
THE GLIDING FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIA INC

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Information Sheet – Informal Complaint

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What is an Informal Complaint?

Characteristics of less serious complaints include behaviour or decisions that are:

- Out of character for the person about whom the complaint has been made
- One-off
- Not entrenched
- Low risk of harm/impact on other people.

Examples of less serious issues that can be dealt with using formal processes include:

- Favouritism in committee, panel or team selection
- Mild coarse language, yelling
- Restriction of access to facilities.

Relevant options for resolving less serious complaints include the following (choose the option you believe most appropriate for handling your complaint):

- more information to the person who is making the complaint
- provide more information to the person who is making the complaint
- you meet with the person who has been complained about
- informal discussions with all those involved

Option 1:

Provide more information to the person making the complaint. This is a good option when:

- you have clear guidelines available and it appears to be lack of awareness of these
- the person making the complaint is seeking greater understanding
- the complaint is in the early stages of the process

Steps to Follow:

- a) Provide the person making the complaint with copy of Member Protection Policy, Codes of Conduct and/or relevant guidelines (e.g. selection policy)
- b) Explain how these policies relate to the issue/ concern

Option 2:

Person making the complaint talks with person who the complaint is about

This is a good option when:

- The person who makes the complaint requests this option
- The complaint is in the early stages of the process
- The focus of the person who is making the complaint is to move forward rather than lay blame
- There is not a significant power imbalance
- The person who is making the complaint is confident &/or isn't concerned about victimisation
- The club can protect the person who is making the complaint against victimisation (e.g. within club policies)
- There is little emotion involved.

Steps to Follow:

Consider suggesting to the person who is making the complaint that they:

- a) are sensitive about when and where the talk takes place (e.g. not in front of the members or other parents, not when the other person is busy/distracted such as approaching a coach during training)
- b) avoid being emotional and don't personalise concerns. Provide clear examples (e.g. when, where, who)
- c) on a solution rather than a problem (e.g. how to move forward rather than seeking to lay blame)

- d) Take responsibility to help move forward (e.g. offering to contribute to a solution such as volunteering to reduce the workload)

Option 3:

You meet with the person who has been complained about.

This is a good option when:

- problem can be resolved by clarifying your club's policies or guidelines
- There is a power imbalance between the parties
- You, yourself have observed the behaviour
- The person who makes the complaint requests this option

Steps to Follow:

- a) Find a time to talk privately with the person who has been complained about (e.g. not in front of members or parents)
- b) Let them know that concerns have been expressed but try not to make the discussion personal
- c) Acknowledge their contribution to the club and discuss policies or guidelines that help clarify the club's position on the issue
- d) Ask for their perspective on the issue and what might have led to this being a concern
- e) Ask for their ideas on how to sort out the issue
- f) Check what further support might help them in their role (e.g. training)
- g) Get back to the person who made the complaint with the outcome and monitor the situation

Option 4:

Informal discussions with all those involved.

This is a good option when:

- The issue is not highly emotive or aggression isn't involved
- It's appropriate for all parties to hear the same message at the same time (e.g. clarifying roles and responsibilities)
- The person who is making the complaint is open to discussion with the other person

Steps to Follow

- a) Find a time and place when you can get the parties together. (in private and without distraction)
- b) Reassure both parties that the focus is on talking openly to try and move forward rather than laying blame.
- c) Make sure both parties have equal 'airtime' so they feel heard.
- d) Refer to the club's policies and guidelines to clarify and provide direction (e.g. codes of conduct, job descriptions, roles and responsibilities).
- e) Identify common ground and build on this for workable solutions.
- f) Allow both parties to suggest solutions
- g) Follow up with both parties to check that the problem is resolved

More Resources:

Guidelines and information sheets available in Sport Integrity Australia / Play by the Rules resources.