

## **RESPONDING TO A DISCLOSURE**

### **Guide for Sport Leaders in Manitoba**

#### **Who is this for?**

Board members, coaches, administrators, staff, and volunteers in Manitoba sport organizations.

#### **Purpose:**

To guide you when someone discloses conduct that may constitute Maltreatment or a Non-Maltreatment Code of Conduct violation, or other conflict.

#### **FIRST: How to Respond in the Moment**

When someone discloses concerning behaviour:

##### **✓ DO:**

- Stay calm and listen.
- Thank them for coming forward.
- Validate the courage it takes to share.
- Clarify immediate safety concerns.
- Explain next steps and available options.
- Maintain confidentiality (only share on a need-to-know basis).

##### **✗ DO NOT:**

- Investigate.
- Promise a specific outcome.
- Minimize the concern.
- Confront the alleged respondent.
- Share details broadly.

- Issue discipline yourself (unless you are formally responsible under PSO policy).

You should **not investigate or issue decisions on a matter** and must maintain confidentiality. You can inform someone on what their options are using the information below.

### **NEXT: Determine the Type of Concern**

In Manitoba, complaints fall into two main categories:

#### **A. Maltreatment Complaints**

Handled through **Sport Manitoba's Independent Third Party (ITP)** mechanism.

Maltreatment includes:

- Physical, sexual, or psychological abuse
- Grooming
- Neglect
- Unreasonable discrimination
- Other conduct prescribed under the Protecting Youth in Sports Act

These matters are addressed independently through mediation or arbitration via the ITP.

#### **B. Non-Maltreatment Code of Conduct Violations**

Handled by the PSO.

PSOs are responsible for:

- Case managing non-maltreatment complaints
- Issuing disciplinary decisions

- Offering alternative dispute resolution

### **Your Role as a Leader**

You are **not the decision-maker** (unless designated by policy).

You are a:

- Listener
- Support person
- Referral point
- Boundary-setter

For all complaints (maltreatment or non-maltreatment related), PSOs must:

- Fulfill Duty to Report obligations
- Implement provisional measures where necessary
- Maintain confidentiality

### **If There Is Immediate Risk**

If a minor may be at risk:

- Follow mandatory reporting obligations to the ITP and authorities.
- Contact Child & Family Services or police as required.
- Safety always comes first.

### **How to Guide Someone Who Is Considering Reporting**

You can say: "You have options. You don't have to decide today. I can help you understand the process."

## **Reporting Options:**

### **1) File a Maltreatment Complaint**

Through the Sport Manitoba mechanism (managed by ITP Sport).

- Independent case manager
- Neutral process
- Mediation or arbitration
- Quasi-judicial structure

### **2) File a Non-Maltreatment Code of Conduct Complaint**

Through your PSO's internal discipline process.

### **3) Seek a Confidential Conversation First**

Before filing a complaint, individuals may:

- Contact the ITP for general guidance
- Reach out to **Bruce Wood** at the Safe Sport Line for a confidential conversation

This allows them to:

- Understand options
- Ask process questions
- Clarify thresholds
- Reduce fear of the unknown

## **Managing Escalation & Emotion**

Complaint processes are emotional and taxing.

Common reactions:

- Demands for immediate suspension
- Threats of media or litigation
- Urgency for validation

Helpful responses:

- Define the limits of your role.
- Explain procedural fairness.
- Clarify what you can and cannot do.
- Take your time.
- Encourage written communication when possible

You can say:

“An accepted complaint does not mean the allegations are proven. The process determines the outcome.”

### **What You Should Never Do**

- Conduct your own investigation.
- Interview witnesses.
- Collect evidence independently.
- Share confidential information with board members casually.
- Promise sanctions.
- Offer legal advice.

### **Key Messaging to Participants**

If someone asks what happens next, you can explain:

#### **General Timeline:**

1. Complaint Reported
2. Triage (1–7 days)

3. Dispute Resolution Process
4. Mediation or Arbitration
5. Appeal (if applicable)

**Possible Outcomes:**

- Apology
- Education
- Probation
- Suspension
- Expulsion

**Quick Script You Can Use**

“Thank you for sharing this with me. I’m glad you came forward. I’m not able to investigate or decide the outcome, but I can help connect you to the right process. You have the option to file a complaint through Sport Manitoba’s independent mechanism if it may be maltreatment, or through our PSO if it’s a Code of Conduct matter. If you’re unsure, you can speak confidentially with the ITP or Bruce Wood at the Safe Sport Line before deciding. Let’s talk about what feels safest and most appropriate for you.”