

Blizzard Soccer Club

Harassment, Abuse and Bullying Policy

Policy Statement:

It is the policy of the Blizzard Soccer Club that there shall be no harassment, abuse or bullying, contact or non-contact of any athlete in any of its programs. The Blizzard Soccer Club and its' Board of Directors expect every parent, volunteer, coach and staff member to take all reasonable steps to safeguard the welfare of its athletes and to protect them from any form of maltreatment.

Definition:

Harassment, abuse and bullying is any behavior, verbal, nonverbal or sexual that causes another to feel intimidated, offended, embarrassed and/or humiliated. Harassment denies the dignity and respect of individuals. It is not an accepted behavior towards anyone of the Blizzard Soccer Club be they athlete, coach, volunteer or parent.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of examples of harassment:

- Unwelcome jokes, innuendo or teasing about a person's body, looks race, sexual orientation etc.
- Condescending, patronizing, threatening or punishing actions which undermine self-esteem
- Practical jokes which cause awkwardness or embarrassment, or may endanger a person's safety
- Degrading or inappropriate hazing rituals
- Unwanted or unnecessary physical contact including touching, patting, pinching etc.

Specific to 'bullying' which is similar to harassment in that it is defined as hurtful interpersonal mistreatment of a person; it can be broken down into four types:

- Physical (hit or kick; take or damage personal property)
- Verbal (name calling; insults; constant teasing)
- Relational (try to cut off victims from social connection by convincing others to exclude or reject a certain person)
- Reactive (engage in bullying as well as provoke bullies to attack by taunting them)

The following is a non-exhaustive list of examples of tactics used by bullies to control their targets:

- Unwarranted yelling and screaming directed at the victim
- Continually criticizing the victim's abilities
- Repeated insults or put downs of the victim
- Repeated threats to remove or restrict opportunities or privileges
- Threats of and actual physical violence

Duty to Report:

Alberta has a mandatory reporting law regarding the abuse and neglect of children and youth. Consequently, it is the policy of the Blizzard Soccer Club that any Blizzard personnel (coach, part-time and full-time staff, volunteer, athlete, team official) or parent or guardian who, has reasonable grounds to suspect that an athlete is or may be suffering or may have suffered from harassment, abuse or bullying shall immediately report the suspicion and the information on which it is based to the proper authorities (Coach, parent, Child and Family Services or the local police detachment).

Guidelines for Coaches:

- Coaches have the duty and responsibility to establish and maintain an athletic environment free of harassment, abuse and bullying of or between athletes.
- Coaches have a duty and responsibility to take seriously all incidents or complaints of harassment, abuse and bullying.
- Coaches will have the opportunity to pursue training and educational experiences that enhance coaches' understanding of issues surrounding harassment, abuse and bullying.

Guidelines for Athletes:

- An athlete should be encouraged to immediately report an incident he/she believes is a form of harassment, abuse or bullying either by a coach or teammate.
- An athlete should feel free of any reprisals as a result of reporting harassment, abuse or bullying.
- Athletes should feel confident that a report of harassment, abuse or bullying will be listened to carefully and taken seriously.
- Athletes being harassed, abused or bullied will be supported and assistance given to uphold their right to play in a safe environment which allows their development as an athlete and individual.

Harassment, Abuse and Bullying Complaint Procedures:

A person who experiences harassment, abuse or bullying is encouraged to make it known to the 'alleged abuser' that the behavior is unwelcome, offensive and contrary to the policies of the Blizzard Soccer Club. If confronting the 'alleged abuser' is not possible or if after confronting the 'alleged abuser', the abuse continues, the 'complainant' should report it to the General Manager of the Blizzard Soccer Club or designate.

If the initial request by the 'alleged victim' to the 'alleged abuser' to stop the harassment, abuse or bullying is not successful, the 'alleged victim' or parent may put the complaint in writing and submit it to the current Blizzard Soccer Club address as found on the website: www.CalgaryBlizzard.com

Once contacted by the 'complainant', the role of the General Manager is to serve in a neutral, unbiased capacity in receiving the complaint, and where appropriate assisting in its informal resolution. The General Manager may choose to turn the complaint over to the Chair of the Discipline Committee for resolution.

Where a third party person believes that a coach, athlete, employee or volunteer of the Blizzard Soccer Club has experienced or is experiencing harassment, abuse and/or bullying and reports this belief to the General Manager, the General Manager or designate (Chair of the Discipline Committee) with the person said to have experienced the harassment, abuse and/or bullying and proceed in accordance with the 'Complaint Procedure.'

Complaint Procedure:

There are three possible outcomes from a meeting of the Complainant and the General Manager or Designate (Designate may be the Chair of the Discipline Committee) which may then go to the Discipline Committee for review. A written report will be provided to the Board:

- It may be determined by the General Manager or designate that the conduct does not constitute harassment, abuse or bullying as defined in this policy, in which case the matter will be closed;
- The Complainant may decide to pursue an informal resolution utilizing appropriate mediation techniques and strategies which will negotiate or mediate an acceptable resolution of the complaint; or
- The Complainant may decide to file a formal written complaint, in which case the General Manager or designate will receive the written complaint and advise the President of the Blizzard Soccer Club or designate in his/her absence, who will appoint an independent individual to conduct an investigation of the complaint.

The 'Investigator' will carry out the investigation in a timely manner and at the conclusion of the investigation will submit a written report to the President or designate, which will include a recommendation that:

- No further action is taken because the complaint is unfounded or the conduct has failed to be determined as behavior which falls within the Blizzard Soccer Club definition of harassment, abuse and/or bullying.
- The complaint has merit and should proceed to a hearing.

Within 10 business days of receiving the written report of the 'Investigator' that recommends that there be a hearing, the President or designate, will convene a 'Panel' of the Board to hear the complaint. The 'panel' shall consist of a minimum of 3 Board members of which one must be a member of the Discipline Committee. A written response must be made to the Complainant within 10 business days from the date it was received.

Hearing:

The 'panel' will hold the hearing as soon as possible, but not more than 15 business days after the panel has been appointed. The panel will govern the hearing as it deems appropriate in the circumstances, provided that:

- Members of the panel shall select from among themselves a Chairperson;
- A quorum shall be all of the panel members (minimum of 3 members);
- Decisions shall be by majority vote where the Chairperson carries a vote;
- Both the Complainant and the Respondent will be given the opportunity to make oral and written submissions to the panel;
- The hearing shall be held in private;
- The parties shall be given 10 business days written notice of the day, time and place of the hearing;
- The respondent shall receive a copy of the formal complaint;
- The Complainant and the Respondent shall each receive a copy of the Investigator's report';
- Both the Complainant and the Respondent must be present at the hearing to respond to the Investigator's report, and able to respond to questions the Panel may have;
- The Investigator may attend the hearing at the request of the Panel;

Decision:

As soon as possible but within 10 business days of the conclusion of the hearing, the Panel will provide its written decision to the President or designate, with a copy provided to both the Complainant and the Respondent. The decision will contain:

- A summary of the relevant facts;

- A determination as to whether the acts complained of constitute harassment, abuse or bullying as defined in the policy;
- Disciplinary action against the Respondent, if the acts constitute harassment, abuse or bullying;
- In addition, the decision may contain measure to remedy or mitigate the harm or loss suffered by the Complainant, if the acts constitute harassment, abuse or bullying.

If the Panel determines that the allegations of harassment, abuse or bullying are false, vexatious, retaliatory or frivolous, its report may direct that there be disciplinary sanctions against the Complainant.

Unless otherwise decided, disciplinary sanctions directed by the Panel shall take effect immediately.

The decision of the Panel will be final and binding upon the Complainant, the Respondent and the Blizzard Soccer Club. Appeals to this process must be carried out according to the process outlined below.

Appeals:

Both the Complainant and the Respondent shall have the right to appeal the decision of the Panel. A notice of intention to appeal, along with the grounds for appeal, must be provided to the President of the Blizzard Soccer Club within 72 hours of receiving the report. The notice must include the grounds upon which the decision is being appealed.

Appeals may be made on the following grounds:

- The investigation was conducted in an unfair or biased manner;
- Panel members did not follow procedure as set out in this policy;
- Members of the Panel were unfair or unbiased;
- Panel members reached a decision which could not be supported by the evidence as provided in the investigation;
- Panel members reached a decision which was grossly unfair or unreasonable;

The appeal shall be heard by a Board appointed by the President of the Blizzard Soccer Club comprised of:

- One representative of the Blizzard Soccer Club Board
- One representative of the Calgary Minor Soccer Association
- One outside individual not associated with the Blizzard Soccer Club

The decision of the appeal board will be based on a review of the documentation regarding the complaint, including the statements of the Complainant and Respondent, the report of the Investigator, the decision of the Panel and the notice of the appeal.

In deciding the Appeal, the Appeal Board may uphold the decision of the Panel, reverse the decision of the Panel and/or modify any of the Panel's recommendations for disciplinary action or remedial measures.

The decision of the Appeal Board will be final and binding. A written response must be made within 10 business days from the date the decision is made.

Record Keeping:

The President of the Blizzard Soccer Club and the Office Manager of the Blizzard Soccer Club shall keep a secure record of the Panel report and any appeal proceedings. The record shall contain all relevant documents including but not limited to:

- A copy of the complaint or report
- Responses to the complaint
- Terms of reference of the investigator
- Interim measures (if any)
- Witness statements
- Investigator's report
- Mediated solution (must be signed by both parties)
- Decision of the Panel
- Sanctions imposed (if any)
- Any other related correspondence
- Appeals (if any)
- Decision of the Appeal Board

To the extent possible, the above documents and documents resulting in a violation of the Harassment, Abuse and Bullying policy shall be held in confidence by the Blizzard Soccer Club. However, there may be circumstances where information may/must be shared which include but not limited to:

- When criminal conduct may be involved;
- When it is believed necessary to protect others from harassment, abuse or bullying;
- In the course of an investigation by a law enforcement agency;
- To protect the interests of the Blizzard Soccer Club;
- When required by law.

It is important to note that the Blizzard Soccer Club will not allow or pursue retaliation of any kind for reports or complaints, or for assistance or information provided to applicable authorities in connection with an investigation of harassment, abuse or bullying, where the reports or complaints are made or provided in good faith.

Acknowledgements:

The information contained in this document was generously shared and is used with the permission of the Chinooks Soccer Club, Hockey Canada, Women's Sport Foundation, Calgary Catholic School District, and the American Sports Council.