



Complaints and Dispute Resolution Policy

The Woodbridge Soccer Club (WSC) encourages all members (players, parents, and coaches) to attempt to resolve issues in good faith prior to club intervention keeping in mind the criteria provided in our published Club Codes of Conduct, Policies and Procedures. We understand that this is not always possible.

The Woodbridge Soccer Club's goal is to provide a positive soccer experience for all stakeholders involved with the Club. Even with a dedicated leadership team, generous volunteers, and hard-working staff there are sometimes occurrences of a serious nature that need to be addressed formally and promptly.

WSC takes situations in which someone is offended, made to feel uncomfortable or intimidated or are put in a precarious position very seriously, as these situations can often be very upsetting and affect the relationship between those involved and the Club.

The Woodbridge Soccer Club is committed to hearing, investigating and ensuring proper action is taken in the event of a serious occurrence. This policy has been created to outline the Complaint and Dispute reporting process to address situations where an unwelcome conduct or communication creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment.

Every effort will be made to preserve confidentiality and protect the privacy of those involved in the investigation to the extent the investigative process allows.

Retaliation against any person involved in the complaint process is prohibited by the WSC and will result in disciplinary action. This includes individuals who initiate complaints, persons against whom a complaint has been filed, players, and witnesses.

General

Members who have a serious issue are encouraged to discuss it first with club coaching, refereeing and/or management staff, whose names and email addresses are listed on the club website.

The following matters are excluded from this policy:

- a) The Complaints and Dispute Resolution processes shall not be used for soccer game-related discipline. The normal discipline and appeals processes shall be followed as per Ontario Soccer and league rules and regulations..
- b) Complaints regarding breaches of the Privacy Policy are to be directed to the club's Office Manager at wscadmin@wscstrikers.com, who shall act as the Club's Privacy Officer.
- c) Complaints regarding the normal administration of the Club, such as: fee refunds; teaming requests; placement of players on teams; etc. will be addressed and finally decided by Club staff, with the General Manager as the final decision maker.

Dispute Resolution

Dispute resolution is defined as “the process of resolving disputes between parties”. In the case of the WSC, disputes are typically brought to the attention of the club first by way of informal discussions. Only if good faith informal discussions are not successful can a formal complaint be lodged with the Club. Resolution is most often achieved following informal discussion. Only if that fails will further steps, such as investigation by club officials; follow-up discussions; provision of education/training be considered.

Formal dispute resolution for matters of “a corporate nature” (as shown below), may be addressed through the Ontario Soccer Dispute Resolution Policy, if the steps indicated above are not successful:

- a) The calling and holding of general meetings
- b) The presentation and approval of financial statements
- c) The nomination and election of Directors and Officers
- d) The removal of Directors and Officers
- e) The acceptance, rejection and removal of members
- f) The calling and holding of Board meetings
- g) Breaches of parliamentary procedure
- h) Other matters of a similar corporate or governance nature

For complaints or reports of inappropriate behavior pertaining to WSC soccer related activities that are not excluded from this policy and which cannot be resolved by staff, or members believe that staff is not following club policy or applicable laws (a "Complaint"), the following process applies:

Complaints

Encouraging open communication, WSC is committed to address fairly, and without bias, all Complaints. If the Club deems it appropriate, an independent review of a Complaint may be sought.

- If a member of the WSC wishes to make a Complaint about a Board of Directors, they may do so in writing. Please fill in the Formal Complaint Form. Any such complaint is to be directed to the Office Manager at wscadmin@wscstrikers.com.
- WSC will immediately follow all club policy pertaining to protection in sport for children when concerns of physical or sexual abuse are reported.
- WSC will immediately report criminal activities to the police.
- Complaints regarding club members, staff, volunteers, coaches, players, referees, fall within the scope of this policy.

Formalizing Complaints

a) Any Complaint can be communicated verbally, initially, to a club official or employee but must be followed up in writing (letter and/or email) in order to be acted upon.

b) All Complaints to the club must be in written form before a Complaint is dealt with. A confirmation from WSC that the Complaint has been received will be provided via email if possible; other confirmation forms may include telephone or letter.

c) Once a written Complaint has been filed with the club, the Complaint will be forwarded to the appropriate department manager. Staff will forward the Formal Complaint Form should more information be requested to process the complaint.

d) The staff member reviewing the Complaint will

- investigate as soon as reasonably possible and may consist of personal interviews with the complainant(s), the alleged perpetrator(s), and witnesses to the alleged incident(s)

Or

- schedule a Complaint Hearing within ten (10) business days of finalizing the review of the Complaint. Notice will be provided to the individual(s) who are the subject of the Complaint and requested to appear at the Complaint Hearing.

e) The individual(s) named on the complaint is/are entitled to be present at the hearing. Only individuals called to attend the hearing are allowed to participate.

f) The goal of the hearing is to communicate the decision within ten (10) business days of the hearing. A confidential report will be kept on file with WSC which includes a copy of the official complaint and the resolution.

g) Penalties can range through a permanent suspension from the club, suspension for a specified period of time, a probationary period where the individual is allowed to continue with the club, a reprimand to a requirement that a person undertake training, reassignment within WSC, or dismissal.

Appeals

a) Any final decision handed down by the WSC staff following an official complaint can be appealed in writing (letter and/or email) to the Office Manager at wscadmin@wscstrikers.com along with a payment of the WSC Appeal Processing fee of \$100.

b) The Office Manager reviewing the Complaint will schedule a Complaint Hearing within ten (10) business days of finalizing the review of the Appeal. Notice will be provided to the individual(s) who are the subject of the Complaint and requested to appear at the Appeal Hearing.

c) Hearings shall be conducted by three (3) persons, none of which are on the current Board of Directors, at least one of whom shall be a staff member (members who were NOT part of the initial Review wherever possible), at least one of whom is to be a certified Discipline Chair, if possible. If a certified Chair is not available the hearing will proceed without a certified Chair.

d) Hearings can take place by way of written submissions or oral submissions and with differing degrees of formality and complexity. The main consideration will be to arrive at a decision which, among other considerations, allows the affected individual(s) to adequately answer the case against them given the circumstances of the complaint and the nature of the matter being considered.

e) The appeal hearing committee shall then deliberate following the Hearing.

f) All appeal committee decisions will be provided in a report and are final, due to privacy concerns the issuing of "Reasons for Decision", along with the decision is not mandatory.

g) Individual(s) who are charged with a criminal offense involving club related incidents may be immediately suspended from the club pending resolution of the charges, depending on the nature of the charges. No Complaint or Discipline Hearing shall take place when an individual is facing criminal charges for club related incidents. Club members who are convicted of a Criminal Code of Canada offense are subject to suspension or removal.

h) Any individual who is convicted of a criminal offense resulting from sexual or physical abuse shall be banned for life from WSC.

i) Subjects to the letter and the spirit of the constraints discussed in this policy, individual(s) who violate the Zero Tolerance Policy for non-criminal activities may apply for reinstatement to the club in writing 30 days prior to the end of a time specified penalty.

j) Should the original decision be overturned in the final report, the club will reimburse the fee of \$100 back to the appellant.