

CONFLICT RESOLUTION POLICY

Community councils from time to time will be faced with situations that require the committee to deal with complaints, disputes or conflict. These situations typically would come to the attention of members of council from an athlete/s, coaches/volunteers, a parent, or an outside agency.

It is important to note that conflict within any organisation is a natural occurrence and that a certain amount of conflict can be considered healthy. As examples, it can open up discussion about differences, it can identify a need to make change within the local program, and often conflict can improve lines of communication and understanding amongst those concerned.

In most situations, conflicts can be dealt with within the community and the council plays a major role in managing the process. Therefore, community councils need to be properly equipped to deal with conflict in order to ensure that situations are managed effectively and fairly and to minimize potential escalation of the problem and to prevent breakdown of relationships and untenable experiences.

By having, some straightforward processes in place when dealing with conflict; it can bring about improved relationships with those concerned and a quick resolution.

As a note, the Disciplinary and Corrective Action Policies and Procedures outline the process when dealing with an athlete or volunteer in violation of the policy and should be followed when faced with correcting a behaviour or performance difficulty. If the behaviour or incident cannot be dealt with according to the Disciplinary and Corrective Action Policies and Procedures and cannot be dealt with through a conflict resolution process then the community council should refer to the Provincial office.

Some community councils strike up a small adhoc committee to deal with a sensitive conflict situation, which works to protect confidentiality, individual's feeling and affect on personal dignity. Guidelines for such a committee are available from the Provincial office.

At any time, the community council can contact and request a representative from the Provincial Office to assist and discuss possible solutions to deal with an issue. **You are not alone!**

The following points (and examples) can be used as a guide to assist in a conflict resolution process and to direct you in determining when and if you should contact or involve the Provincial Office staff

Basic Conflict Resolution

1. Identify the Problem

- What is the problem?
 - Is this an issue between two volunteers that can be resolved by them talking about it outside of a practice?
 - Is this an issue with an athlete that could be resolved by speaking with a parent/guardian?
 - Is this an issue between two athletes that started at their residence prior to entering the practice?
 - Has there been a violation of the code of behaviour policy?

- **Whose problem is it?**
 - Is this an issue between two volunteers that does not need the community council to intercede in?
 - Is the behavioural difficulties an athlete is having the responsibility of the family or agency to manage as opposed to volunteers at a program?

- **Does the problem need to be solved?**
 - Is this an isolated incident that may not ever be seen again?
 - Will these two volunteers ever resolve their conflict?

- **How does it make you/others feel?**
 - Is one person's behaviour having an affect on the entire program?
 - Do you feel threatened by this volunteer?

2. What Are The Possible Solutions?

Will a one on one discussion with the athlete/volunteer and the head coach be enough to identify the problem and come up with possible solutions?

- Should the athlete be asked to sit out this one practice because of their rough play and to return next week?
- Should the head coach be contacting the parent/guardian to discuss a problem from the practice and to ask for any suggestions as to modify the behaviour?
- Is it possible for these 2 volunteers to work together or should a different program be suggested?
- If repeated athletes have voiced concerns, should an athlete survey be sent out to every athlete for feedback?
- Should a behavioural contract for an athlete be developed between the head coach, the athletes and the parent/guardian?
- Should a volunteer be verbally warned about their abusive language and a report be filled out in case it happens again?
- If communication seems to be a problem amongst volunteers, should a newsletter be developed to open the lines of communication?
- Is the incident of a serious enough nature that the Provincial Office should be contacted or a suspension discussed?

3. Try Solutions

- Did it work?
 - If trying one of the suggestions mentioned above worked, then the problem is solved. Congratulations!

- **If it did not work, you need to consider why it did not. You should consider:**
 - Did you have the conversation with the volunteer in a private area and keep the conversation confidential?
 - Did you only deal with the situation at hand and not bring other issues into the discussion?
 - Was the parent made to feel comfortable when discussing their son/daughter or did they feel threatened about the tone the conversation took on?
 - Is it possible to modify this person's behaviour?
 - Did you correctly identify the problem or were there other circumstances you did not realize prior to starting the conversation?
 - Do you need to ask for assistance from your community co-ordinator or the Provincial Office?

How should a complaint/problem be dealt with?

Most problems can be dealt with in a calm, rational manner through a simple discussion.

It is always important to deal with athletes and volunteers in a manner with which you would like to be treated. ***Fairness, firmness and sensitivity*** should always be used when applying any corrective action. Head Coaches and Community Councils should always remember that teaching and coaching people through positive feedback as an immediate follow-up to an incident should always be used. All minor occurrences should be dealt with at that time and corrective action should be instituted immediately. If any consequences are placed on an athlete it is imperative that a parent or guardian be involved in the process.

If at all possible, the problem should be discussed between the athlete and coach or volunteer and coach prior to calling anyone else in. If the problem cannot be dealt with at the club level, a representative from the community council should be contacted to discuss the circumstances of the problem. The community council will then investigate the problem and attempt to solve it at their level. If the community council cannot solve the problem, or the volunteer/athlete is not satisfied by the solutions proposed by the community council, the Provincial Office should be contacted.

When should the Provincial Office be called in?

The Provincial Office should be contacted for any serious offences including anything involving a criminal offence such as intentional serious theft, physical or sexual assault, continuous verbal abuse, harassment and any serious breach of the Code of Conduct or as identified in the Disciplinary and Corrective Action Policy. In any of

these instances the police in collaboration with Provincial office may be contacted along with notification to the athlete's parent or guardian.

As mentioned previously the Provincial Office (Area Coordinator) should also be contacted if the community council/head coach is not sure of how to proceed or deal with a specific incident or complaint.

What needs to be in writing when reporting a serious occurrence/incident?

Any incidents or complaint should be documented as part of your records. The incident/accident report forms are an excellent tool to capture what happened and ensure that the incident is well documented. In the event of a more serious incident, ensure that additional information is collected and that documentation includes:

- Written description of the occurrence
- Whether there are any witnesses and/or evidence to support claims
- All facts are gathered, a description of circumstances and individuals involved
- Degree of harm caused to the victim and the Special Olympics program

Who in the Provincial Office should I contact?

- Sport and athlete issues – Sport Services Manager – extension 234
- Competition issues – Competition Manager – extension 235
- Community Council and Volunteer issues – extension 230

If the problem is of a very serious nature or involves legal representation, the Director Organizational Development should be contacted immediately.

Appeals to decisions made by the community council or the Provincial Office would follow the guidelines as written in the Corrective action and Disciplinary Guidelines Policy.

Please note: From time to time, the Provincial Office may directly receive a verbal complaint or receive a complaint in writing from a member of the organisation. While we will involve the community council in the complaint procedure process, it is the responsibility of the office to respond and to bring resolution to the complaint.

Should you need further clarification on this guideline feel free to contact the Provincial Office.

RESOLUTION MODEL

Problem Recognition

- Identify the source(s) of the problem/conflict (i.e. how did it come to your attention?)

- determine if action is required
- identify the "players"
- identify your role (i.e. are you the appropriate person to problem-solve?)

Problem Analysis

- consider all factors contributing to the problem? (e.g. values, interests, relationships, resource control, etc.)
- collect information about each contributing factor

Problem Definition

- define the problem by framing issues carefully
- learn about the interests of all participants (e.g. substantive, procedural, psychological, etc.)
- separate the problem(s) from the personalities

Identify Desired Outcome(s)

- begin to generate a range of possible solutions for a durable settlement
- consider how long will it take
- consider any financial cost
- project the best and worst possible results

Select Appropriate Method(s)

- identify potential direct and indirect risks (personal, emotional, time and resource allocation, etc.)
- consider alternatives
- look at face-saving opportunities
- choose "de-escalators" which will improve communication, build momentum, increase (not decrease) contact between participants, identify common interests, avoid victimization, etc.

Action Plan Phase

- develop your action plan
- fractionate bigger issues into manageable pieces
- identify common interests, superordinate goals and values
- consult with others and remain objective
- change what isn't working
- recognize this may be an on-going process that will require time
- understand that conflict is natural and can be constructive

Review

- review the planning process (the 5 w's)
- learn from mistakes to avoid future pitfalls
- ask yourself: was the process fair, open and collaborative?
 - did it lead to open dialogue?
 - did it result in healed and/or strengthened relationships?
 - did it improve negotiation, communication and problem-solving skills?

- did it increase understanding and respect?

Implementation

- discuss the final action plan (format and content) with all parties
- ensure the action plan is clear and concrete, clearly outlining duties and responsibilities
- give guidance, as required, in carrying out the action plan
- ensure all parties understand the consequences of a failed action plan implementation
- build in a progress review process
- confirm durability and party satisfaction