

## **OHF Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Speak Out**

#### **Why was a change to the old Speak Out policy required?**

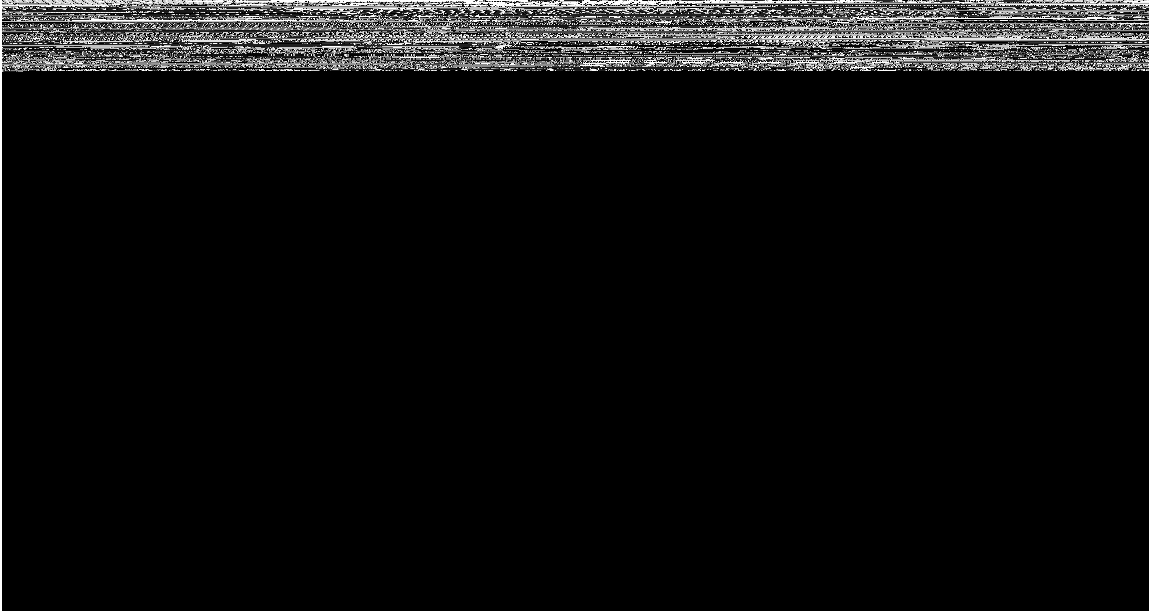
The OHF spent three years, between 2002-2005 revising its harassment and abuse policies and in doing so also included bullying and misconduct to create an all-encompassing behaviour management policy. During this time, Hockey Canada also made changes to their policy which further required the OHF to make similar and consistent changes.

#### **How is the new policy structured differently from the old?**

The OHF Speak Out Policy document is subdivided into categories of behaviour management including staff and volunteer screening; complaint administration and process; investigation process; and discipline.

#### **Why was Bullying added to the policy?**

Bullying was added to the policy as a requirement of Hockey Canada. Hockey Canada had recently revised their policy and as a Branch it is incumbent upon us to meet the standards set by the national body. While harassment and abuse fall into the criminal code or government legislation, bullying does not. Therefore as a body that provides services to children it was recommended that we devise a policy that includes bullying to allow for intervention and resolution. In addition, bullying has been added to the



**As a coach, what protection does this policy afford me from a malicious complaint?**

There can be nothing worse than one adult making a vexatious accusation of child abuse against another adult when considering the definitions as provided by Hockey Canada and the OHF. The consequences to a person in their community of being accused of such can be debilitating. While relationships between coaches and parents and administrators can break down and tempers may flare, all are cautioned against making allegations that they know not to be true. Where a person makes an accusation in bad faith they may be liable for a suspension or expulsion of themselves and their child from hockey.

**How do you define Harassment?**

Harassment is a legal term and it is defined by the human rights code. It is based on specific grounds that are prohibited like race, age, gender, etc. If the complaint is not based on one of these grounds, then it will not be considered as harassment. Some behaviour that is not harassment may very well violate the Code of Conduct and can be addressed as such.

**How do you define Abuse?**

Abuse is a legal term and is defined by the criminal code. It can be categorized as emotional, physical or sexual. The key to defining abuse is the need for protection of the child. In a situation where a parent feels the coach is mistreating his or her child, they always have the option to remove the child from the negative situation – or the ability to protect the child. To contrast this scenario, a child that is being abused at home by a parent will not be afforded that same level of protection without intervention from an outside service. Abuse in hockey is not a term to be used loosely or casually. It is something that we all take very seriously and caution anyone against using the term in bad faith.

**If a complaint has been substantiated then why is the coach still in place?**

The intention of the Speak Out program is to educate coaches on harassment, abuse and bullying and provide strategies for preventing and resolving conflict. In some cases, a person may not be aware that their behaviour is not acceptable or is offensive to someone. In this situation it is not necessary to remove someone from a position, rather to remedy the behaviour and resolve the conflict. Discipline under the Speak Out policy will escalate in direct relation to the behaviour. For instance, a minor infraction will result in minor discipline.

**Why is a complaint of harassment, abuse or bullying not grounds for a release?**

Complaints of Harassment, Abuse, Bullying and misconduct are never grounds for a release from a team. It is important that complaints are investigated or redirected appropriately for resolution and when substantiated, the offender will be disciplined, not the player (unless of course the offender is the player).

**What is the responsibility of the local club or association with respect to**

