of all review panels to hold committee members accountable to these procedures.

Filing a Complaint

A. Any person with relevant, credible, and verifiable evidence that a CCPDT candidate or certificant has committed a violation of the CCPDT Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics or any CCPDT Policies or Position Statements may submit a Complaint.

B. The Complainant must submit a Complaint to the CCPDT by using the Complaint form on the CCPDT website. The CCPDT Administrator forwards the Complaint to the Chair.

C. The Complainant must provide the following information to file a Complaint:
   1. The name, mailing address, email address, and phone number of both the Complainant and the Respondent (anonymous Complaints are not accepted);
   2. the specific facts regarding the alleged conduct, including where the violation is alleged to have occurred, who was involved, and the circumstances surrounding the incident(s);
   3. which principle(s) listed in the Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics or the CCPDT policy or policies the Respondent is alleged to have violated; and,
   4. Emails, voicemails, text messages, photographs, social media postings, recorded video or audio, and any other written documentation to support the allegations of the Complaint.

D. The Complainant must disclose any administrative or legal action they may have initiated regarding the Complaint.

Receipt and Initial Review of a Complaint

A. The Chair will review the Complaint for sufficiency to confirm that it meets the minimum requirements for filing a Complaint as listed in section IV C.

B. If, upon a review of the Complaint, the Chair determines that it concerns a matter that likely poses an immediate and substantial risk of harm, the Chair may suspend the Respondent's certification pending resolution of the Complaint.

C. The Chair will appoint a CRP to conduct an initial review of the evidence provided in the Complaint as it relates to the CCPDT Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics and any Policies and Position Statements within five (5) business days of receiving the Complaint.

D. The CRP will complete an initial review of the evidence and submit a brief Summary of Allegations outlining its findings to the Chair within ten (10) business days of receiving the Complaint.
    1. If the CRP determines that the allegations are frivolous, or the evidence fails to support a violation of the CCPDT Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics, Policies, or Position Statements, then the Chair will notify the Complainant via email of that finding and case closure, notify the CCPDT Board of the decision and the notification to the Complainant, the panel will disband, and the case will be closed. The Respondent is not notified of the Complaint in this instance.

Complaint Investigation Procedure

A. The CRP will review the Complaint and gather additional information from the Complainant, public information sources (such as social media postings and websites), and witnesses, as needed. The CRP will prepare a Notice of Complaint, which shall include a statement of allegations summarizing the alleged violations of the CCPDT Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics, Policies, and Position Statements, within 15 business days of receipt of the Complaint, with an extension possible with permission from the Chair.
B. The Chair will submit the Notice of Complaint, along with any supporting evidence, to the Respondent via email within 30 business days of receipt of the Complaint when the CRP finds sufficient evidence to support the allegations of the Complaint, unless the Chair has granted an extension of time to the CRP. In all but extraordinary circumstances, the Chair shall submit Notice of Complaint to the Respondent, where warranted, within 45 business days of the receipt of the Complaint.[1]
C. The Respondent has 30 days from receipt of the Notice of Complaint to respond to the allegations of the Complaint and to provide any relevant evidence in response to the Complaint. The Respondent shall submit any response and corresponding evidence via email to the Chair.
    1. The Chair will forward the Respondent's answer to the CRP.
    2. The Respondent may submit documentary, photographic and video evidence, witness statements, and any other appropriate evidence to support the answer.
    3. If the Respondent submits any witness statement into evidence, such statement must be written and must contain the name, mailing address, email address, and telephone number of the witness, as well as the CCPDT's attestation of truthfulness statement signed by the witness.

[1] Extraordinary circumstances could include such instances as an inordinate number of complaints or allegations against one Respondent, unexpected personal responsibilities of the Chair or a CRP member, and such other unpredictable circumstances that may arise, with all due care given to the timely notification to the Respondent of the allegations of the Complaint(s) against him or her.

4. The Respondent may request an additional period of time to answer the Notice of Complaint with proper notice and sufficient reason for the delay to the Chair, which the Chair may grant. This extra time allotment is not to exceed ten days, barring extraordinary circumstances.
5. In the event that the Respondent fails to respond to the Statement of Allegations within the 30-day time period, the CRP will recommend a default judgment to the Chair.
6. The CRP may, at its discretion, contact any witness for either party concerning their statements. The CRP will record any verbal conversations with the witnesses, but in every case the CRP will endeavor to conduct a written hearing. The CRP cannot accept the witness's evidence if the witness refuses to permit the recording of a phone or video conversation. The Respondent will receive a record of any such conversation.

D. If necessary for thorough consideration of the Complaint, the CRP may ask additional questions of the Respondent and may provide up to another 30 business days for responses. Failure to respond to questions propounded by the CRP on the part of the Respondent is considered grounds for Sanction.
E. After the CRP receives the Respondent's answer or the time to answer has expired, the CRP may ask additional questions of the Complainant if necessary. In this event, CRP may, if warranted, provide a summary of the Respondent's answers and evidence to the Complainant. The Complainant has 15 days to respond to any questions or to provide any additional evidence, as it pertains to the additional questions, to the CRP. If requested, the CRP may grant the Complainant an additional 15 days. If the Complainant fails to answer the request for additional information, the CRP may vote to dismiss the Complaint.

Decision-Making Process

A. Within 45 business days of the receipt of all responses and not more than 90 business days after publication of the Notice of Complaint, the CRP will prepare a Recommendation summarizing the CRP's findings regarding the allegations and the evidence supporting them.
    1. The Recommendation will include a Statement of Facts, a Statement of Findings, and a proposed resolution if the evidence supports a violation of the CCPDT Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics or any of its Policies or Position Statements. The CRP may also recommend specific sanctions where appropriate.
    2. If the evidence does not demonstrate a violation of the CCPDT Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics or any of its Policies or Position Statements, then the report must recommend dismissal of the Complaint
    3. Decisions by the CRP require a majority vote.

B. The Chair will review the CRP's Recommendation before forwarding it to the CCPDT Executive Committee for consideration. This review period should not exceed three (3) business days.
C. Once the CRP Recommendation is forwarded to the Executive Committee, the committee will have 14 business days to review the document and all attendant evidence and render a decision on the Complaint.
    1. Executive Committee decisions require a majority vote of committee members. If the Executive Committee cannot break a tie, the Chair or a neutral Board member will cast the deciding vote on the Recommendation.
    2. If the CRP cannot find an acceptable resolution, the Executive Committee will determine a recommendation, in consultation with the Chair.
    3. The Executive Committee may request that the CRP reconsider its recommendation based on specific reasoning articulated to the CRP.
    4. The Executive Committee will notify the Chair of its decision
D. Decisions by the CCC require a majority vote of CRP members.
    1. The standard of proof in a CCC Complaint is a preponderance of the evidence.[2] This standard requires that evidence presented by the Complainant and as a result of investigation must be determined by the panel to be more credible and convincing than the evidence presented by the Respondent. If the evidence in support of the Complaint does not meet this burden, the Complaint must be dismissed.
    2. The Chair only votes when serving as a member of that CRP.
E. The Chair will issue notices to all parties of the resolution of the Complaint.

Sanctions

A. The Sanctions Rubric, as approved by the Board, will direct the CRP's sanctions recommendation(s).
B. One Respondent may receive multiple sanctions and the sanctions may be combined, as warranted.
C. Sanctions for the violations may include, but are not limited to the following options:
    1. Denial of application or ability to sit for the examination
    2. Written reprimand for infractions
    3. Completion of an educational course relevant to the sanctioned violation(s)
    4. Completion of a mentorship relevant to the sanctioned violation(s)
    5. Probationary period up to one (1) year
    6. Suspension period up to one (1) year
    7. Revocation of CCPDT credential

[2] See, https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/preponderance_of_the_evidence .

a) If sanctions other than certification revocation have been imposed, a Respondent's certification(s) are subject to revocation in the event that the Respondent fails to provide proof of compliance with the imposed sanction(s) to the CCC within the specified time frame.

8. Re-Application for Certification credential(s)
   a) If a former candidate or certificant, whose exam application was denied or certification was previously revoked, wishes to reapply for certification with the CCPDT at a future date, not less than three (3) years after revocation, that individual re-applying for certification must provide overwhelming evidence of cure of the actions which led to the finding of violations for which the individual's credentials were previously revoked. The CCC Chair, in consultation with the Executive Committee, will evaluate the evidence and decide whether it meets the standard for re-application.
   b) Any individual whose CCPDT credentials have been revoked more than once is permanently barred from further certification with the CCPDT.

Appeals

A. The Complainant has no right of appeal. A new Complaint may be filed if a certificant commits a new violation of the Standards, or in the event that the CCPDT has not rendered a substantive decision in a previously filed complaint and new evidence supporting the previous complaint arises.
B. The Respondent may appeal the decision to the full CCPDT Board of Directors if a written request is received by the CCPDT Administrator via email at administrator@ccpdt.org within 30 days of the Notice of Decision. Those Board members will form an Appeals panel. A default judgment entered upon a Respondent's failure to respond is not subject to an appeal.

   1. In that request for appeal, the Respondent must include written argument as to why the case was not correctly decided.
   2. If the Respondent wishes for the CCPDT to consider new and material evidence not submitted during the original case, the Respondent may make a new evidence request in writing, including in that request compelling reasons why the evidence was not available or submitted at the time of the original case. That evidentiary request will accompany the argument supporting the request for appeal, and the Appeals panel will make a separate determination regarding the appropriateness of including the new evidence.

C. The Administrator will notify the Chair of the request for appeal and will forward the request to the Board of Directors, along with any accompanying written argument supporting the appeal.

D. Within 30 business days of receiving the request for appeal, one designated member of the Appeals Panel will notify the Respondent of the decision whether to grant an appeal.
E. Should the Respondent's argument and/ or any new evidence which was considered on appeal warrant reopening of the case, the Board will reopen and reevaluate the case within 60 business days.
F. The Board of Directors Appeals Panel, by majority vote, will issue a decision based on the Complaint record without any hearing, argument, or further submission of evidence. The Appeals Panel will issue the decision email. The decision will contain the conclusions of the Appeals Panel and any sanctions to be applied
G. Appeals Panel decisions are final.

Confidentiality, Complainant Identity, and Due Process in CCPDT Disciplinary Matters

The CCPDT conducts all disciplinary investigations confidentially between the involved parties. When a complaint is submitted in good faith, the Certification Compliance Committee (CCC) will make every effort to protect the complainant's identity, except where disclosure is necessary to pursue an appropriate remedy or comply with legal obligations. Investigation outcomes are not made public.

Fairness and due process are foundational principles in professional regulatory settings. Accordingly, the CCPDT's disciplinary procedures typically allow respondents to know the complainant's identity. This transparency ensures that respondents are given a full and fair opportunity to respond to the allegations, provide context, gather evidence, and present a meaningful defense.

Knowing the complainant's identity can also promote early resolution by clarifying misunderstandings before formal disciplinary action becomes necessary. Additionally, transparency helps deter frivolous or malicious complaints driven by personal or competitive motives, reinforcing accountability for all parties involved.

Exceptions are granted when a complaint is submitted in good faith, and there is a legitimate concern that the complainant may face retaliation or harassment. In such cases, upon a showing of good cause, the CCC may approve anonymity and will assume the role of the complainant. The identity of the individual who initially brought forward the concern will not be disclosed to the respondent.

In cases involving alleged violations of the Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics that are a matter of public record, such as blog posts or social media activity, the CCC may initiate its investigation without a formal complaint. In these instances, the CCC acts as the complainant, and the identity of the person who alerted the CCC to the concern will not be disclosed to the respondent or informed of the outcome.

Upon submission of a Complaint,

A. Complainant agrees to be bound by the CCPDT's Certification Compliance and Disciplinary Procedures and agrees to keep submission of the Complaint, the identity of the Respondent, the alleged violation, and any related act or determination by the CCC confidential, other than as noted within the Procedures. A breach of confidentiality may result in sanctions against the Complainant or dismissal of the Complaint.
B. The Respondent in any complaint filed under these Procedures is, by definition, a CCPDT certificant and is bound by the Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics. Disclosure of the existence of a Complaint, the identity of the Complainant, the nature of the alleged violation, or any related evidence or correspondence to individuals outside the review process constitutes a violation of the Code of Ethics and will be treated as such, independent of the outcome of the original Complaint.
C. The Chair will notify the parties in writing after decisions are made. Details of the resolution remain confidential except as required by law or by this governing policy.
D. Violation of confidentiality by a CCPDT certificant or a CCC review panel member is considered a breach of the Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics and will result in sanctions. Any violation of confidentiality by any witness or any party to the Complaint may result in dismissal of the Complaint.
E. The confidentiality obligations imposed by these procedures do not preclude a Complainant, Respondent, or witness involved in a Complaint from consulting legal counsel in drafting statements and in responding to any questions asked under these Procedures.
F. In the interest of fairness and to ensure the integrity of the organization and these Procedures, the CCPDT reserves the right to disclose information related to the Complaint, including but not limited to, names of parties and resolution of a case.
G. A party to a Complaint may petition the CCPDT for permission to disclose the names of the parties and the resolution of their case. The CCPDT may grant disclosure for good cause. The Board may consult the CCC in making a good cause determination.
H. All correspondence relating to an investigation will be marked "Private and Confidential."