



**BC ATHLETICS  
POLICY ON HARASSMENT**

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**POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

# **BC ATHLETICS POLICY ON HARASSMENT**

## **INTRODUCTION**

BC Athletics, in an effort to provide a safe and harassment free environment within its activities and those of its members (individuals and clubs), has set out the following Policy on Harassment in order to clearly indicate its position on Harassment of All Types and initiatives to inform and educate its members. The policy provides for an informal, confidential and non threatening alternative to a formal registering of complaints as well as a formal process involving individuals designated by BC Athletics and possessing the training and appropriate background to investigate complaints.

## **BC ATHLETICS LEGAL and ETHICAL DUTIES**

1. BC Athletics has a legal responsibility to act in the best interests of its members.
2. BC Athletics has a legal responsibility to intervene if they know of matters within its operation which are contrary to the country's laws and the organizations by-laws, rules, policies and codes.
3. This is an extended responsibility which is subject to a legal test of reasonable conduct, meaning that the responsibility exists not just when the organization knows, but also ought reasonably to have known, of matters requiring action.
4. Specifically with regard to matters of abuse and harassment, BC Athletics is aware that there are circumstances when cases are completely outside the Association's jurisdiction and within the purview of the justice system. These are cases which involve persons who are not of the age of legal majority, or any other age specified by law. Even when the persons are of the specified age, when the notion of consent is often an issue, we must all be aware that the concept of informed consent is a legal one which BC Athletics realizes is defined by Canadian Law.
5. BC Athletics has a responsibility to ensure that all members are aware of the policy to a reasonable extent. This includes clear information on the steps which are taken when cases are reported.

## **KEY CONCEPTS in the BC ATHLETICS POLICY**

1. An Association where the participants may reasonably expect to be able to carry out their activities free from abuse and harassment.
2. That as a sport association it is important to have such policies, information and educational initiatives.
3. That all reports and allegations follow the process as contained in the Harassment Policy and are dealt with in the manner as set out.

## **POLICY OBJECTIVE**

1. To establish BC Athletics as an organization in which all members, employees and volunteers may reasonably expect to participate free from harassment.
2. To provide an environment when members, employees and volunteers contribute to the Association's goals in the knowledge that their personal aspirations and dignity will be respected.
3. To create an awareness of the nature and types of harassment.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

Members, employees and volunteers of BC Athletics are jointly responsible to free their sport/working environment of harassment by:

1. Taking assertive action should they feel that they are being subjected to harassment.
2. Fostering an environment free of harassment by attempting to stop incidents of harassment whether there is a complaint or not. Failure to take appropriate corrective action may be interpreted as condoning the prohibited behavior.

## 1. STATEMENT OF POLICY

- 1.1 Harassment of any kind will not be tolerated by BC Athletics.
- 1.2 BC Athletics is committed to providing a sport and work environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. Each individual has the right to participate and work in an environment which promotes equal opportunities, prohibits discriminatory practices and is free from abuse and harassment.
- 1.3 BC Athletics is committed to the education of all of its members in the area of harassment and to providing information to the parents/guardians of its youth members on the policies, procedures and education initiatives on harassment.
- 1.4 This policy applies to all employees, directors, officers, volunteers, coaches, associates, officials, and athlete members of BC Athletics. BC Athletics encourages the prompt reporting of all incidents of harassment, regardless of who the offender may be.
- 1.5 For the purposes of this policy, sport and/or workplace harassment can occur in the following places:
  - a) at sporting events, competitions, and in training sessions;
  - b) at the office;
  - c) at sport/office-related social functions;
  - d) at the organization's business functions, such as meetings, conferences, training sessions, and workshops;
  - e) during sport/work-related travel;
  - f) through any form of communication device/system including but not limited to telephone, eMail, fax, postal service;
  - g) Elsewhere if the person harassed is there as a result of sport/work-related responsibilities or a sport/work-related relationship.
- 1.6 Notwithstanding this policy, every person who experiences harassment continues to have the right to seek assistance from the B.C. Council of Human Rights, even when steps are being taken under this policy.
- 1.7 An investigation under this policy shall follow the process of natural justice, as described in this policy.

## 2. PREVENTION

- 2.1 BC Athletics is committed to the elimination of harassment through educational programs including information and training. Please refer to Appendix 1 for educational and informational programs that form part of this policy.

## 3. DEFINITIONS

- 3.1 **Appeals Panel and Committee:** A panel appointed by the Board of Directors of BC Athletics consisting of individuals of the sport community. An Appeals Committee formed from the members of the appeals panel, shall consist of three (3) individuals, at least one woman and one man, each of whom have no personal or professional involvement with either the Complainant or Respondent, and no prior involvement in the matter under appeal.
- 3.2 **Complainant:** An employee, athlete, coach, official, or other member of BC Athletics or participant involved in the activities of BC Athletics, who thinks he or she has been harassed.

- 3.3 **Harassment:** Improper behavior by any person towards another which a person knows or ought to know would be unwelcome. This behavior includes comments, conduct or gestures which is insulting, intimidating, humiliating, hurtful, malicious, degrading, or otherwise offensive to an individual or group of individuals or which creates an uncomfortable environment, or which might reasonably be expected to cause embarrassment, insecurity, discomfort, offense, or humiliation to another person or group, including, but not limited to:
- a) written or verbal abuse or threats;
  - b) physical assault;
  - c) unwelcome remarks, jokes, innuendoes, or taunting about a person's body, sexual orientation, attire, age, marital status, ethnic or racial origin, religion, etc.;
  - d) displaying of sexually explicit, racist or other offensive or derogatory material, sexual, racial, ethnic or religious graffiti;
  - e) practical jokes which cause awkwardness or embarrassment, endangering a person's safety or negatively affecting performance;
  - f) hazing or initiation rites;
  - g) leering or other suggestive or obscene gestures;
  - h) intimidation;
  - i) condescension, paternalism, or patronizing behavior which undermines self-respect or adversely affects performance or working conditions
  - j) conduct, comments, gestures or contact of a sexual nature that is likely to cause offense or humiliation or that might, on reasonable grounds, be perceived as placing a condition of a sexual nature on employment or any opportunity for selection, training or advancement;
  - k) false accusations of harassment motivated by malice or mischief, and meant to cause other harm, is considered harassment;
  - l) Sexual harassment, as further described in section 3.10.
- 3.4 **Harassment Advisor:** A designate of BC Athletics who is conversant with the issue of harassment. The role of the Harassment Advisor is to serve in a neutral, unbiased capacity, to provide information about the resources and support available, and to receive simple complaints, assist in informal resolution of complaints, and to make recommendations as to further action. The Harassment Advisor will handle complaints which may be resolved through informal procedures, and refer all other complaints to the Harassment Officer.
- 3.5 **Harassment Officer:** An individual designated by BC Athletics and possessing the training and appropriate background to investigate complaints.
- 3.6 **Investigation Report:** The product of an investigation completed by the Harassment Officer, including, but not limited to, a summary of details, determination of harassment, and recommended disciplinary action if harassment is found.
- 3.7 **Respondent:** The perpetrator of the action(s) which the Complainant thinks constitutes harassment.
- 3.8 **Responsible Adult:** Where the Complainant or the Respondent is a minor, a parent, guardian, or other adult of the minor's choice, who may speak on behalf of the minor Complainant or minor Respondent, as referred to in paragraphs 7.1 and 7.2.
- 3.9 **Disciplinary Committee:** A committee of persons as defined in the BC Athletics By-Laws and Constitution. The Disciplinary Committee decides whether harassment occurred and confirms or rejects the recommendation(s) of the Harassment Officer.

- 3.10 **Sexual Harassment:** One or a series of incidents involving unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, or other verbal conduct of a sexual nature:
- a) when such conduct might reasonably be expected to cause embarrassment, insecurity, discomfort, offense, or humiliation to another person or group;
  - b) when submission to such conduct is made either implicitly or explicitly a condition of employment/sport related activity;
  - c) when submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as a basis for any employment/sport decision (including, but not limited to, matters of promotion, raise in salary, job security, benefits affecting the employee, team selection);
  - d) When such conduct has the purpose or the effect of interfering with a person's work/sport performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work/sport environment.

#### **4. RESPONSIBILITY**

- 4.1 The BC Athletics Board of Directors is responsible for the implementation of this policy.
- 4.2 BC Athletics will identify and designate Harassment Advisors and access the identified Harassment Officers as necessary.
- 4.3 BC Athletics will act quickly on any complaint of harassment with the goal of resolving the situation fairly and of preventing future occurrences, including determining and enforcing appropriate discipline, if required.

#### **5. CONFIDENTIALITY**

- 5.1 In all reported instances, a prompt, thorough, fair investigation will take place giving careful consideration to protect the rights and dignity of all people involved.
- 5.2 The regular procedures associated with privacy and confidentiality will be observed at all times, including the sealing of all documents upon the conclusion of the investigation.

#### **6. COMPLAINT PROCEDURE**

- 6.1 A person who thinks he or she has been subjected to conduct which constitutes harassment under this policy (the "Complainant") is encouraged to make it known to the person responsible for the conduct (the "Respondent") that the behavior is unwelcome, offensive, and contrary to this policy.
- 6.2 If confronting the Respondent is not possible, or if after confronting the Respondent the conduct continues, the Complainant should seek the advice of the Harassment Advisor.
- 6.3 Upon receiving the complaint, the Harassment Advisor shall obtain from the Complainant a statement in writing outlining the details of the incident(s) and the names of any witnesses. The statement should be dated and signed by the Complainant.

- 6.4 At the first meeting between the Harassment Advisor and the Complainant, the Harassment Advisor shall inform the Complainant of:
- a) the options of pursuing an informal resolution of the complaint;
  - b) the right to make a formal written complaint under this policy when an informal resolution is inappropriate or not feasible;
  - c) the availability of counseling and other resources;
  - d) the confidentiality provisions of this policy;
  - e) the right to be represented by a person of choice (including legal counsel) at any stage in the complaint process;
  - f) other avenues of recourse, including the right to file a complaint with the B.C. Council of Human Rights or, where appropriate, to contact the police where the conduct may be an offense pursuant to the Criminal Code.
- 6.5 Following the initial meeting between the Complainant and the Harassment Advisor, any of the following steps may be taken:
- a) If the Complainant and the Harassment Advisor agree that the conduct does not constitute harassment, the Harassment Advisor will take no further action and no written record of the complaint will be kept **but** a written record of the mutual resolution will be recorded and kept on file.
  - b) If the Complainant wishes to proceed with a complaint investigation, the matter will be referred to a Harassment Officer for investigation.
  - c) If the Harassment Advisor believes that the alleged harassment constitutes *prima facie* evidence (sufficient to establish fact unless disproved) of harassment but the Complainant does not wish to proceed with a complaint investigation, the following steps may be taken:
    - i) If the Complainant wishes to pursue an informal resolution of the complaint, the Harassment Advisor will meet with the Respondent with a view to obtaining an apology and an assurance that the offensive conduct will not be repeated;
    - ii) If the Complainant does not wish to pursue an informal resolution of the complaint, the Harassment Advisor may, nevertheless, take either of the following steps:
      - A) The Harassment Advisor may meet with the Respondent with a view to obtaining an apology and an assurance that the offensive conduct will not be repeated. In the case of a meeting pursuant to this clause, the Harassment Advisor will make every reasonable effort to protect the identity of the Complainant. If the Harassment Advisor is satisfied that the complaint has been resolved through this informal process, the Harassment Advisor will take no further action on the complaint. If the Harassment Advisor is not satisfied that the complaint has been resolved through this informal process, then the Harassment Advisor may refer the matter to a Harassment Officer for investigation.
      - B) The Harassment Advisor may refer the matter to a Harassment Officer for investigation.
- 6.6 Investigation by the Harassment Officer
- When a Harassment Officer receives a complaint from the Harassment Advisor, the Harassment Officer will:
- a) review and clarify the Complainant's written complaint;
  - b) Give a written copy of the complaint to the Respondent and the Complainant.
- 6.7 Where the Harassment Officer gives a copy of the written complaint to the Respondent, the Harassment Officer will include with the written complaint a copy of this policy and a notice that the Respondent has the right to be represented by any person of choice at any stage of the process when the Respondent is required or entitled to be present.

- 6.8 The Respondent will provide a written response to the Harassment Officer within ten (10) days of receiving the written complaint. If there are special circumstances, the Harassment Officer may extend the time for response.
- 6.9 The Harassment Officer will receive and clarify the response from the Respondent.
- 6.10 Within sixty (60) days of receiving the initial written complaint, the Harassment Officer shall conduct an investigation and prepare a written Investigation Report.
- 6.11 All investigations stemming from this complaint shall follow the principle of natural justice, which states that:
- a) everyone has the right to a fair hearing in the course of determining whether an infraction has been committed;
  - b) the issues should be clearly and concisely stated so that the accused is aware of the essentials of the complaint;
  - c) the accused has a right to have a representative present his or her case;
  - d) relevant information must be available to all parties;
  - e) the accused has the right to call and cross-examine witnesses;
  - f) the accused has the right to a written decision following the judgment;
  - g) the accused has the right to appeal a decision (if there are grounds);
  - h) The Harassment Officer has a duty to listen fairly to both sides and to reach a decision untainted by bias.

### **The Investigation Report**

- 6.12 The Investigation Report from the Harassment Officer should contain:
- a) a summary of the relevant facts;
  - b) a determination as to whether the acts in question constitute harassment as defined in this policy;
  - c) If the act(s) constitute harassment, a recommended disciplinary action against the Respondent.
- 6.13 When recommending disciplinary action to be taken, the Harassment Officer shall consider factors such as:
- a) the nature of the harassment;
  - b) whether the harassment involved any physical contact;
  - c) if the harassment was an isolated incident or part of an ongoing pattern;
  - d) the nature of the relationship between the Complainant and the Respondent;
  - e) the relative age of the Complainant and/or Respondent;
  - f) whether the Respondent had been involved in previous harassment incidents;
  - g) Whether the Respondent retaliated against the Complainant.
- 6.14 On completion of the report, the Harassment Officer shall forward a copy of the Investigation Report to the Complainant, the Respondent, and the BC Athletics Disciplinary Committee.

## **DISCIPLINE COMMITTEE**

- 6.15 The Discipline Committee shall receive the Investigation Report as prepared by the Harassment Officer.
- 6.16 After considering the Investigation Report, the Discipline Committee shall:
- a) make a determination as to whether the Respondent has engaged in conduct constituting harassment; and
  - b) If the Discipline Committee determines that Respondent has engaged in conduct constituting harassment, order such disciplinary action to be taken against the Respondent as is appropriate in the circumstances.
- 6.17 When imposing disciplinary action against the Respondent pursuant to sub-paragraph 6.16(b), the Disciplinary Committee may impose such disciplinary action as it considers appropriate in the circumstances which may include, but is not limited to:
- a) A verbal apology;
  - b) A written apology;
  - c) A letter of reprimand from the sport organization;
  - d) A fine or levy;
  - e) Referral to counseling;
  - f) Sensitivity training in harassment issues;
  - g) Removal of certain privileges of membership or employment;
  - h) Demotion or pay cut;
  - i) Temporary suspension with or without pay;
  - j) Termination of employment or contract;
  - k) Expulsion from membership.
- 6.18 The Disciplinary Committee shall, not more than 10 days after it makes its decision pursuant to paragraph 6.16, send a notice to the Complainant and the Respondent.

## **APPEALS**

- 6.19 A Complainant or Respondent who is dissatisfied with the decision of the BC Athletics Discipline Committee may, not more than 30 days after the date he or she receives notice of the Discipline Committee's decision, serve the President of BC Athletics with a Notice of Appeal and Request for Hearing.
- 6.20 The Notice of Appeal and Request for Hearing shall be in writing and shall set out the grounds for appeal.
- 6.21 Upon receipt of a Notice of Appeal and Request for Hearing, the President of BC Athletics shall (within 5 business days of its receipt) forward the notice of appeal and request for hearing to the Chair of the Appeals Panel who shall (within 10 business days of receipt of the notice to hear the appeal) select three (3) individuals (one of which may be the Chair) to hear the appeal (Appeals Committee). The Chair of the Appeals Panel shall send a copy of the Notice of Appeal and Request for Hearing together with a Hearing Notice by registered mail to the last known addresses of the Complainant and Respondent.
- 6.22 The Hearing Notice shall be sent at least 30 days in advance of the scheduled hearing and shall:
- a) specify the date, time, and location of the hearing;
  - b) advise the parties that they should bring with them to the hearing all relevant witnesses and other evidence they wish to be considered by the Appeals Committee;
  - c) advise the parties that they have the right to be represented at the hearing;
- 6.23 Within 10 days after completing a hearing, the Appeals Committee shall send a notice of its decision, by registered mail, to the last known addresses of the Complainant and Respondent.

## **7. MINORS**

- 7.1 If the Complainant is a minor, the complaint may be brought forward by a “Responsible Adult”. The Responsible Adult will have the right to act on behalf of the Complainant throughout the complaint process, including:
- a) Making a complaint;
  - b) Receiving all notices on behalf of the Complainant;
  - c) Being present at all dealings with the Complainant.
- 7.2 If the Respondent is a minor, the following shall apply:
- a) If the Harassment Advisor is attempting an informal resolution of a complaint, the Harassment Advisor may speak to the Respondent directly concerning the complaint PROVIDED THAT prior to speaking to the Respondent the Harassment Advisor shall inform the Respondent that he/she may have a Responsible Adult present during the meeting.
  - b) If the complaint is referred to a Harassment Officer for investigation:
    - i) a copy of the written complaint shall be forwarded to a parent or guardian of the Respondent if such person is known;
    - ii) the Respondent shall be advised that he/she has the right to be represented by a Responsible Adult;
    - iii) The Respondent’s designated Responsible Adult will have the right to act on behalf of the Respondent throughout the investigation process, including:
      - A) Responding to a written complaint
      - B) Receiving all notices on behalf of the Respondent; and
      - C) Being present at all dealings with the Respondent.

## **8. REVIEW AND APPROVAL**

- 8.1 This policy was approved by BC the Athletics Executive Committee of the Board of Directors on 26th day of March 1997.
- 8.2 This policy shall be reviewed by BC Athletics Discipline Committee and Legislative Chairs and senior staff from time to time to insure it remains current.

## **Appendix I**

### **PREVENTION - Information and Education**

BC Athletics realizes that to be at all effective, policies, information and education must be presented to the members and participants in Athletics at the community club and individual levels. To this end BC Athletics will:

1. Provide information on abuse and harassment to the member clubs and individuals through the Association Newsletter, an Information Brochure or other appropriate means;
2. Present the BC Athletics Policy on Harassment to the Member Clubs of BC Athletics for their review and eventual adoption/endorsement at the community club level;
3. Support and distribute information concerning educational workshops/seminars;
4. Include or present information on Harassment as part of Coaches, Officials, Athletes, Event Organizers and Administrators workshops/seminars/camps or other appropriate opportunities;
5. Provide information to clubs, committees and individuals on screening volunteers and staff;
6. Include Codes of Conduct as part of the information presented at workshops/seminars/camps and as part of the information provided to all athletes and staff of BC Athletics Teams; and
7. Provide other appropriate information and resources to the member clubs, individuals and participants.