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Which Family Is Welcome at the Club?

The days of the men's golf club are over, and clubs that emphasize family-oriented facilities are increasingly more common. Both traditional golf clubs and other clubs are struggling to define the family of members who have facilities use privileges. The trend is to expand the family definition, especially in resort and second home communities, to attract the family-oriented market. Clubs have adopted a number of different family definitions:

- One member with option to pay additional joining payment and dues for family members;
- One joining payment for membership, but single, couple and/or family dues options;
- Immediate family privileges covering spouse and unmarried children under a specified age (generally 21 to 26);
- Immediate family privileges, plus extended family privileges, whereby adult children, grandchildren, parents and grandparents use the facilities upon payment of reduced guest fees;
- Immediate family privileges, plus houseguest privileges for extended family who are staying in the member's home upon payment of houseguest fee; or
- "Vertical family" membership that includes children (regardless of age), grandchildren, parents and grandparents.

In addition, clubs are also increasingly allowing unmarried members to designate their partners to have privileges. Most clubs strive to be family oriented in the current market, but they need to structure family

privileges membership document provisions and operating systems to work well from an operational and legal perspective. For example, a club with an expansive family definition may want to adopt access rules and limitations or adopt more stringent guest policies to alleviate crowding during peak times. A club may need to consider membership transfer to family, member discipline and admission provisions carefully so they work well with the family privileges provision. Club billing systems may need to account for multiple billing groups within the same membership. A photo membership card system may be needed to allow a club to confirm that only eligible family members have access to the facilities. Many clubs are anxious to place a welcome mat for members' families in order to appeal to the family-oriented market. The clubs should carefully structure their family privileges provisions, other membership document provisions, rules and operating systems to avoid problems that may cause the club to want to remove that welcome mat in the future.

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