

Managing Conflicts of Interest

“Conflict of Interest” – a conflict between the private interests and the official responsibilities of a person in a position of trust.

All key volunteer roles will be asked to disclose any potential Conflicts of Interest, and to complete the [Conflict of Interest and Disclosure form](#). During the Judges meeting, Judges will be asked to declare any potential conflicts to the rest of the judging pool. During the Referee meeting, Referees will be asked to declare any potential conflicts to the rest of the referee team. Some scenarios of conflict of interests:

- A coach/mentor volunteers as a judge or a referee.
- A parent/relative of a team member volunteers as a judge or a referee.
- A recent alum (student or adult) of a team competing at the event volunteers as a judge or a referee.
- A sponsor of a team competing at the event volunteers as a judge or referee.

Having a Conflict of Interest, or even the perception of a Conflict of Interest can affect a team’s experience, even if decisions that were made throughout the day were not biased in any way. The perception of potential favoritism is enough to discourage a team, coach, or mentor, and take away from their overall experience at an event. Knowing what Conflict of Interest is, and how to avoid being in a position that could be a conflict will ensure all teams feel they have been evaluated fairly.

All volunteers at an event have a fiduciary responsibility to act in the best interest of the event which means to treat all teams fairly and equitably. Volunteers should use prior FIRST experience to help inform their decisions but should not use prior knowledge or perception of any specific team to inform their decisions either good or bad. Every team, at every event, deserves a fresh blank slate with all volunteers.

A volunteer who does not disclose their conflict of interest can compromise the integrity of *FIRST* Tech Challenge events. In judging, this could cause teams affiliated with the volunteer with a Conflict of Interest to be removed from consideration for awards.

Conflict of Interest, in some cases, can be quite easy to see. In other cases, it may be less obvious, and it may be difficult to decide what constitutes a true Conflict of Interest. In some cases, the bias may be apparent, while other times a Conflict of Interest may be perceived by a team or a coach. It is best to keep the following in mind when volunteering:

- Be open and forthcoming about any conflicts you may have with a team competing at the event.
- If there is a known Conflict of Interest, avoid making decisions about a team that would change the outcome of the day, such as speaking for or against a team in judge deliberations, or holding some teams to a different refereeing standard than others.
- Remove yourself from any situation that could be perceived as a Conflict of Interest.

Below is one example of a Conflict of Interest. Keep in mind this is an example, and there are many forms of Conflict of Interest, and ways to handle it.

Parent/Relative/Alumni of a Team

If a parent or a relative of a team member, or an alum of a team is volunteering at an event, this volunteer must abstain from making any decisions that could affect the results of the tournament. Whether volunteering as a judge or as field personnel (referee, field technical assistant, etc.) it is important to have that volunteer remove themselves from making any decisions related to that team. For example:

- If the volunteer is a judge, they must recuse themselves from any conversations about that team during deliberations.
- If the volunteer is a referee, they should not be involved in any decisions around penalties, match replays, etc.
- Keep in mind that there are many ways Conflict of Interest can be presented, from parents to sponsors. Make sure to remove any apparent Conflicts of Interest but also keep in mind any perceptions of conflicts.

Revision History		
Revision	Date	Description
1.0	12/11/2024	2024 Initial Release