



Huntsville Girls Hockey Association Feedback and Complaint Policy

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1. Purpose

To ensure all concerns and complaints are addressed fairly, transparently, and based on verifiable information, while distinguishing between informal feedback and formal complaints that require investigation.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all complaints or feedback regarding HGHA Board members, volunteers, team staff, or association members.

3. Definitions

- Party: An individual or group involved in a complaint.
- Complaint (Formal Complaint): Allegation that a party acted contrary to HGHA, OWHA, or Hockey Canada by-laws, policies, procedures, or code of conduct.
Examples:
 - Harassment, bullying, or abuse
 - Misconduct by board members, volunteers, or team staff
 - Safety violations or violations of HGHA policies
- Feedback (Negative Feedback): Opinion or information regarding HGHA performance, decisions, activities, or procedures that does not constitute a formal complaint.
Examples:
 - Suggestions for improving practices or programs
 - Minor disagreements with coaching methods
 - Comments on communication or scheduling
- Misconduct: Behaviour contrary to HGHA or OWHA policies that is not harassment, bullying, or abuse.
- Rebuttal: A statement intended to disprove or contradict a claim.

4. Handling Negative Feedback (Informal)

Purpose: To address suggestions, concerns, or constructive criticism that do not require formal investigation.

Process:

- Feedback must include the individual's name and contact information. **Anonymous feedback will not be reviewed**, except in cases of immediate player safety, discrimination, abuse, or severe maltreatment.

- Feedback can be submitted verbally or in writing to a coach, manager, team staff, or board member.
- The recipient acknowledges receipt and may follow up for clarification.
- Feedback is reviewed and considered for improvement but is not formally recorded.
- If feedback escalates into a complaint, it will follow the Formal Complaint Process.

5. Formal Complaint Process

5.1 Submission Requirements

Complaints must be in writing and include:

- Complainant's name and contact information
- Details of the issue and involved parties
- Any supporting evidence

5.2 Anonymous Complaints

- **Formal complaints and feedback must not be anonymous**, except in cases of immediate player safety, discrimination, abuse, or severe maltreatment.
- Such cases are forwarded to the appropriate authority (OWHA, Police, Child Protection Services, Hockey Canada Independent Safe Sport group).
- **Standard Response: If a complaint or feedback is anonymous, the Director sends the following message:**

"Thank you for your message. HGHA policy states that anonymous complaints and feedback cannot be reviewed or investigated. To address your concern appropriately, please resubmit it with your name and contact information so we can follow up directly."

5.3 Frivolous or Unreasonable Complaints

- **Complaints that are malicious, clearly frivolous, or unreasonable will not be investigated.**
- Complainants making frivolous complaints may face disciplinary action.
- Members are always encouraged to raise concerns in good faith. A complaint is only considered frivolous or unreasonable when it is intentionally harmful, harassing, repeatedly submitted after resolution, or made without any basis in fact. The Association will not impose discipline for complaints brought forward respectfully and in good faith.
- Any disciplinary action related to frivolous or unreasonable complaints will be determined by the Board, based on the severity and intent of the behaviour.

5.4 Procedural Fairness

- All parties will receive notice of the allegations and the applicable rules or policies.
- Parties have time to prepare rebuttal materials.
- Investigations must be conducted in a reasonable timeframe without prejudice.
- No party shall unreasonably delay the process.

5.5 Investigation, Acknowledgment & Communication

1. Any Board member receiving a complaint acknowledges receipt immediately.
2. The complaint is forwarded to a Committee (default: President, Vice President, and the receiving Board member).
 - If the President or Vice President are involved, substitute uninvolved Directors.
3. The Committee evaluates the complaint for validity. If valid, a full investigation is conducted, including interviews and evidence review.
4. Recommendations are forwarded to all Board members.
5. The Board votes to adopt or reject recommendations, in whole or in part.
6. Parties may be asked to attend a meeting to speak on the matter.
7. Investigative materials are confidential; publicly available resolutions exclude identifiable information of minors.
8. Committee representatives communicate the final decision to the parties.
9. Reference: For anonymous complaints or feedback, see Section 5.2.

5.6 Team-Specific Complaints

- Wait at least 24 hours after the incident before raising a complaint.
- Attempt to resolve the issue with the coach, manager, or team staff.
- If unresolved, escalate to the House League or Competitive Director.
- The Director may consult two uninvolved Board members for assistance.
- If unresolved or deemed serious, the matter is referred to the Board under the steps above.

6. Severe Maltreatment Allegations

- Allegations of criminal offences, abuse, or immediate danger are immediately forwarded to authorities and Hockey Canada's Independent Safe Sport group.

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