



VOLLEYBALLBC

## SAFE SPORT SERIES

# REPORTING MALTREATMENT

An important part of eliminating abuse and maltreatment in volleyball is handling and reporting concerning behaviour or incidents when they occur. Too often in sport we have accepted or perpetuated inappropriate behaviour as being part of the culture. But times are changing and for good reason. As more people speak up and more examples of abuse and maltreatment are shared, we are able to change the culture and ensure that all volleyball programs are participant-centred with safety and well-being as priorities.

Volleyball BC is committed to providing a safe, effective, and supportive process for reporting maltreatment, abuse, or inappropriate behaviour. This document reviews what to do if you experience concerning behaviour within a volleyball program. It also provides tips for disclosing and reporting incidents, and outlines additional resources.

### **Our commitment (from our [Abuse Policy](#))**

Volleyball Canada and Volleyball BC have zero tolerance for any type of abuse. Individuals are required to report abuse or suspected abuse to Volleyball Canada or to VBC so that those matters can be addressed in an expeditious manner.

Volleyball Canada and Volleyball BC will share all decisions regarding Abuse with one another. All information shared will be in compliance with Volleyball Canada and/or Volleyball BC's Privacy Policy and will be subject to applicable privacy laws and regulations.

The policies of Volleyball Canada and Volleyball BC require that complaints, including those related to harassment, discrimination, and abuse, must be handled by an Independent Third Party ([Abuse-Free Sport](#)).

Volleyball Canada and Volleyball BC pledge not to dismiss, penalize, discipline, or retaliate or discriminate against any person who discloses information or submits, in good faith, a report concerning abuse.

### **Concerns about welfare or safety may come to light in a variety of ways in volleyball:**

- You may experience abuse, maltreatment, or inappropriate behaviour as a participant in a program
- You may observe or hear something concerning by a child, young person or adult in a program.
- You may see or receive something inappropriate or abusive online from a Volleyball BC participant.
- Information may be received from outside of the volleyball community (eg from the police) to indicate that an individual involved may represent a risk to others.
- Concerning information may come to light during the recruitment or screening process for coaches, referees, or other volunteers.
- Someone may choose to disclose abuse, maltreatment, or inappropriate behaviour during a volleyball program. A well-run sports event or program with trustworthy and approachable people in charge may provide just the opportunity or trigger for someone to tell about worries they may have, either in their sport or in their family/community.

## What are signs to look for?

### SIGNS & SYMPTOMS OF ABUSE OR MALTREATMENT

#### IMMEDIATE SIGNS

- Loses enthusiasm for sport, even for competition
- Doesn't want to practice, or skips out on practice without an explanation
- Stops trying in practice or competition, perhaps in hopes of getting kicked off the team
- Performance declines
- Avoids contact with a particular individual, such as a coach, assistant coach, or athletic trainer
- Changes from outgoing to reserved, depressed and withdrawn
- Has a sudden mood change, such as a violent emotional outburst

#### LONG-TERM SIGNS

- Poor self-esteem
- Trust issues
- Anxiety
- Feelings of isolation
- Depression
- Self-destruction
- Substance abuse
- Disordered eating

Keep in mind that these behaviors individually do not necessarily indicate a person has been abused. But if several of these behaviors are present, there is probably something going on that is making the individual reluctant to participate in their sport. If you have observed these behaviors, open up a conversation to find out what may be going on.

### SIGNS & SYMPTOMS OF INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR OR POOR PRACTICE

Poor practice or inappropriate behaviour refers to behaviour from a coach, volunteer or member of staff that causes a participant distress or harm but might not meet the threshold of abuse.

Inappropriate behaviour can be subtle or happen over a long period of time, making it less noticeable and difficult to decide whether it's something that needs to be addressed.

Some examples of what inappropriate behaviour or poor practice might look like are:

- Pushing someone to train or perform on an injury or whilst unwell
- Shouting, berating or humiliating someone
- Not providing adequate or safe equipment or spaces for participants to use
- Pressuring someone to drastically change their diet, lose or make weight, or follow an unhealthy diet plan
- Coaching with alcohol or marijuana on the breath
- Setting unrealistic expectations for someone
- Failing to safely supervise or support someone

As a general rule, if an individual is distressed, in physical pain or in danger, these kinds of practices are not acceptable. An individual should also never feel coerced by someone such as being pushed harder to perform. Although they may not cross the line into abuse, these are examples of poor practice and should be reported and addressed before further harm is caused.



Reporting inappropriate behaviour creates accountability so proper action can be taken and expectations can be re-established. It holds adults interacting with minors to a high standard. It may also prevent participants from experiencing abuse by potentially disrupting an unhealthy situation.



## Why is it important to report maltreatment or abuse?

**KEY POINT: Reporting abuse is a legal and ethical responsibility, especially if a minor is involved**

Reporting knowledge about potential child abuse is not a personal decision, it is mandatory under the law.

When a person becomes aware that a child may be or has been abused, there is a legal and ethical responsibility to take action. The legal responsibility comes from child welfare legislation. The responsibility to report means that a person who has knowledge or information that a child is or might be at risk must report it to someone:

- If the information relates to potential abuse of a child by the child's parent or guardian, the person who becomes aware of the information must report it to child welfare or police.
- If the concern involves potential abuse of a child by any other person, the individual who becomes aware of it must report it to the child's parent or guardian and may also be obligated to report it to child welfare and/or police.

**KEY POINT: People are responsible for reporting concerns, not proving abuse.**



## KEY POINT: Preventing abuse or maltreatment is the responsibility of everyone


All club, school or sport event organisers have an ongoing commitment to the safety and protection of participants in sport. The welfare of participants is everyone's responsibility, particularly when it comes to preventing abuse. Reporting information about potential abuse or maltreatment is beneficial in many ways:

- Organisations or authorities like child welfare or police can determine whether it is necessary to investigate the allegations
- Parents or guardians can proactively take steps to protect her/his child (in the case of a minor).
- Reporting concerns helps everyone understand the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour in sport.
- Reporting may disrupt or prevent existing or future abuse from occurring.
- If a person learns about past child sexual abuse that is no longer occurring – it is still important to report the abuse. The offender may still have access to other children and those other children may be at risk.
- Flagging the concerning behaviour to the volleyball club or organization should trigger a review of the activities in an effort to correct and stop the possible misconduct. It will also allow the organization to address any behaviour that is not consistent with its policies and procedures.

# How do I report abuse, maltreatment, or inappropriate behaviour?

If you are a victim, witness, or trusted confidante of someone who has experienced abuse or maltreatment in volleyball, follow these steps to report and ensure that the situation is addressed. You may not need to follow every part of the process if the concern is resolved at an earlier stage.

## Is the individual in immediate danger or are they injured?



### If yes, call the emergency services or police.

- The welfare and safety of the individual is the main priority. It is not up to you to decide whether or not someone has been abused but to report concerns and ensure immediate safety.
- If the individual requires immediate medical attention, arrange this and ensure that medic or police is informed that there may be a concern about abuse, maltreatment, or child protection.



### If no, report the concern

**1. Raise the concern with the program organiser or volleyball organisation** – Talk to the on-site program organiser or to the main administrator for the volleyball club/organisation. Depending on the severity, they may be able to address and handle the situation internally. Volleyball clubs that are members of Volleyball BC are obliged to refer more serious or complex complaints related to abuse and maltreatment to the Abuse-Free Sport program.

### 2. Report the concern directly to Abuse Free Sport

CONTACT DETAILS: 1-888-837-7678 or [info@abuse-free-sport.ca](mailto:info@abuse-free-sport.ca)

Volleyball BC has an independent third-party to expertly and confidentially review complaints that concern abuse and maltreatment. This is [Abuse-Free Sport](#), a “one stop shop” for managing complaints of abuse and maltreatment. Where appropriate, the organisation will conduct independent investigations and recommends sanctions against individuals. You can report any incidents or suspected incidents of abuse and maltreatment directly to the helpline and they will provide you with advice and handle the complaint.

NOTE: The Abuse Free Sport Program is available to anyone who is a registered full member of Volleyball BC and Volleyball Canada (such as youth club players, club coaches, club administrators and referees). For recreational participants (such as adult league players and participants in our recreation or beach programs), please file any safe sport complaints directly with Volleyball BC as outlined below.

### 3. Report the concern to Volleyball BC

CONTACT DETAILS: [reporting@volleyballbc.org](mailto:reporting@volleyballbc.org) or by completing the [online incident form](#).

We have a process in place outlined in our [Discipline and Complaints Policy](#) to address issues or behaviours that contravene our Code of Conduct. A complaint must be signed and in writing and must be filed within fourteen (14) days of the alleged incident. If a complaint is related to abuse, maltreatment, or suspected abuse, VBC will refer the complaint to the Abuse-Free Sport program or independent case manager.

## Ensure you keep a record of your concern and how you reported it.

Write down all the details or keep copies of all communication about the incident.

Volleyball BC pledges that there will be no recrimination, dismissal, discipline, or penalization of individuals who submit a report concerning abuse and maltreatment.

The confidentiality and privacy of individuals should be respected at all times. Do not share information about the incident or behaviour with anyone other than those immediately involved.

If you do not believe that a situation has been appropriately addressed, Volleyball BC has an [Appeal Policy](#).

## How should I handle concerning behaviours that happen to others?

### IF SOMEONE TELLS YOU THEY HAVE BEEN MALTREATED OR ABUSED

If someone tells you that he or she is being maltreated or abused:

- React calmly so as not to worry, alarm or deter them. Keep the pace slow and calm.
- Tell them that you care about them and that their safety is the most important concern.
- Reassure them you are glad that they told you.
- **Don't promise to keep it to yourself** – explain that you need to make sure that they will be safe and may have to pass on the information to someone trusted to deal with it appropriately.
- Listen to what the person says and take it seriously. Do not make judgements or commitments. Provide positive feedback for the sharing of the experience.
- Only ask questions if you need to clarify what the person is telling you. Do not ask for explicit details if they aren't relevant. Do not ask leading questions where you pre-suppose the answer, eg "They hit you, didn't they?"
- Thank them for sharing and tell them you want to help. Encourage them to call the Abuse Free Sport Program or request permission for you to call them.
- Tell them that confidentiality is important and not to share freely with others.
- If appropriate ask about their state of mind and support network. Do not allow the person to leave if they are upset or very emotional.
- Do not notify the complainant without the express consent of the individual or allow the complainant to have contact with the individual without a safety plan.

**It is not your responsibility to decide whether someone is being maltreated or abused. However, it is your responsibility to act on your concerns.** Make a detailed record of what you have seen or heard and report the situation to the appropriate person or organisation.

### IF YOU SEE OR HEAR CONCERNING BEHAVIOUR

You may witness behaviour that troubles you when you are participating or watching volleyball. You may even be an employee or volunteer at the organisation.

A **bystander** is a person who observes an action, event or behaviour like bullying or harassment. Bystanders can often experience feelings like helplessness, fear and worry and may even feel unsure if they should interfere, particularly if there are other people around. Taking action as a bystander (if it's safe to do so) can be a way to try to stop the behaviour, show solidarity with the person who's experiencing bullying, encourage others to disapprove of the situation and prevent future incidents. If intervening isn't safe, the bystander should document what happened, when, and who was present, so it can be reported.

**Whistleblowing** occurs when a person raises a concern about dangerous or illegal activity, or any wrongdoing by staff or volunteers, within their organisation. Whistleblowing can involve sharing potentially vital information about health and safety risks and the behaviour or attitude of someone that is concerning.

As a bystander or as a whistleblower, it is essential that concerns are reported and acted upon as soon as possible. When pursuing a concern:

- Keep calm
- Consider risks and next steps
- Let the facts do the talking – don't make up allegations
- Don't pursue the allegation yourself
- Remember that you're a witness

## What information should I report?

- The name of the individual about whom there are concerns, noting any disability or special needs (eg communication/language) they may have or whether they are a minor.
- The nature of the concern, suspicion or allegation.
- A description of any visible injury or other physical or behavioural indicators, taking care to be as accurate as you can.
- The individual's account of what has happened (whether they are the person to whom it happened or the person reporting it)
- Dates, times and any other factual information, including details of the person suspected or alleged to have harmed the individual.
- The distinction between fact, opinion or hearsay.

## Reporting Peer-To-Peer Incidents

Peer to peer incidents are situations where maltreatment or inappropriate behaviour occurs between two people on the same team or in the same group. This may include bullying, harassment, sharing of images without consent, or any other type of maltreatment. It can be especially hard to come forward and report behaviours if they are among your teammates because:

- You may not want to get into trouble.
- You may feel ashamed.
- You may fear retaliation or making things worse if someone finds out.
- You may have also engaged in inappropriate or concerning behaviours and be concerned about getting into trouble.

Check out our tips below if you are in this situation...



### TIPS FOR REPORTING PEER-TO-PEER INCIDENTS HAPPENING TO YOU

Family members can offer you guidance, support and be an important advocate when you are going through a difficult time. While it may be difficult to tell your parents or another safe adult about what is happening, even when you know you need to, it is important. Remember, it's your parent's job to help keep you safe so while they may be upset, they should also be concerned about what has happened and help you figure out how to deal with it.

In some situations, there may be reasons why talking to a parent may not be an option. In those situations, speak with another safe adult like a coach or relative about what's happening.

Here are some suggestions about how to let your parents/a safe adult know what's happening:

- **Write a note or an email** to your parent/a safe adult explaining what's happening and asking for their help.
- **Have a friend or a safe adult present with you** while you speak with your parents about what happened.
- **Have a safe adult (coach) speak with your parents on your behalf.** This can give your parents time to process the information without you being in front of them.
- **It may also be helpful to practice** what you are going to say before approaching your parents/a safe adult. You can make notes about what you want to say and discuss with a friend. This may help you figure out how to approach your parents/a safe adult and their possible reaction.

If you aren't able to identify a safe adult to talk to, contact a crisis line like Kids Help Phone (1-800-668-6868) or find a counsellor who may be able to help you make decisions about what to do next.

### TIPS FOR BYSTANDERS AND SUPPORTING A TEAMMATE

A **bystander** is a person who observes an action, event or behaviour like bullying or harassment. Being a bystander can be tough. Bystanders can often experience feelings like helplessness, fear and worry and may even feel unsure if they should interfere, particularly if there are other people around. Taking action as a bystander (if it's safe to do so) can be a way to try to stop the behaviour, show solidarity with the person who's experiencing bullying, encourage others to disapprove of the situation and prevent future incidents.

- **Reach out:** Making an effort to be there for the person who's experiencing bullying can go a long way. You can approach them and ask if they're OK, remind them that the situation is not their fault and offer to try and get help together. This could involve moving away from the person who's bullying in the moment or contacting a safe adult, too.
- **Don't take it personally:** don't get upset if the person isn't ready to talk about it. Knowing that you care may be enough for now.
- **Be a team:** offer to help your team-mate to speak to a safe adult (a parent/caregiver, your coach.) when they're ready. Don't push the person. You can also give your friend Kids Help Phone's number and offer to call a counsellor together.
- **Take care of yourself:** being a good friend can be challenging and you may need support. Try to think of a safe adult you can speak to about your feelings such as a coach or parent/caregiver.
- **Go to a safe adult:** if you're concerned about someone's safety and well-being, it's important to involve a safe adult such as the coach, your teacher, or parents. If someone is in immediate danger, you can contact the emergency services in your area for help.

## Reporting maltreatment in volleyball

- **911** - If an individual is in immediate danger or seriously injured.
- **Your program organiser or volleyball organisation, including Volleyball BC** – Talk to the on-site program organiser or to the main administrator for the volleyball club/organisation. Depending on the severity, they may be able to address and handle the situation internally. Volleyball BC and clubs that are members of Volleyball BC are obliged to refer more serious or complex complaints related to abuse and maltreatment to the Abuse-Free Sport program to ensure that they are appropriately handled.
- **Abuse Free Sport** - 1-888-837-7678 or [info@abuse-free-sport.ca](mailto:info@abuse-free-sport.ca) or <http://abuse-free-sport.ca/en/>  
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## Support services

- **Canada Suicide Prevention Service** - 24/7/365, in French and English. Call 1-833-456-4566 or text 45645 (4 p.m. - midnight Eastern Time, standard messaging rates apply)
- **Crisis Centre BC** - 24/7 support in over 140 languages using a language service. Call 310-6789 or 1-800-784-2433 (1-800-SUICIDE), or one of the regional support lines listed on their website.
- **Kids Help Phone** - 24/7 free support for children and youth across Canada by phone (1-800-668-6868), online chat, text (text CONNECT to 686868), or Facebook Messenger (account name Kids Help Phone). If you identify as Indigenous, you can ask to be connected with a First Nations, Inuk or Métis crisis responder (if one's available) by messaging FIRST NATIONS, INUIT, or METIS to 686868 or through Facebook Messenger.
- **2-1-1** - 211 is Canada's primary source of information for government and community-based, non-clinical health and social services. The free and confidential service can be accessed 24 hours a day, in more than 150 languages, by phone, chat, text, and web.
- **B.C. Helpline for Children** – a confidential toll-free phone line for children and youth wanting to talk to someone – is 310-1234 (no area code required)
- **The Foundry** - Health and wellness resources, services, and supports for people aged 12 to 24, online and through integrated service centres in communities around B.C.
- **VictimLinkBC** – a toll-free, confidential, multilingual telephone and online service available across B.C. 24 hours a day, 7 days a week which provides information and referral services to all victims of crime and immediate crisis support to victims of family and sexual violence.
- **KUU-US Crisis Response Service** - 1-800-588-8717 for crisis support for Indigenous people in B.C.
- **Trans Lifeline Canada** - Peer support, run by and for trans people, offering direct emotional and financial support to trans people in crisis. 1-877-330-6366
- **Qmunity** - B.C.'s queer, trans, and two-spirit resource centre



**LEADING IN SAFE SPORT PRACTICES  
& FOSTERING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT**