

What are solicitation, promotion and tampering?

Promotion is done publicly. It is appropriate for all coaches to promote their background and credentials to the entire world. This information can be posted in a public space at the rink, advertised in a flyer or promoted in a newspaper - as long as the opportunity is available to all and the audience is general. Many coaches say they promote themselves through their work. Their student's accomplishments are their "advertisement." That, unequivocally, is the best way to promote oneself.

Solicitation is done behind the scenes. It is clandestine and usually conveyed one to one and not in a public forum. Solicitation can be done by a coach, a parent on behalf of the coach or by rink management favoring one coach over another. It is considered solicitation for a professional to contact a skating student, not their own, when a significant motive for doing so is the personal gain of the skating professional. Solicitation includes contact directly, indirectly or through a third party, in person, by telephone, letter or other means directed to a specific recipient.

To completely understand these terms, there is one more word which needs defining: **Tampering**. An example of tampering is helping someone else's skater by offering a suggestion that might improve their skating. This gray area extends to such subtle tactics such as sending another coaches' student a birthday card. Another example would be holding a pizza party and inviting other coaches' students. The sentiment may be sincere but the perception is suspect.

In an excerpted article written by Bob Mock several years ago entitled, "Just Say NO to Soliciting!" he offered some great words of wisdom. "Soliciting destroys skaters, clubs and rink programs. If soliciting is going on in your area, the good coaches, parents and skaters must band together to stop it. Every skater has the right to believe his coach is the best and should not be interfered with by a high-pressure, fast-talking, snake oil salesman who promises stardom but by his own action, lacks the very qualities needed to develop championship caliber skaters. The soliciting coach always loses in the end. Don't be the next victim"

Here is a listing of some common methods of solicitation. I'm sure there are many more creative approaches but this should give you an idea of some possible scenarios.

Directly approaching a parent (or child) stating:

- "I could take your child further (to the Olympics, etc.)"
- "I am a much more qualified coach than _____ is."

- "Join our program. That other program isn't very good."
- "We'll give your child free (lessons, ice time, equipment, etc.)"

Indirect approach:

- Being overly friendly to the skater. (Giving hugs, offering assistance with skills on the side.)
- Ego boosting. ("You did so great today.")
- This one gets tricky. It's ok to be encouraging and to help a fellow coach instill positive feedback. However, it's when it's excessive that it crosses the line into solicitation.

Third -Party approach:

- Parents in the stands talking and convincing other parents to switch their skater to the "better" coach.
- Skaters in the dressing rooms, on the ice or out of the rink persuading another skater to become part of "the group of good skaters."
- Coach's spouse talking to parents both in and out of the rink. "My husband/wife could do so much more for your child."
- Sponsorships. "We (business) will sponsor your child, but only if they take from _____ or only skates at _____ rink."

Stopping solicitations from occurring is critical to have a comfortable environment in your rink. This applies to Synchronized Teams, Dance and Pair skaters as well as to singles skaters. It applies to all skaters whether they are in the same rink, across town or across the country.

If you witness any form of solicitation, it is your obligation to:

- Tell your coach immediately.
- Notify your rink manager or club president.
- Avoid soliciting coaches for your own best interest.
- Document what you have seen and/or heard. Include dates, times (if possible), method of solicitation, names of parties involved and what occurred.

It is possible to remain anonymous when reporting solicitation. Document as suggested above and report it immediately. The coach, manager or president should investigate the report and follow necessary procedures while maintaining your confidentiality.