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Miss America Local Judges Guidelines

**Judges Rules Update:**

Point #3 was updated to mirror the Judges Affidavit that specifically stated “immediate family”

3. Individuals, their company/business, spouse, immediate family, domestic partner or significant other, who in any way benefit, financially or otherwise, from working with contestants or the organization are barred from judging….

New addition to Judges Rules: #14. The state competition’s judges panel can only include one (1) state volunteer, whether active or inactive.

**MAO Policies Regarding Coaching**

Dear Friends of the Miss America Organization:

The Miss America Organization does not condone or endorse coaching. It is our strong belief that a young woman should be encouraged and supported to be herself through the guidance of her State Executive Director and the State Organization's board. However, if contestants utilize a coach, whether paid or unpaid, then all coaches must be approved by the local or state ED, and all coaches and contestants must adhere to the rules and regulations.

Given the recent influx of complaints from our State Executive Directors regarding coaching, it is imperative to remind everyone of MAO's rules and policies regarding coaching within the Miss America System, as outlined below:

1. Under the **MAO Judges Eligibility Rules** and the **MAO Judges Affidavit**, coaches and their immediate family are expressly prohibited from judging, regardless of whether or not they receive compensation. With regard to the selection of judges, anyone who works directly with contestants is prohibited from serving as a judge at any level of competition. This rule also pertains to any person whose business, immediate family, spouse, or significant other works directly with contestants.

Recently, a known coach accepted an invitation to judge on a state panel. Even after reading the Judges Affidavit, she asserted that the prohibition from judging did not apply, citing the fact that she does not receive financial compensation but only wants to help contestants. However, this coach is improperly interpreting the MAO Judges Policy, and the state has properly revoked the invitation.
2. According to the **MAO National Contestant Forms**, coaches of any type are not granted access to the Contestant Hair and Make-Up area. In the past, MAO has denied access to coaches listed on the Contestant Hair & Makeup Form.
3. MAO Badges/Credentials must be requested and approved by the State Executive Director from their respective home state. State ED's and MAO reserve the right to deny and/or revoke MAO badges/credentials. Pageant coaches are not authorized to obtain an MAO badge.
4. Regarding Talent Rehearsal during Nationals: a brief conference with a designated, authorized individual is only allowed if the individual is pre-approved by the State Executive Director.
5. According to the **Local & State Contestant Contracts**: Any immediate family member of a contestant who served as a coach must have formally resigned at least six (6) months prior to the contestant being eligible to compete in her first local competition, or the state competition if locals are not held in her state.
6. As stated in the **Local & State Contestant Contracts** and the **State Organization Agreement**, MAO does not endorse nor promote the use of individuals nor businesses who act as pageant coaches, whether or not they are paid to offer services. The use of a coach is only allowed if the coach is acknowledged and approved by the Local and/or State Executive Director.
7. **The National Contestant Contract's Rules for National Finals** states that a contestant will not engage in any private or personal meetings with coaches during the National Finals.
8. The **MAO State Organization Agreement** asserts that volunteers may assist the state representative at no charge, provided that the volunteer is not a pageant coach.

Unfortunately, there have been prior incidents involving coaches and some examples are noted below:

* A national contestant entered her coach's hotel room to discuss the private interview the night before the contestant's interview.
* The disappearance of the contestant with a coach caused security to contact the police.
* A coach hid in a bathroom stall to meet with a contestant and both were found standing on the toilet to keep the hostesses from locating them.
* Coaches have been discovered working with contestants without their State Executive Director's approval or knowledge.
* Coaches actively pursued state judges in conversation before and after several competitions to either gain influence or insight.

It is important to understand that a coach, judge, or anyone found in violation of the MAO State Organization Agreement may be barred from any capacity or association with the Miss America Organization. The license agreement specifically prohibits the State Organization from engaging in conduct which adversely reflects on MAO, including the uttering or publishing of any disparaging comments regarding MAO or participants in the Miss America Program; and/or fails to present communications to the public in a professional manner in order to maintain and enhance the Miss America Program's broad public acceptance and in order to prevent damage to MAO's business or reputation.

It is critical that state and local leaders thoroughly vet the use of any coaches should they be approved to assist in your titleholder’s preparation.

Violation of MAO's rules and regulations diminishes the integrity of the judging process.

Respectfully,
The Miss America Organization