



## **Parent – Complaint Management Guide**

Hockey Alberta wants to provide parents, caregivers and families with support in all areas of hockey including working through feedback, conflict and complaints.

To help guide the understanding of the role of Parents, the Local Minor Hockey Association (LMHA), and Hockey Alberta (HA) we have provided some guidance and information.

When a complaint or conflict with an LMHA has been identified what are everyone's roles?

Examples of complaints and conflict may be:

- Being unsatisfied with a disciplinary sanction or decision by your LMHA.
- Having concerns about your LMHA, the board, leadership or team personnel and their ability to remain unbiased, practice due diligence, and/or follow LMHA policies and procedures.
- Having concerns of bullying, harassment, disrespectful behaviour etc. by the board, leadership, or team personnel.
- Conflict of interest.
- Complaints against other players, parents and/or families in your team/LMHA or against another team/LMHA.
- Concerns with coaching, fair play guidelines, team selection, practice or game play etc.

### **Parent, Caregiver, Family Responsibility**

- Advocate for yourself, your family, and your athlete(s) within your LMHA.
- If it is safe to do so, speak with the individual(s) involved in the incident in a timely manner. Follow the 24hr rule.
- Address the issue the FIRST time it occurs, either through speaking with the individual(s) directly or through your LMHA.
  - o Seek to self-address and manage minor conflicts with respect and solutions focused outcomes the FIRST time they happen.
- Your association may have identified an individual who acts as the middle member for conflicts/concerns that arise at the team level. Check with your LMHA if you are unaware who this person is.
- Continue to bring issues forward, every time. Especially if it continues to occur after the first incident was actioned and/or resolved.
- Submit a formal complaint to your LMHA. If you are unsuccessful or unable to resolve the issue yourself first. Formal complaints in writing are preferred.
- Check in with the LMHA after you've submitted a complaint, advocate for yourself and your athlete(s), hold the LMHA accountable to their complaint or conduct management policies and processes.
- If you are unsatisfied with a discipline sanction/decision made because of an investigation/review by your LMHA inquire about making a formal appeal on the decision.
- Connect with Hockey Alberta only if the LMHA has not done due diligence and has clearly broken a policy or process.
- If the concern is of serious maltreatment (for example abuse, assault, sexual harassment) make a formal complaint to the Sport Complaint Independent Third Party (ITP).  
<https://sportcomplaints.ca/>



### **Local Minor Hockey Association (LMHA) Responsibility**

- See Hockey Alberta's Effective Conduct Management for Members process and Conduct Management Guide, under the Members tab.  
<https://www.hockeyalberta.ca/members/game-conduct-management/>
- Visit your LMHA website and/or connect with the LMHA Board to view the LMHA's internal policies and processes regarding conduct and complaint reviews.

### **Hockey Alberta's Responsibility**

- Holding the LMHA accountable to following their internal policies and procedures and to Hockey Alberta's policy and process guidelines.
- Supports safe play, safe environments, and inclusion for all through guidelines, policy implementation and accountability at the LMHA level.
- Will conduct a review of an LMHA's processes if there are sufficient details provided noting the mismanagement of a procedure, or a disregard for a policy and its process (ie; when there is evidence to show an LMHA has not done their due diligence).
- Responds to evidence that proves an LMHA has not done their due diligence.
- You can find Hockey Alberta's Policies under the Members tab "Bylaws & Regulations".  
<https://www.hockeyalberta.ca/members/bylaws-regulations/>

### **What Hockey Alberta Doesn't Do**

- HA is not an independent third party complaint mechanism.
- HA does not do appeals on the outcomes of process, conduct management, discipline sanctions and decisions of LMHAs.
- HA does not hold jurisdiction over an LMHA's elected board members and their behaviour.
- HA does not intervene in personal conflicts, disagreements, or taking sides of one person's experiences over another.

You can find an additional helpful table that breaks down some conflict management steps for you in the document Parent – Complaint Management Table.

### **Defining Bullying, Harassment, Maltreatment**

Your LMHA may have identified their own definitions for Bullying, Harassment and Maltreatment, or may align to the definitions laid out by Hockey Alberta. Seek out your LMHA policies to familiarize yourself with these definitions and others. Use the definitions to support your complaint or concern.

Hockey Alberta has identified definitions for these terms and some helpful tools on our website.

<https://www.hockeyalberta.ca/members/maltreatment-bullying-harassment/>

- Further information on dealing with Bullying can be found at the link below  
<https://www.hockeyalberta.ca/members/maltreatment-bullying-harassment/dealing-bullying/>
- Further information on dealing with Harassment can be found at the link below  
<https://www.hockeyalberta.ca/members/maltreatment-bullying-harassment/dealing-harassment/>
- Further information on dealing with Maltreatment can be found at the link below  
<https://www.hockeyalberta.ca/members/maltreatment-bullying-harassment/dealing-maltreatment/>

### **Strategies for bringing a concern, feedback, or complaint forward.**

- Address your concern, each time it happens, and in a timely manner.
- Look for safe places to talk.
- Provide written communication if talking in-person is not safe or possible.
- Consider having a third person present when sharing feedback or working through conflict.
- Plan, in advance, how you are going to communicate your concerns respectfully.
- Search out conflict resolution or constructive feedback strategies to help you prepare for your conversations.
- You may have some hesitations and reasons why you don't want to reach out and have a conversation yourself, consider brainstorming with others different strategies for addressing the challenges and hesitations in ways that make it safe for you and respectful to others.
- Don't point fingers, focus on the action/behaviour that is the concern and not on the individual and how you perceive them.
- Come to the meeting with helpful solutions-focused outcomes, rather than a punitive or "kick them out" attitude.
- Submit a formal complaint to your LMHA or the ITP.

### **Strategies for submitting a formal complaint to your LMHA.**

- Use your LMHA's feedback or complaint reporting mechanism/steps, if any. You may be able to find this on your LMHA's website and/or through connecting with a board member.
- If the LMHA doesn't have a formal reporting mechanism, provide your complaint in writing.
  - o Some LMHAs have safety or discipline coordinators that you can direct your complaint to.
  - o All LMHAs have Presidents who can receive complaints or feedback.
- Note details when sharing your complaint.
  - o Date, time, place, individuals involved.
  - o Concerning behaviour and/or actions.
  - o Any breaches in conduct & policy.
  - o Suggest resolution or solutions to the issue.
  - o Try to remove personal opinions and focus on the concerning issues/behaviours to help with unbiased reviews.
- If the concern is of serious maltreatment (for example abuse, assault, sexual harassment) make a formal complaint to the Sport Complaint Independent Third Party (ITP).  
<https://sportcomplaints.ca/>

### **Strategies for advocating for yourself, your family, and your athlete(s).**

- Ensure your own behaviour models respect and integrity towards coaches, officials, participants, and other parents. Your LMHA may have a parent code of conduct that you can remind yourself of.
- Understand the issues and become knowledgeable.
- Know and support your Association's policies and procedures.
- Act when you see bullying, harassing or abusive situations.
- Speak Out and promote safe environments.
- Bring a complaint, concern, feedback forward at the FIRST issue. Do not wait until the behaviours and/or concerns build up. Similarly, don't wait until the end of the season to address issues that happened at the start or have been building up.
- Continue to bring forward issues, concerns, complaints, and feedback as they arise. Especially if it is repeated behaviour that had been previously addressed but has not seemed to change.

- Consider applying/running for a board member role with your LMHA, to influence change at the highest level.
- Develop strategies for dealing with the unhealthy behaviours of others. Coping strategies, resiliency behaviours, calming and de-stressing activities. Find ways to manage the impact of the harmful behaviours while simultaneously holding your LMHA accountable to addressing the harmful behaviours each and every time they occur.
- Be respectful when you bring your concerns forward, LMHAs are volunteer ran and may be supporting many different tasks. Help your LMHA be successful in supporting your complaints and concerns by giving them details, managing your emotions and suggesting solutions focused outcomes vs. a punitive or “kicking people out” mentality.
- Volunteer with your team/LMHA activities to help be part of the solution to making your spaces and teams safe, inclusive, welcoming and free from harm.

### **Sample complaints and suggested next steps.**

1. Complaints involving team and/or coach behaviour being unacceptable, consisting of harassment, bullying and harmful language.

*If the behaviour is a serious maltreatment offense, thinking along the lines of physical or sexual abuse, severe harassment, sexual harassment, and discrimination, make a report to the Independent Third Party (ITP).*

<https://sportcomplaints.ca/>

- a. If the complaint is about an opposing team and/or your child/your child’s team does not want to play against this team again.

*Recommendation is to bring the information and details of the harmful interaction forward to your LMHA and to the LMHA of the opposing team (if different than your own). Submit a formal complaint to the LMHA who has decision making over the person/team causing harm.*

- b. If this complaint is about conduct happening on your own team and/or the players don’t want to keep playing.

*Recommend bringing this issue forward at the team level first. Respectfully discuss the incident with the team staff and seek a resolution. Bring a solutions-focused mindset and suggestions, focusing on wanting to stop the harmful behaviour and create safe environments for everyone, not just on punitive punishments.*

*If the first step does not result in changes, or you are dissatisfied with the solution bring the issue forward to your LMHA in a more formal reporting capacity.*

2. If there is a conflict of interest being noted between the board/leadership and coaches/team personnel and you are uncomfortable bringing complaints forward because it seems like those in charge are siding with their family/friends.

*Recommendation is to note the conflict of interest and where it is causing concern or breaking an LMHA’s policy and submit a formal complaint to the LMHA with this information. Holding your LMHA accountable to their investigation policies. Look for written confirmation/decline of an investigation into your complaint.*

*If there are details/evidence noting your LMHA has not followed fair and impartial process in reviewing and/or investigating your complaint this information can be shared with Hockey Alberta. Hockey Alberta will not take on their own investigations of complaints. However, Hockey Alberta can support getting your complaint investigated by holding the LMHA accountable to their processes, which includes removing conflict of interest from conduct reviews.*

3. If concerning conduct has occurred in the dressing room (bullying, harassment, inappropriate language, sexual innuendos, changing challenges, physical or sexual assault etc.).



*If the behaviour is a series maltreatment offense, thinking along the lines of physical or sexual abuse, severe harassment, sexual harassment, and discrimination, make a report to the Independent Third Party (ITP). <https://sportcomplaints.ca/>*

*If the concern has not been submitted to ITP, bring the issue forward at the team level first. Respectfully discuss the incident with the team staff and seek a resolution. Bring a solutions-focused mindset and suggestions, focusing on wanting to stop the harmful behaviour and create safe environments for everyone, not just on punitive punishments. The rule of two is helpful to look in to as it supports dressing room supervision and seeks to minimize many types of dressing room conflict.*

*If addressing the behaviour at the team level does not result in changes, or you are dissatisfied with the solution, bring the issue forward to your LMHA in a more formal reporting capacity.*

*\*note reporting Hockey related incidents to police and/or having police involved in investigations of an incident that occurred in consort with a Hockey related activity/personnel etc. does not remove the responsibility of bringing the issue forward to the ITP and/or your LMHA for the sport related investigation and discipline. Please make sure you are also making a report into the ITP or your LMHA to support having the concern looked at from the hockey lens.*