



Fitness Facility Operational Guideline Recommendations

Employees

The number of people working within a fitness facility will vary from location to location. However, the job classifications basically will be the same. During the facility's growth period, it may be necessary for various employees to “double-up” on jobs.

Guideline 1 A fitness facility should include the minimum number of individuals:

1. General Office Manager (responsible for administration, basic bookkeeping, marketing, sales, initial interviewing and consultations with potential clients, client complaints, ordering [e.g., supplements, reading materials, bathroom and cleaning supplies, business forms, etc.]
2. A fitness practitioner registered with the FSC.

In the instance of private one-to-one facilities, a single person may be responsible for all operational duties.

Optional Employees (these individuals may be accounted for under Guideline 1):

1. Nutrition Advisor (responsible for data collection, analysis and dietary recommendations of clients). Not all fitness facilities will offer nutrition advice or counseling, although often it is difficult to make quality physical or health changes without addressing the nutrition component.
2. Marketing/Sales Specialist (responsible for advertisements, public sales, workshops, publicity, etc. Consider working with a sales manager who earns a commission on sales and promotions. Some sales reps may work at this position part time for extra income. That position frees up the facility owner's time to manage or instruct clients while having a professional in another field focus on sales. The commission could be based particularly on the sales generated by a contest, promotion, etc., something that can be quantified or tracked. Offering greater sales incentives to sales personal also can work, as sales staff are eager for more income).
3. Receptionist (responsible for greeting clients, answering telephones, and filing and typing duties).
4. Facility Attendant (responsible for facility and equipment cleaning and preventative maintenance procedures).
5. Other (responsible for any general management duties that the general manager does not have time to conduct).

Employee Qualities

Guideline 2 Employees should possess an ideal employee profile:

- Registered with the FSC
- Personable, outgoing, reliable and in good health
- High integrity and dedication
- Neat in appearance
- Able to take on responsibilities
- Able to follow directives
- Demonstrates leadership qualities
- Previous retail experience
- Basic office skills
- Sincere interest in helping others achieve goals
- Makes an effort to live an active and healthy lifestyle
- Team worker, but responsible for independent duties
- All employees should understand and know the rules and regulations of the fitness facility.
- All employees should be familiar with all products and services sold even if any person does not sell them directly.
- All employees must be familiar with the fitness facility's philosophies (fitness related and moral).
- All employees must be diverse, flexible and knowledgeable in their instructional and exercise/nutrition prescription ability, always willing to learn new and relevant things.

Fitness facilities with a staff of more than one individual constitute a "**team.**" Katzenbach & Smith¹ define a team as *"as small number of people with complimentary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable."* In many instances there will be a need for collective work from various professionals, including aspects that deal with technical instruction, program evaluation and design, counseling and motivation, dietary concerns, and administrative/bookkeeping duties, all of which work synergistically with shared leadership that fluctuates at different times. Teams must work together with a clear objective mission, common approach, and mutual accountability.

Consequently, although the role of each facility employee is unique and each is independent to some extent, the knowledge, skills, and talents of each staff member coordinates and balances as a whole. However, there still needs to be one overseeing supervisor for the entire operation or, at least, to oversee the progress and evaluation of each client. This may mean or necessitate multiple supervisors, since different fitness practitioners will work with different clients in possibly various settings.

¹ Katzenbach J.R. & Smith D.K. *The Wisdom of Teams.* Boston MA: Harvard Business School, 1993.

Staff Attire and General Conduct

Appearance is important since first impressions play a major role in how clients perceive staff.

Guideline 3 Staff should dress appropriately, be neat, clean and professional in appearance at all times. Establish an appearance and dress code if one is not implemented already. Recommendations are as follows:

1. Instructors: *spring, winter and fall* – sweat pants, with a polo shirt, or collared sweater; *summer* – khaki or tennis shorts of a cotton or cotton/polyester blend (although pants are acceptable) with a polo shirt, or collared sweater. A full zippered tracksuit is acceptable and apparel may be standardized year round if air conditioning makes it uncomfortable to dress lighter during warmer months. Brown, tan or black dress or casual shoes should be worn. Regulation tennis shoes (non-skid soles) also are acceptable. Avoid ‘loud’, multi-colored footwear. Avoid muscle shirts and baggy pants. All trainers should be similarly dressed to promote professionalism and uniformity. Do not wear baseball caps or other headgear or sunglasses since these accessories appear overly casual.
2. Clean shaved or groomed facial hair with a neat hairstyle.
3. Minimal make-up worn in a professional and natural manner; never apply make-up or touch-ups in front of clients, but always do so on breaks in the staff room or in the bathroom.
4. Personal name tags with title (e.g., John Doe, Fitness Practitioner).
5. Loose jewelry should not be worn to avoid catching on equipment. Also, request that clients remove any hanging earrings or necklaces. Provide a locked safety storage box if necessary.
6. Smoking and other anti-health activities must not be allowed on the premises, and should be discouraged outside and near the facility.

Work Guidelines

Guideline 4 Fitness practitioners are to follow the work guidelines as established by the facility, taking into account proper and professional conduct and attention to detail at all times and that may include the following recommendations:

- Always be at the fitness facility 15-20 minutes before opening time or before starting a shift. Be organized and prepared before the first member walks through the door.
- Park employee vehicles furthest from the main entrance to allow convenient availability to the members. A designated area for all employee vehicles is recommended.
- Take breaks in accordance to the facility's timetable, but use some common sense. If the facility receives an unexpected high volume of members or ‘drop-ins’, employees should obtain permission to delay a break period. People find it frustrating when assistance is needed and no one is to be found.
- There should be designated employees (if not the practitioners) to walk through the facility routinely to organize any abandoned equipment, such as plates, bars, handles and dumbbells. If a member trips over loose equipment, and hurts him or herself, a lawsuit may occur on the basis of negligence to maintain an organized exercise area. The walk-through also should be applied to locker rooms to ensure cleanliness.
- Always smile and greet members.
- Remember client names and use them.

Fitness Standards Council

- Service all members on all visits. Offer your assistance whenever possible without being a bother.
- Be sure to inform members of all facility areas (spa, hot top, gym equipment, etc.). These aspects could be included in a club tour, to be given to all prospective and new members. Also, it is a good idea to provide a copy of the facility floor plan.
- Memorize and apply the facility's rules and regulations. Also, inform the members of any gym rules, such as safety and etiquette. Better yet, have them posted on the walls.
- Give members an opportunity to share their thoughts, rather than dictating to them.
- Do not assume you know what is best for a new member, and do not assume they know what their objectives are. Often confusion surrounds a new member, and it is your responsibility to work with than individual.
- Give praise when possible. Making a member feel good about him or herself is the best way to create motivation and enthusiasm.
- Occasionally ask members the following questions about their programs:
 - a) Are you receiving adequate instruction?
 - b) Do you enjoy your current program?
 - c) Do you feel like you are receiving adequate results?
 - d) Do you wish to add, omit or change any of the exercises from your current program?
 - e) Do any of the exercises cause you discomfort or pain?
 - f) Do any of the exercises feel unnatural?
- Encourage members to participate in facility programs, such as lectures, weight loss programs and social events.
- Always look busy by supervising the floor area, and perform a walk-through during slow hours. If unable to find something to keep you occupied, assist other employees with cleaning, clerical duties, telephone answering, and sales work.
- Always talk business while working (exercise, health, nutrition, etc.). Random discussions about TV shows or gossiping is unprofessional, and could cause friction between employees. Divide personal life from work.
- Make a point of coming up with new promotional ideas to help the facility's success. The more constructive effort each employee puts forth, the greater the rewards and respect of fellow workers. Each employee should try to come up with one marketing idea every week – make it clear that there are no “bad” ideas and enforce a “zero-mocking” policy.

Employee Conduct Policy

To assure orderly operations and to provide the best possible work environment, the facility expects associates to follow rules of conduct that will protect the interests and safety of all employees, consumers and the facility. Conduct that interferes with operations, that discredits the facility or that is offensive to customers or co-workers will not be tolerated. Any employee that violates this policy should be subject to disciplinary procedures that may necessitate immediate termination.

Guideline 5 Employees are expected at all times to conduct themselves in a positive manner so as to promote the best interests of the facility. Such conduct includes the following recommendations:

- Reporting to work punctually as scheduled and being ready for work at the designated time.
- Giving proper advanced notice whenever unable to work or report on time.
- Complying with all facility safety and security regulations.
- Wearing appropriate clothing or uniforms for the work being performed.
- Treating members, visitors and coworkers in a courteous and friendly manner.
- Refraining from behavior or conduct deemed offensive or undesirable, or that is contrary to the facility's best interests.
- Performing assigned tasks efficiently and in accord with established quality standards.

The following conduct should be prohibited, thus subjecting the individual involved to disciplinary action, up to and including immediate termination:

- The use of profanity or abusive language
- The possession of firearms or other weapons on facility property.
- Insubordination or the refusal by an associate to follow management instructions concerning a job-related manner.
- Excessive absenteeism.
- Inappropriate use of facility telephone, mail, Internet, or e-mail systems.
- Fighting or assault on a coworker or member.
- Theft, destruction, defacement, or misuse of facility property or of another employee or member's property.
- Falsifying or altering any facility record or report, such as an application for employment.
- Threatening or intimidating coworkers, members, or visitors.
- Horseplay, pranks, or practical jokes.
- Failure to abide by safety rules and policies.
- Improper attire or personal appearance.
- Engaging in any form of sexual or other harassment.
- Improper disclosure of trade secrets or confidential information.
- Overt negligence of professional or clinical duties and responsibilities.
- Being under the influence of drugs or alcohol at the workplace.

The examples listed above are illustrative of the type of behavior that should not be permitted, but are not intended to be an all-inclusive listing. Any violation of facility policies or any conduct considered inappropriate or unsatisfactory may (at management's discretion) subject the employee to disciplinary action. Questions regarding this policy should be directed to the Site Manager.

Fitness Practitioner Employee Agreement

Requirements for Employment

- Eligibility for facility employment.
- Experience and knowledge of fitness practitioner guidelines.
- Demonstrated ability to work well with people of various ages and backgrounds.
- Completion of in-service training for facility fitness practitioners and review of any policies.
- Provide proof of fitness and CPR Certification.
- Signed commitment to Fitness Practitioner registration with the FSC.

General Responsibilities

- Conduct supervision or teaching in accordance with facility and FSC fitness practitioner standards.
- Support all facility mission statements, policies and procedures (including emergency procedures).
- Be prepared to help in any minor or major emergency situation if practical.

Specific Responsibilities

- Keep a commitment to instructing scheduled clients. The need to cancel an appointment is acceptable only in emergency situations (all appointment cancellations *must* be approved by the Site Manager).
- Arrive 15 minutes before your first session begins.
- Come to your sessions prepared to supervise and instruct clients by knowing what skills need to be covered and how you will be going about instructing your clients.
- Hand in all session evaluations to the Site Manager when requested.
- Wear an appropriate uniform and name tag.
- Attend meetings as requested (attendance is mandatory unless otherwise indicated).
- Complete paperwork regularly and on time (payment requests, evaluations, etc.).
- Remember customer service...be polite and professional.
- Carry out additional duties assigned by the Site Manager.
- Keep all client records up-to-date and strictly confidential.
- Keep all client tracking records detail-oriented and professional looking.
- Be responsible for taking care of exercise equipment by performing regular preventive maintenance checks and reporting faulty or misused equipment to Site Manager in a timely fashion.
- Be responsible by upholding the facility's Policies and Procedures.
- Actively pursue continuing education by researching the most to date exercise and nutrition methods.
- Attend all in-services (attendance is mandatory unless otherwise indicated).

I, _____ understand and agree to comply with all policies, procedures, and expectations outlined in this agreement and understand that my employment may be terminated for failure to comply. In addition, I have read the facility's polices and understand the disciplinary guidelines and procedures.

Signature _____ Date _____

Manager _____ Date _____

Employee Acknowledgment Form

The facility Policies and Procedures describes important information about the facility. I understand that it is my responsibility to review the policies and procedures of the facility and that I should consult the Site Manager regarding any questions.

Since the policies described in the facility Policies and Procedures are necessarily subject to change, I acknowledge that revisions may occur. All such changes will be communicated through official notices, and I understand that revised information may supersede, modify, or eliminate existing policies.

I have entered into my employment relationship with the facility voluntarily and acknowledge that there is no specified length of employment. Accordingly, either I or the facility can terminate my employment at any time, for any reason, with or without cause, and with or without notice. Furthermore, I understand that the Policies and Procedures do not in any way alter, nor shall be construed to in any way alter, the at will relationship between the facility and me or any of its employees.

I have reviewed the Policies and Procedures and I understand it is my responsibility to read and comply with said policies and procedures of the facility and any revisions made to it.

Employee's Signature _____

Employee's Name _____ Date _____

Employee Corrective Action Policy

Guideline 6 The facility is to establish disciplinary actions and may terminate an employee at will at any time, with or without notice, and with or without cause, while considering the following:

- Disciplinary action generally is taken when an employee's overall performance is below expected standards. Disciplinary action also may be taken if the associate's performance is manifested through specific problems including, but not limited to, chronic absenteeism, frequent tardiness, and inappropriate use of company time, equipment or facilities to carry out personal errands.
- The usual first step in dealing with an associate's performance or behavior problem is informal counseling by the Site Manager. If informal counseling does not achieve the desired results, a formal disciplinary procedure shall be initiated. This procedure includes verbal warning, written warning, and termination of employment. Depending on the specifics of each situation and the severity of the offense, any and all of these steps can be skipped, and the employee can be terminated without prior warning.
- Gross misconduct will lead to immediate dismissal. It includes, but is not limited to, theft, vandalism, fraud, insubordination, intentional physical harm caused to others, destruction of property, and other willful disregards and violations of company policies. The company reserves the right to terminate at will.

Disciplinary Action Guidelines and Procedures

Level I: Verbal Warning

These will be monitored through Documentation of Written Records.

Level II: Written Warning

These will be monitored through Employee Performance Sheets.

Level I and II Categories include:

- Late for a shift (1-15 minutes)
- Working out on shift unless done with a client and requested by the client
- Failure to enforce facility policies or rules
- Failure to wear complete uniform during a shift
- Failure to complete due projects
- Failure to complete payroll documents on time.
- Inappropriate language
- Expressing discontent in front of patrons

Action: Written warning and meeting with Site Manager

Any 2 written warnings for the same offense results in next level.

Fitness Standards Council

Level III: Disciplinary Action or Probation

A meeting with the Site Manager will determine the disciplinary action for the infraction.

Categories include:

- Late for a shift (16 minutes - 1 hour)
- Failure to attend in-service
- Leaving the facility unattended or unsecured for any reason

Action: Meeting with Site Manager and letter of understanding.

The letter of understanding will state the infraction and disciplinary action.

Probation begins at the time of the write-up and will continue as long as the employee is actively working. In the event of a holiday, probation time will resume during the next day worked by the employee. Probation carries a term of 30-60-90 days depending on severity of incident.

Disciplinary action may include, but is not limited to Probation.

Any infraction during this period will result in the next level.

Level IV: Suspension or Termination

A meeting with the Site Manager will determine disciplinary action for the infraction. Mitigating circumstances such as past performance history (recurring pattern or first offense?), quality of performance to date and the nature of the offense will influence the decision. Extreme special circumstances may dictate waiving or special consideration in applying this policy. For example: A severe blizzard that creates extreme traffic difficulties and tardiness/absenteeism will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Categories include:

- Failure to give two weeks notice when resigning
- Conduct that creates an unsatisfactory image on the fitness facility
- Insubordination or intentional physical harm caused to others
- Conduct that compromises the safety of members
- Being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs while on shift
- Theft, vandalism, fraud or destruction of property
- Employment Agreement Violation

Action: Meeting with Site Manager and letter of understanding

The letter of understanding will state the infraction and disciplinary action.

Suspension is the loss of all scheduled shifts. Length of suspension will be determined by the Site Manager.

Termination will be the decision of the Site Manager and will result in the inability to work for the facility.

The actions of this policy will be automatic up to the point of suspension/termination. Circumstances of each violation will be noted but will have *no* bearing on the action until the suspension/termination level has been reached. These circumstances and how they are handled may or may not be in the facility's favor at the suspension/termination level.

Facility Conduct Policies

The following provides a framework to guide employee conduct, but is not inclusive of every situation that may arise. The facility maintains policies and procedures in respect to standards of conduct. These standards are intended to maintain a positive employee work environment and facility reputation.

Productive Work Environment

The facility is committed to maintaining a professional and productive work environment that values and promotes diversity and is free from the effects of discrimination. The facility is committed to complying with both the letter and spirit of this policy and all applicable laws and regulations.

We will provide equal opportunity in employment to all associates and applicants for employment. No person will be discriminated against in employment because of race, religion, color, sex, age, national origin, disability or any other characteristic protected by law. Discrimination in the workplace will not be tolerated.

We will provide an environment that is free from harassment in any form. We will not engage in any behaviors that are, or may be perceived to be harassing, including sexual harassment. Harassment in the workplace will not be tolerated.

We will extend the policy of non-discrimination and non-harassment to our dealings with co-workers, consumers, members, suppliers, and all other persons with whom we come in contact during the course of our duties.

Facility Property

The facility expects its employees to protect both facility and client property. Property includes not only physical property, but confidential information.

We will not disclose facility or client Confidential Information, which we learn or acquire during the course of employment, to any other person or entity, or use Confidential Information for our own benefit or for the benefit of another unless the facility expressly directs us to do so. Confidential Information means any information not generally known outside the facility or the client's business.

Gifts

The facility expects all employees to use only legitimate and ethical practices in promoting the facility to current or prospective clients, selecting vendors, and in all other business operations.

We gain new business through our merits, maintain existing customers through our work performance, and select our suppliers based on their capabilities. As such, we do not give or accept gifts that are intended to induce or improperly influence our selection or our business dealings.

Corporate Identity and Reputation

Our business dealings inside and outside the workplace are opportunities to reinforce the good reputation of the facility. The facility expects its associates to promote the facility positively, in its appearance, communications and behavior, and to ensure that, in all respects, associates portray the facility in an appropriate and fair manner.

Conflict Resolutions

Guideline 7 Conflicts are to be resolved in a timely manner and procedures put in place to avoid similar future disputes. A conflict may be a customer complaint, or it may be disagreement or negative feelings between two fitness practitioners, or among any staff members or individuals not employed by the facility. Conflicts can be frustrating and harm relationships that were once sound and beneficial, thus requiring effective and responsible management to resolve disputes. Prior to establishing a *conflict resolution* meeting, refer to and complete as many items on this list.

- Clarify what the conflict is about; be objective and precise about each side's actions/comments.
- Is it worth confronting the other party (parties) about this conflict, or are you making more of it than you should as a result of an emotional response? If so, perhaps those emotions are informing you of something that should be investigated introspectively.
- Is the problem/conflict of mutual concern or does it merely concern you (should it concern others)?
- If confrontation is required or necessary, arrange an appropriate time and favorable conditions for both sides, and allow the other side to express his or her perceptions of the conflict without interruption.
- If you are in the wrong or are part of the conflict, what have you done or will do to correct the situation now and in the future?
- To achieve mutual benefit, work with the other side to evaluate and provide solutions. If time and the situation allow, work together until all details are worked through and a mutual decision is achieved.
- Implement the solution and set up a time and place to discuss how the solution is working.

Roles of the Facility

Guideline 8 Have all employees meet at least once every two weeks to discuss promotional techniques, to work out problems, and to offer criticism. You may require separate 'common interest' meetings for fitness practitioners, office personnel and supervisors – grouping too many roles at one time could produce confusion and few results. This, of course, depends on the size of the facility and number and categories of employees.

Guideline 9 Always keep the fitness practitioners up-dated by:

- Providing classes on training techniques and nutritional procedures;
- Establishing an in-house library of quality resource materials;
- Subscribing to a few top level fitness magazines or sports medicine and nutrition journals; and
- Obtaining guest speakers for educational sessions.

Guideline 10 Provide motivational workshops to keep employee enthusiasm at a pinnacle and attitudes positive; praise employees at the end of the day for the hard work accomplished. Employees need to feel they are a contributing factor to the facility's success, and they should know they are doing more than collecting a paycheck.

Guideline 11 The facility should provide public-service programs to expand awareness of the benefits of regular exercise and sports.

Working Hours & Daily Procedures

It is extremely important that sound, proven working habits be established. The systematic opening and closing of a facility at fixed hours and the systematic performance of opening and closing procedures need to be established. The following is a typical example of these procedures. It may seem elementary to discuss this protocol, but a sound and successful system leaves nothing to chance.

It is recommended that you open the center no later than 8:00 a.m. daily. This, however, depends largely on the work hours of your members. For example, some members may be able to use the services only at 6:00 AM. In cases such as these, it will be up to you to determine if you will accommodate them, or risk losing those members.

Closing time of the facility should not be before 6:00 PM. In some cases a later closing time is highly advisable. This will enable members to use the facility on the way home from work. Again, operation hours are better left to the goals of the facility owner and desire to earn an income. It may be best to consider hiring extra personnel for shift work or to establish a private lock key system that is camera monitored for those who purchase a gym membership and who do not require supervision (consider the legalities of this direction, however).

Guideline 12 Establish, enforce, and update (when necessary) a daily routine schedule. These steps may include the following:

Opening

- Upon entering the facility, immediately display an “OPEN” sign (if used).
- Next, activate any equipment that needs “warm-up” time. For example, if there is a powered treadmill, it may need to warm its belt drive motor before use. In this case, it will be ready to go for the first member of the day.
- Make certain the member service area (counter area) is clean and organized. Check all floors, waste baskets and change rooms. Do not underestimate the importance of having and maintaining a clean facility.
- If a refreshment area is provided (e.g., coffee, juice, nutritious snacks, etc.), be certain it is clean, with cups and other necessary supplies available.

Closing

- Prior to leaving for the day, turn off electrical equipment and services according to any instruction manuals.
- Review the schedule for the following day’s clients.
- Clean up the member service area so that it is ready for the next day.
- Clean your work area and dispose of any trash properly. Sweep and/or mop if necessary.
- Double-check any electrical appliances to establish they are turned off.
- Display a “Closed” sign if one is used.
- If an illuminated sign is installed outside, check that it lights properly. Burnt bulbs will serve to “cheapen” the overall professional look of a business, dampening the congruency of an intended message, e.g., that attention to detail in fitness supposedly is provided, yet a simple bulb in a sign cannot be changed. This may seem petty, however it is vital to the marketing message of “quality” and should not be overlooked.
- If there are employees beyond a sole proprietorship, create a “checklist” for them to sign and complete. As mentioned previously, the system used for a given day’s work should be followed to the letter each and every business day; consistency of operations is key.
- Lock up for the night.

Clients and Members

Inquisitive Members

Guideline 13 Be prepared to answer a question related to any fitness topic. If unsure of the answer, admit to it, but do one of the following:

1. Discuss the subject with the member if he or she seems intent in doing so (a topic relating to exercise or nutrition, of course) – an inquiring member may bring up a point of interest to see how the situation is handled or thought about.
2. If the member is willing to wait at the fitness facility, discover the answer to the question quickly and efficiently using the facility's reference library or the assistance of other staff members.
3. If the member is unwilling to wait, indicate that he or she will be contacted soon. The faster you get back to the client, the more professional and efficient you and/or the facility will appear. Too often days or even weeks pass before a business returns a call or inquiry – this lack of courtesy shows lack of interest in obtaining or retaining that member.
4. Most importantly, avoid straying too far from one's level and area of expertise and knowledge. Pretending to know something not known could prove embarrassing in the future, and reduce the level of respect from members.

Guideline 14 Provide a copy of the proposed service/membership agreement to any prospective customer if requested, together with a copy of the signed agreement. Provide a copy of any certification issued by a qualified education provider or otherwise if requested.

Customer Complaints

Guideline 15 The fitness facility will make every reasonable effort to resolve quickly and fairly any complaint made by a member including those regarding inadequate exercise and diet results. Where an oral complaint is made, the person receiving the complaint will:

- Identify him or her self, listen, record details and determine what the complainant wants;
- Confirm the details received; analyze the source and discover if there is any truth to the complaint. Is it the result of instruction methods, or personal character?
- Investigate the complaint, if necessary;
- Resolve the complaint immediately if possible with feedback regarding the result of action taken to resolve the complaint.
- If something is done to make a member disgruntled, do something immediately to make up for it, thus replacing a negative with a positive. Offer a free session to his or her convenience, for example.

Client: "I must say that I'm not too pleased with the attitude of one of your practitioners. I honestly do try hard, and Tony keeps pushing me, telling me not to be weak minded."

Owner: "Let me talk to Tony. I'm sure he had your best interests in mind... but his approach apparently needs to change. Let me set up your next appointment, on the house, and I promise Tony won't be so aggressive in the future. He likely will feel sorry once I speak to him about this."

FSC Involvement in Consumer Complaints

Guideline 16 The FSC reserves the right to become involved in consumer complaints, to protect the rights of consumers and quality services.

- Depending on the nature and severity of the complaint, the FSC may request that the fitness facility or practitioner collect relevant data relating to the complaints it receives from consumers. The nature of this data will be determined by the FSC and the registered facility must comply with such a request.
- Where the complaint cannot be resolved between the facility/practitioner and the consumer, the facility must advise that person of the consumer's right to refer the complaint to the FSC.
- Where the complaint is referred to the FSC, the FSC will, as soon as practical after the referral, hear the complaint and notify the parties in writing of the determination.
- Where the FSC determines that the facility has breached a code or standard, the FSC reserves the right to withdraw the accreditation issued to conduct business as an official FSC fitness facility representative (or as a practitioner as the case may be), depending on the severity of the misconduct.

Guideline 17 When a facility or fitness practitioner accumulates a significant number of complaints in a given area, the facility or practitioner is advised that there is a problem in that area and appropriate corrective measures must be sought, with any measures presented to the FSC.

Refusing to Pay

Guideline 18 Services demand payment; the facility will establish a disciplinary process for defaulting signatories. If a member fails to pay for a session or block of sessions, do not continue his or her instruction. It is acceptable to inform the client that company policy prevents further instruction without monetary compensation, similar to the services of an automobile mechanic, restaurant, or any other business. (This is why it is vital to have a general office manager, an individual who does not instruct clients, who can be responsible for company policy when applicable.)

Records and Record Keeping

Guideline 19 Fitness practitioners and facilities should develop and maintain the following records for a period determined by professional legal advice:

- Manufacturer provided manuals, operating guides, and warranties
- Equipment records on inventory, purchases, installations, inspection, maintenance, and repairs.
- Personnel credentials, backgrounds, and contact information
- Membership and client files and case study reports, including any informed consent, agreement to participate, and waiver documentation
- Pre-participation medical clearance and return to participation clearance documents
- Professional standards and guidelines
- Safety policies and procedures, together with a written response plan
- Injury/incident reports

Guideline 20 Facility financial, administrative and member/client records should be maintained in a reasonably accessible place and protected adequately, so long as those records likely are to be needed. Protection may be by:

- An active fire suppression system, or
- With passive protection using two-hour rated files or vaults, or
- By using off-site back up files. Other records are maintained in accordance with current business and legal practices.

After the last appointment of the day, make any necessary computer backups. This step may be necessary several times throughout the day depending on one's confidence in the computer equipment and if there are electrical storms transpiring.

Supplies and Stock

Guideline 21 Maintain sufficient supplies and stock of all necessary items. Do not be put in a position whereby an exercise session cannot be followed through because enough toilet paper was not ordered, or you ran out of cups for the juice bar/health drink area. Remember that one of the keys to success in operating a facility is "service" to the clients, and organization is vital in this regard.

As the owner of a facility, order supplies and stock when necessary. It is advisable to stay in touch with direct suppliers regarding your needs and purchases to avoid a potential shortage. Some vendors will be pleased to place a "standing order" for products and supplies. Once an amount for any time is determined, supplies can be shipped at a predetermined date, and then a bill received for such items on an ongoing basis.

Storing, Hiding and Receiving Stock

Guideline 22 Stock is to be received and stored properly.

- In accordance to the section on general maintenance and operating a clean and organized facility, if there is space availability, establish a specified area for storing supplies. It is important to keep these items out of sight, as they will detract from a facility's attractive, upscale appearance. Remember that the general appearance of a facility also is considered a part of marketing.
- While seemingly unlikely, theft becomes a concern when product is left in direct line-of-sight of members. The saying "out of sight, out of mind" could save the facility from losing many hard-earned dollars with dishonest clients.
- When receiving stock at the facility, put it in its proper place or rotate into displays as soon as possible. Proper arrangement of supplies helps speed workflow and saves precious time, especially during a busy day of instructing clients.
- Instruct employees to make a list of supplies that are running low.

Required Supplies

Guideline 23 An appropriate personnel is to create a stock/supplies list and maintain the facility's contents regularly.
The following is a list of supplies and their uses. These are items that should be kept on hand at all times.

- Cleaning agents
- Toilet paper, paper towels, and facial tissue
- Computer printer and fax paper
- Letter head stationary, business cards, brochures and other advertising medium
- Pens, pencils, and note paper
- Heart rate monitor straps (if necessary and one for each client)
- Stock of food bars and drink mixes if a pro shop exists
- Promotional gifts (t-shirts, hats, magnets, etc.)

General Sales & Marketing

Guideline 24 Disclosure of fees and alteration thereof must be explained clearly and in full.

- When discussing fees, provide a clear explanation regarding special services that are not part of the services being sold and their costs. There should be no surprises at a later date as to what the client thought he or she was paying for and what is being received for that fee.
- Be professional in altering and communicating rate changes. Rate increase may take effect as fitness practitioners improve in expertise or ability or if the facility upgrades equipment and services. The ethics of altering fee structures based on client income or the potential of losing a client as a result of an increase vary within the industry. If different clients are charged different fees for whatever reason, this information must remain confidential. Better yet, account for the differences in fees within the services so that such discrepancies are addressed.

Guideline 25 Fitness facilities should allow a fair monthly billing agreement.

- All consumers, both new and renewing, should be given the option of entering into a monthly billing agreement.
- Ensure that the monthly membership rate will have a reasonable proportional relationship to any term or annual membership offered and will not be so excessive as to discourage consumers from entering into a monthly billing option.

Cooling-off Period

Guideline 26 Consumer agreements/contracts are to include a cooling-off period policy and should include the following provisions:

1. Where a client enters into an agreement for a period of three months or more, there is a 7-day cooling off period that begins on the date the contract is signed, during which the member may terminate the agreement. The cooling-off period does not apply where a contract is renewed.
2. A member who terminates an agreement during the cooling-off period shall give the notice to the fitness facility in writing, including evidence of the agreement.
3. Where the fitness facility has provided services to a member before he or she terminates the membership, the facility may deduct from the amount refunded the standard cost of any service provided including a reasonable administration charge.
4. The fitness facility must pay a refund owing to a member within seven days of receiving notice of termination of a contract/agreement.

Refunds or membership deferment because of sickness or physical incapacity

Guideline 27 Consumer agreements/contracts are to include a membership deferment policy due to sickness or physical incapacitation and may include the following provisions:

1. Where a member is unable, by reason of permanent physical incapacity verifiable by a medical certificate, to avail him or herself of the services provided under his or her agreement, that member is entitled to receive a refund for the unused portion of the agreement.
2. Where a member is unable, by reason of temporary physical incapacity verifiable by a medical certificate, to avail him or herself of the services provided under his or her agreement, that member is entitled to defer the balance of the period of the agreement to a period as recommended by the member's physician.
3. Where a member is to receive a refund, as per *Point 1*, the fitness facility may deduct from the amount refunded the standard cost of any service provided including a reasonable administration charge, and must pay the refund owing to the member within seven days.

Furnishing and Equipment

While the amount of furnishings and equipment in a fitness facility may vary from location to location, some basics will be found in all facilities. The following is a list of items that should be included:

Facility Layout - Essentials

Guideline 28 The fitness facility will strive to achieve the highest standards in its environment as it pertains to appearance, safety, and exercise equipment quality, and may include the following:

1. Flooring should be a dark rubber/plastic tile/matting or dark, low-pile carpet. Although the dark color may show light colored lint (thus requiring regular vacuuming), it will not show discoloration and some dirt (e.g., machine grease) as readily. Rubber or plastic matting or floor tiles are preferred since both increase traction, wear better and clean easier.

Fitness Standards Council

2. Temperature should remain between 60-65°F (15-18°C) with humidity under 50%. Too cold makes it uncomfortable for the instructors and clients upon first entering the facility, thus necessitating a longer warm-up time. If the facility is too warm exercise becomes uncomfortable, thus increasing the rate of fatigue and lethargy. If the environment is very humid, it will be necessary to implement a dehumidifier or invest in central air-exchange if not already installed. Proper ventilation and air conditioning systems should be installed in all rooms or areas.
3. Ceiling fans on a slow rotation helps to circulate air, but is unnecessary if the facility is equipped properly with an air-exchange system.
4. Establish appropriate signage, including rest rooms, exits, administration/reception. Include anatomical charts with each exercise machine to reinforce client education. Signage outside the facility will include the facility's name.
5. A minimum of one change room/washroom should be in place (one is sufficient if working in a small one-to-one facility). This could be a single combination unit, but lockers will have to be available to limit theft of personal property unless a private safe is offered in a different location. Consequently, consider renting lockers to clients on a monthly basis to increase income potential and to help pay for locker costs.
6. Avoid leaving barbell plates, dumbbells or equipment handles lying on the floor to avoid injury and to remain organized, even between sets while training a client.
7. Keep telephones out of auditory range to avoid distraction while instructing clients. Either a receptionist or an answering machine should be available to take messages.
8. A separate staff room or divided area must be allotted for phone calling, discussing of business, or eating lunch/snacks. It is unprofessional to conduct any of these activities in the presence of members.
9. All file cabinets and computer work areas (excluding the reception area) should be kept out of view. Dark smoked glass is preferred and is a less of a distraction than a two-way mirror, if the office manager/administrator requires visual contact with the staff and clients.
10. The facility and equipment should be dusted and vacuumed/swept every day, either before opening or at night when closing.
11. Maintain a separate storage room or concealed area for cleaners, mop, vacuum, dust rags, and a broom.
12. Client interviews, program discussions and nutrition analyses should be conducted in a separate room for privacy and confidentiality, such as the management/administrative office.

General Maintenance

Guideline 29 The facility should remain clean and orderly at all times.

Nothing discourages a potential customer of a business more than sloppiness and filth. For this reason, place special emphasis on the appearance of the facility. A few simple chores regularly performed enhance the appearance of a facility significantly, thus adding to the business' success. Remember that one of the key areas to the appeal of a facility is attention to detail coupled with cleanliness and professional instruction and prescription.

First Impressions

Clients judge the ability to provide quality service by the appearance of the facility and its personnel.

- Keep the exterior of the facility clean. Glass windows and doors should be cleaned on a regular basis. Make certain that trash and debris do not pile up outside. Keep the sidewalk and street clear of snow in bad weather.
- Keep the member service area clean. Carpeting should be vacuumed and shampooed regularly. Rubber matting should be swept clean throughout the day. If necessary, paint the walls if they begin to peel or fade or appear dirty or marked.
- Keep counters clean of trash and needless clutter at all times.
- Books and reading materials for outside services or general entertainment should be stacked neatly or placed and organized on a shelf/magazine rack.
- Shipments of supplements, cleaning agents and “in-house” supplies should be unpacked and stored in their proper places once received.
- Empty all trash cans and wastebaskets regularly.
- Clean and sanitize exercise equipment when applicable and after each use or as often as deemed appropriate.
- Proper lubrication of exercise equipment is a must. It is possible to double the life of equipment with proper maintenance. Members expect equipment to be in optimal working condition each time used.
- If there is a parking area adjacent to the facility, make certain to keep it clean of garbage and snow fall.
- Dusting is an absolute must. Members with allergies will be the first to thank for this detail. If feasible, install a high-grade air-filter to keep the facility free of dust and allergens.
- If juice or food products are provided or sold, dispose of all bottles and wrappers that may be left behind in an area out of the members' view.

Suggestions to Avoid Problems

Guideline 30 A general maintenance program should be written up and implemented, including the following steps and elements:

1. Train all personnel using the written maintenance program.
2. All deficiencies regarding the facility must be reported to management immediately by personnel.
3. Corrective action must be instituted immediately upon learning of any deficiency in the facility.
4. Corrective action must be in keeping with proper recognized maintenance practices.
5. Train all employees how to handle an accident if one occurs.
6. Continually train personnel on proper maintenance practices.

Playing Fields

Guideline 31 Field grading should run from a high center to a low sideline to ensure proper drainage of the playing surface.

Guideline 32 Fields should be separated from roadways by a fence, wall or buffer zone, yet be accessible by emergency vehicles.

Guideline 33 Playing fields should be separated from spectator viewing areas, and from other obstructions such as lighting poles, irrigation ports, garbage cans, maintenance sheds, etc.

Guideline 34 Proper lighting for dusk and non- daylight hours must be provided to ensure safe play areas and that all lighting must be adequate and functioning.

Courts (squash and racquetball)

Guideline 35 Court doors should open inward to avoid potential collision with a passer-by and allow for quick evacuation in the event of an emergency.

Guideline 36 Court floor surface should be constructed with shock absorption in mind, such as a sprung wood floor, and the floor finish should limit the amount of slippage during normal use.

Guideline 37 All rental equipment should be inspected before and after rental to ensure proper condition and structural integrity.

Locker Rooms and Showers

Guideline 38 Shower and locker room areas should not be connected directly to exercise area to ensure privacy.

Guideline 39 Back-flow valves should be used to eliminate water temperature differences from pressure variances in the water system. Rada valves could be used to maintain water temperature within a safe range, i.e., the maximum allowable water temperature can be set to prevent scalding.

Guideline 40 There should be adequate drainage to prevent water from pooling in shower areas.

Guideline 41 Floors should not be slippery when wet. Fitness facility flooring specialists should be investigated in this regard, and while avoiding standard tile flooring designed for office building use. Separate drying areas should be provided.