

This is an unofficial summary of the Advisory Council meeting to inform District 11 members.
Please see the Board of Directors motions for official actions taken by that body.

Richard Popper, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM Eastern Daylight Time noting that the only topic for discussion would be the recent changes to the ACBL CDR and motions pertaining to those changes. He thanked Executive Director Bronia Jenkins, National Recorder Jeff Edelstein, President Margot Hennings, Sabrina Goley and all ACBL Board of Directors representatives present in the zoom meeting.

Larry Sealy, Region 7 (Districts 8, 10, & 11) Chair of the Appeals & Charges Committee, presented a summary of all the changes made to the CDR for Computer Based Cheating Detection.

Changes agreed by the Board on June 13 and voted on in Philadelphia in July:

- Players who cheated online may play face-to-face if they apply to the club manager and the club manager approves.
- They must complete the online Ethics training and fair play pledge (EC/FPP).
- Club managers are encouraged to notify players in their club if they approve someone who cheated to play.
- Such players approved to play may not play with their online partners complicit in cheating.
- This applies to suspended players only and not to players expelled or who resigned to avoid pending charges.
- Players who cheated only in 2020 and 2021 will get a reduction in discipline.
 - o For those newly caught with <5000 MPs at the time of cheating will get an official warning.
 - o If they have >5000 MPs they get a 60-day suspension, a standard 2-year probation, and 10% reduction in masterpoints.
 - o This reduction in penalty requires clear and convincing evidence that they stopped cheating in 2020 such as:
 - They stopped playing with that partner,
 - They stopped playing altogether,
 - It's very very clear that their results change significantly indicating an absence of cheating.
- This reduction excludes:
 - o Players with a second offense are subject to expulsion.
 - o Those who are GLM eligible (won an NABC+ event)
 - o Players cheating with multiple partners

- Players in a position of significant influence determined on a case-by-case basis. BoD Reps would be ineligible, so would members of the Advisory Council or someone serving an ACBL disciplinary committee.
- Players who signed a negotiated resolution or who opted for a management decision through the office of the national recorder must be approved for reduction by Office of the National Recorder and the Appeals & Charges Committee. Decisions by management were typically for players who did not respond to the charging letter (radio silent).
- Players who cheated in 2020 and 2021 only and went through fast-track discipline have had their penalties already reduced. For those for whom it is not clear when they stopped cheating, they will be looked at more closely.
- To receive this reduction players must submit an EC/FPP.
- The EC/FPP no longer requires an admission of guilt (*nolo contendere*). However, these players must acknowledge that the ACBL considers this finding a first-time offense, and that a second offense will be subject to expulsion.
- EC/FPP not required for people getting an official warning.
- ACBL is extending the grace period for players to respond to charges when they give a good reason for the extension.

Larry discussed the statistics. There have been no new EDGAR runs since November of 2024. The large number of red flags took a lot of time to process. So did updating the CDR. There were 35 ad hoc runs covering advisory council members, and committee and hall of fame nominees.

Sabrina Goley is reading a new 10,000 player run through CBDC later this month.

Currently ACBL has charged 900 players with first degree ethical violations online. While the overall rate of red flags is 3%, it's hard to judge exactly because the denominator in that fraction is poorly defined (multiple partners, partners tested more than once, etc.). Expecting on the order of an additional 600 red flags with approximately 60,000 more people to run.

IBA Update as of mid-July 2025)

- 3 cases resolved since Memphis (March 2025)
- 4 cases completed awaiting verdict (3 of these have rulings in hand as of this evening)
- 4 cases pending

Net we are waiting to clear 5 total cases.

A quorum was confirmed by Richard Popper.

Steve Moese D11 moved to approve the July 2025 minutes by unanimous consent. Seconded by Harold Robbins. Minutes were approved.

Doug Couchman Past Chair – why was the requirement for the EC/FPP dropped?

Larry – It was not dropped they must complete it

Marty Hirschman D12 – It's important to have an overview of the entire situation. We started doing EDGAR about 3 ½ years ago. Then we got our ducks in the row. We have 60,000 players left to run. 82,000 have been identified. We've run about 22,000 people. We've been doing this for 1 ½ years. We have caught more than half the cheaters. People have been cheating for a whole year and a half. What are we waiting for?

Larry – We've spent a lot of time coordinating the changes to the CDR. The November run identified 600+ red flags that took time to handle properly. November 2024 – May 2025 were spent processing these 600 reds. Since we expect 600 more, we think we can be finished by June next year.

The implementation of FTD for all, the elimination of penalties for 2020/21 cheating, and the elimination of the admission of guilt on the EC/FPP will speed up the process considerably. A lot of people who refused FTD before will now take it.

Marty – Nothing you send is responsive to my inquiry. Why don't we run them all, send out the notices, and hire a few people for a few hundred thousand dollars to clean up the game? We have the capability to do it and we are not doing it. Now we are talking about fairly minor discipline. We are not disciplining a half or a third of the cheaters. On top of that we have the yellow flags. They are cheating too and we have no plan for the yellows.

Larry – We do have plans for the yellow flags. When we are through running everyone, we go back and rerun the yellows.

Marty – Yellow flags are cheating right?

Larry – Probably most of them are. But if we want to stand by our pledge to avoid implicating one innocent player and would allow a few cheaters to get through. We have to draw the line somewhere.

Marty – Well the line shouldn't be all yellows. They are just being ignored. We are talking about hundreds and hundreds of people whom we can catch right away, especially the red flags, and just send them notices and suspend them.

John Dickenson D4 – Complimented the new under discipline list (Microsoft BI) on the acbl.org website. Much easier to use. We have 2 people who were accused and they resigned and are now playing in the ABA. If someone is disciplined by the ABA could someone play in the ACBL?

Larry – No they could not. We honor the discipline from other bridge organizations.

Hugh McSheffrey D19 – Concerns about the changes in the message from August 5th. There is an improper delegation from the A&C to the club managers. You say make up your own

mind about whether this cheater can play in your club. You do not say “these are the standards that must be followed to allow a cheater to play in your club”. So, it’s possible if I play in two different clubs I can get two different decisions. There’s a certain inequality in how club managers can make their decisions. Is it based on table count/money? Something else? I would have hoped the A&C could have formulated some standards that the clubs could apply when making that decision.

Larry – This change is not coming from the A&C. This decision came from the Board of Directors.

Hugh – It’s like the court ordering someone to be put on probation and then allowing the probation officer to end their probation.

Larry – that’s not a great analogy. We’ve discussed this issue several times. The question was also asked in the survey (more than half said no). The idea is that these clubs are private businesses. Rather than the ACBL dictate to the Club Managers who can play, there might be one guy who cheated and people thought he was unethical while another was a volunteer who was never suspected face to face suggested the ACBL should not dictate to the club managers. Club players will also have different opinions.

Hugh – The other concern I have is the imprecision. I’m not certain who is eligible to play while under suspension.

Larry – It’s only someone who EDGAR caught. Has nothing to do with cheating that ended prior to January 1, 2022.

Jay Apfelbaum D4 – Compliments on the move toward allowing people who were arguably cheating in online bridge where they presumably they won’t. I am confused about the process to put the decision in the hands of the club manager. Can the player write a certification that they did not cheat after Jan 1, 2022?

Larry – I want to clear up one point. The 2020 and 2021 cheating limit is for reducing the penalty, and has nothing to do with allowing play in clubs. Sufficient proof is: 1) quit playing online, 2) the suspicious partnership ended in time, 3) EDGAR might have found a different window where there is a high degree of confident (low green – clear and convincing evidence).

Jay – would the certification be useful?

Larry – I am not sure what you are asking. If a pair is caught in 2020/21, and come off suspension, then if they are caught again later, that is a second offense and they will be expelled.

Jay – say there’s an EDGAR run for 2020-21 only. They are currently under suspension. Would they allowed to begin playing with a certification they did not cheat.

Larry – We did not run EDGAR for 2020-21 only. We ran EDGAR for 2020 to the date of the run. If they did not have evidence after 2021, that meant they stopped playing.

Jeff Bayone D24 – allowing people to play in face-to-face games. Do we want that to happen? I've spoken with club owners and in many cases, they are hopeful some of their old players can play again. There is a significant restriction here. They cannot play with a partner with whom they cheated. It's difficult for these players to play with new/other partners. Many married pairs were convicted. Is it that necessary that we cannot allow long time partnerships play together again?

Larry – most people would think they would cheat face to face with a cheating partner. Expect you'd get less push back from other players if they do not play with a known cheating partner.

Jeff – I think that the club manager is best placed to make that decision. We have people who has played at the club for 25 years with no issues. Now they can't play together? We want to change that.

Larry – Your point is heard.

Chair - Jeff you can make a motion to ask that this be changed. Eventually the BoD will be required to consider that if the majority of the AC votes in favor of your motion.

Tim Edwards=Davies D1 – I really like the new MUD list. Surprised me to see the number of people had multiple BBO handles. Is there any move to have people have only one handle? Does EDGAR notice if I have been playing with a different handle?

Larry – it depends on whether the BBO handles have the same ACBL number associated with them. If so, then yes, EDGAR will know that. We had a very good change written into the new contracts – players will be required to have actual first and last names showing in their profile when they are playing in an ACBL game. We expect BBO to implement this by January 1, 2026.

Doug Couchman Past Chair– I have expressed many times my disappointment to management and the Board how much the penalties for ethical violations continue to be reduced. I won't reiterate that. I would like the Board to consider:

- 1) EC/FPP provides for a reduction by $\frac{1}{2}$ the masterpoint penalty. A 10% hit seems too small. Should stay at 20%.
- 2) When someone is found responsible of first-degree ethical violations that they be removed from all published lists of achievements for the time period of that cheating. For example, the Mini-McKenney list.

Larry – Management is pen to removing those people form the list. We had it in a situation where that happened. It's just a matter of information passing between two different groups.

Bronia Jenkins ACBL Executive Director– don't have a problem keeping the penalty at 20% but we pass what we passed. We should be starting to remove names from a digital list. We do not need a Board motion to do that.

Martin Hirschman D12 – We heard all sorts of sob stories about people who cheated and how it has affected their lives. Do we have any data/actual facts? We are being told people are lifelong ACBL members and they are being cut off from their social experience at clubs.

Larry – we obviously do not know that. People who have called in provide sympathetic information about friends.

Marty – So we really don't know who we are allowing to play in clubs.

Bronia Jenkins – There was a list of 218 people who we ran back through EDGAR for the 2020-21 cutoff. 56 of them cheated only in 2021. Their average age was 80 and tenure 33 years.

Marty – Well BBO is a club. Why don't we let them back on now? Why is that different?

Larry – because we are letting them play face to face where it is a lot harder to cheat in a first-degree manner. It's a lot easier to cheat online. We are not open to letting them cheat online while on suspension.

Marty – we are going to let them come back in 3 months and play again.

Larry – and if we catch them again, they will be expelled.

Steve Gaynor D14 – a fellow in our unit was caught cheating online. He was very active volunteering. He had nothing but good things to say about the procedure and about Jeff Edelstein. He is totally rehabilitated. The system worked.

Chair – asked for a motion for reconsideration of the CDR changes. None was offered.

Steve Moese D11 - discussed the motion to improve communication to membership about CBCD. Steve noted the reaction of uninformed members about losing their friends in several units in District 11. He mentioned the burden these charges caused Unit officials, District officials, and club managers whom membership look to for answers and help. The proposal asks for information, flow charts and FAQs that can support club managers and Unit officials answer questions. Steve referenced the decision in Cincinnati where more than half of the weekly tables went unsanctioned so that convicted cheaters could play. Steve mentioned the excellent series of articles on BridgeWinners by Brian Platnick and

Franco Bassegio. All of the posts on BridgeWinners – not many local club players read that site. There was a crying need to help people understand what EDGAR is and what it does, and what the process is in the ACBL to handle all of that. Steve shared the following webpage to help as a reference for club managers and Unit officials:

<https://www.district11bridge.com/EDGAR.html>

Steve M. complimented the new information on the Ethics and Discipline section of acbl.org. He asked the ACBL to build trust and relationships with members, clubs and unit officials to include:

- i. More FAQs that help clubs and Units manage not only understand the changes to the CDR from June and July but also the whole discipline process – the overall process and the steps an accused person will face when receiving a charging letter.
- ii. A description of the data provided in the charging letter so that the charged player can understand the evidence provided before paying for arbitration and the discovery hearing.

Steve M. paraphrased the letter written by Potter Orr (Steve shared several of Potter's credentials and contributions) printed in the July ACBL Bulletin p7-8. The impression a charged party has is: *I'm given a whole bunch of stuff. I can't make heads or tails of it. I don't understand what's going on here, and I'm asked to spend \$900 to find out what's going on.* What I'm asking for is to hark back to where we were years ago – the ACBL published a great deal of information online that helped coach people through the process. I want us to do more to help members understand what is happening. Steve read the proposed motion.

The charging letter or packet should have an executive summary that does a much better job of focusing people on the likely charges. We understand that the specific charges will not be made available to the charged party until the discovery hearing as part of arbitration.

Steve M. cited the following excerpt from the new CDR:

502. SPECIFIC PROCEDURES FOR CBCD Resolution (see p29)
(E) Required Notice to the Player.

ACBL must provide the player with official written notice in accordance with § 501(E).

(1) (2) All notices must:

- ii. Outline the basis for identifying the player as collusively cheating, including the prima facie case which led to the charge;

Steve M. ceded the floor. `Henry Robin D15 seconded the motion.

Marty Hirschman – Is it the expectation that management write this?

Steve M. – Yes – this is an exercise in marketing – building trust around the entire process with our membership.

Marty – So management has done what they thought necessary when they set this process up. So, what you have here is a criticism of the incompleteness of what they have done.

Steve M. – I would not characterize this as a criticism. I would characterize this as an opportunity to implement a simple solution to issues identified by anecdotal information from many sources.

Bronia – I think the word SIMPLE and what we are doing don't go together. Nothing about this is simple. We continually refine the charging letter. We made the MUD list more sortable. We have FAQs on the website. We continue to do that. This is a relatively new process. We used to have Units and District doing discipline. Now its consolidated to headquarters. Sabrina Goley, Jeff Edelstein and I all answer questions as they arise. People who get the charge letters communicate with Jeff, Justin, and Sabrina. The things you are talking about I totally agree with. We will continue to post things that are happening. Are people confused when they get the letter? Sure. Some read it some don't read it some ignore it. I am totally with you that we should continue to work on the process. I'm not with you that we should pass a motion and show a simple flowchart. We have so much information already, if anything we have too much information, so giving more information is not necessarily going to help. Should we continue to do better and try to explain to people and have case studies? There's plenty of stuff out there. We had a flow chart but took it down because people didn't understand it.

Steve M. – I agree there's been a great improvement in the communication particularly since late winter 2025. I was surprised how many uniformed Unit and District Board members there were.

Bronia – I'm surprised every month when I hold monthly Unit President meetings and only 25 people show up out of 290. On a good day we have 30 people who show up.

Steve M. – I agree. I would be very concerned about that too.

Bronia – Sabrina, Jeff, and Larry are working already on improving communication. We're going to continue to get better at this. We are putting things on the website. We are communicating with people. I'm agreeing with you 100%. Is our communication perfect? We are doing the best we can. I'm not sure what the motion does that we are not trying to do automatically.

Jay Apfelbaum D4 – I am speaking in favor of Steve's motion. I'm not sure it requires only management and ACBL BoD input to do what he wants. If someone can help simplify the documents so non-lawyers can understand it that would be a plus. I'm not saying the current staff can't do this. We simply might include people with those skills to help.

Bronia – If you have questions that people are confused about, we will include them and the answers in our FAQs. Write an article for the Bulletin. We are trying to do what you are proposing.

Steve M. – I agree Bronia. This is not a criticism of any of the current efforts by management. The new information is a great improvement.

Steve M. reviewed details from Potter's letter about the contents of the charging letter. The "hot Spot Report" was poorly understood. Steve shared his inexperience with the charging letter contents. If anything can be done to help people understand the contents that will be an improvement. Steve mentioned the apparent confusion about the charging process where people receiving the charging letter believe they are guilty and must appeal an unknown case in arbitration. They do not realize that arbitration is the charging process starting with discovery where the specific case is defined by the ACBL. People are believing that the ACBL is railroading their friends in an unfair way. I do not want members to believe that. I marvel at what EDGAR does. I think it is an amazing invention. I also believe it is a strongly vetted process, but I want people to have trust in it. Right now, I don't think they do.

Bronia – I believe people have trust in EDGAR. We have trust in EDGAR. I believe in EDGAR and statistics. I believe there are misconceptions.

Jeff Edelstein – You are putting the cart before the horse here. You haven't looked at a charging document. Correct?

Steve M. - Yes.

Jeff – I will not mention anything about the Cincinnati cases. I have talked with the Cincinnati Unit Board. You are addressing a problem that I do not think exists. I'm happy to provide a notice (redacted). People don't read the notice we send them. I'm sure that if you got a notice accusing you of cheating you would read it with a fine-tooth comb. Everything is explained in the notice. What the data sheet is what the hot spots are. Before we consider this motion, you should ask for a copy of the charging report. I'm happy to provide you and the rest of the Advisory Council with a scrubbed-up letter that doesn't have any information about whom it is addressed to.

Steve M. – Thank you Jeff. And thank you and all who do this work on behalf of all of us. I know it's yeoman's work. I admire how you are leading this forward. I wanted a conversation about helping people understand. I am more than willing to withdraw the motion if the AC thinks this is handled. I really think there is a gap that needs filling here. If people aren't reading this maybe we need a different approach.

Chair – Can Jeff send a scrubbed letter to the entire Advisory Council so we can all read it. Are you willing to table this motion so we can allow the AC to read the redacted letter? Bronia

has said she will take FAQs from us that show what people are confused about and get answers posted.

Steve M. – I think that's great – I am willing to entertain a motion to table.

Henry Robin D15 - you can withdraw it.

Jay Apfelbaum – I move that the motion be tabled for the next meeting. Seconded. Passed unanimously.

Chair – Steve M.'s motion is tabled and will be on the agenda for the November Meeting.

Steve Allen – Harking back to Doug's suggestion: we should remove all MPs earned online. If the criteria are 10%, then they should lose all online points earned during that period or 10% whichever is higher.

Chair – we need a written motion to ensure best language and preparation. I can review it and discuss with others if necessary (Larry Sealy for example). It will improve the workflow if the Board sees what it might get. I say the same to Jeff for your proposal.

The Chair thanked all who participated in this meeting. The Chair entertained a motion to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 8:57 PM EDT.

Respectfully Submitted,
Steve Moese
District 11 Advisory Council Representative






Participants (45)

Q Find a participant

- F** Farley Mawyer, D3
- IJ** iMark Jones D10
- JZ** Jackie Zayac - R12 Director
- JE** Jeff Edelstein
- JG** Joann Glasson - Region 3
- MH** Margot Hennings
- MC** Mike Cassel D14
- PW** Patrick Williams D10 AC
- RB** Rebecca Brown-R9
- SG** Sabrina Goley
- S** Steve Allen D5
- SG** Steven G. D5
- S** Suzi
- TS** Tomi Storey D16
- WH** Wybren Hoogland D2 AC




Participants (45)

Q Find a participant

-  D11 Steve Moese (Me)
- HR** Henry Robin D15 (Host)
- JA** Jay Apfelbaum D4
- JB** Jeff Bayone D24 AC
- RP** Richard Popper / AC Chair /
-  Doug Couchman — ex AC C
-  Larry Sealy R7 Director
- AD** AC D1 Tim Edwards-Davies
- AR** Andrew Risman D2
- AH** Anne Hollingsworth, D21
- B** barbaraheller-r6
-  Bronia Jenkins
- DM** D!2 Martin Hirschman AC
- DJ** D11 Jeff Chapman
-  D12 Susan Bailey-Carman

Participants (45)

Q Find a participant

- DR** D-14 R Vanek Unit 104 D-14
- DS** D14 Steven Gaynor - A/C Mir
- DB** D16 Betty Starzec
- DL** D16 Larry Davis AC
- D-** D17 - Kyle Rockoff
- DW** D1-Leo Weniger
- L** D24 Lee Lin
-  D3 Jason Fuhrman
-  D4 John Dickenson
- D** D7xprez-BobHeller
- DA** Dennis Abeln - D8 AC Rep
- DC** Dennis Carman Region5Direc
-  Dian Petrov D5
- D2** Dist. 22 - Gary Waldron
- F** Farley Mawyer, D3