

# Complaint Handling Processes

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## Dealing with issues through informal processes

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 informal processes include:

- favouritism in team selection
- mild coarse language, yelling
- excessive emphasis on winning
- 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):

1. provide more information to person who is making the complaint
2. suggest person making the complaint talks directly with person complained about
3. you meet with person who has been complained about
4. informal discussion with all those involved

### **Option 1: Provide more information to 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:

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

## More Resources

Your organisation's guidelines, Member Protection Policy and Codes of Behaviour,

Issue-specific information, guidelines and information sheets (e.g. pregnancy guidelines, appropriate physical contact, overnight and away trips) available in "Got an Issue" on [www.playbytherules.net.au](http://www.playbytherules.net.au)

Guidelines and information sheets available in Play by the Rules resources  
[www.playbytherules.net.au/resources](http://www.playbytherules.net.au/resources)

## 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:

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

## More Resources

Your sport's guidelines, Member Protection Policy and codes of behaviour, issue-specific information, guidelines and information sheets (e.g. pregnancy guidelines, appropriate physical contact, overnight and away trips) available on [www.playbytherules.net.au](http://www.playbytherules.net.au)

### Option 3: You meet with person who has been complained about

This is a good option when:

- The 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:

- Find a time to talk privately with the person who has been complained about (e.g. not in front of the team or parents)
- Let them know that concerns have been expressed but try not to make the discussion personal (e.g. rather than saying the person is alleged to show favouritism and bias towards their own child say there are concerns that children are not getting equal time in the game)
- Acknowledge their contribution to the club and discuss policies or guidelines that help clarify the club's position on the issue (e.g. junior sports policy and team selection)
- Ask for their perspective on the issue and what might have led to this being a concern
- Ask for their ideas on how to sort out the issue
- Check what further support might help them in their role (e.g. training)
- Get back to the person who made the complaint with the outcome and monitor the situation.

## More Resources

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Guidelines and information sheets available in Play by the Rules resources [www.playbytherules.net.au/resources](http://www.playbytherules.net.au/resources)

## Option 4: informal discussion 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 same message at same time (e.g. clarifying roles and responsibilities)
- The person who is making the complaint is open to discussion with other person

Steps to follow:

- Find a time and place when you can get the parties together. (in private and without distraction)
- Reassure both parties that the focus is on talking openly to try and move forward rather than laying blame.
- Make sure both parties have equal 'airtime' so they feel heard (e.g. the person making the complaint is concerned about the coach shouting at the players and the coach feels stressed because he has too many responsibilities).
- Refer to the club's policies and guidelines to clarify and provide direction (e.g. codes of behaviour, job descriptions, roles and responsibilities).
- Identify common ground and build on this for workable solutions (e.g. that the coach needs more support to undertake his/her role).
- Allow both parties to suggest solutions (e.g. more parents involve themselves with the team as a team manager or scorer, work with club on selection policy, code of conduct).
- Follow up with both parties to check that the problem is resolved.

## More Resources

Guidelines and information sheets available in Play by the Rules resources

[www.playbytherules.net.au/resources](http://www.playbytherules.net.au/resources)