



Safe Sport Knowledge Synthesis 2021-2022

Executive Summaries

Financé par le
gouvernement
du Canada

Funded by the
Government
of Canada



*All projects were funded by the Government of Canada through
the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada*

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Title:	Synthesis Report on the Best Practices to Ensure Survivor-Centric Complaint Process/Trauma-Informed Process in Non-Sport Sectors
Researcher:	Dr Delphine Collin-Vézina, PhD, Full Professor, School of Social Work, McGill University
Collaborator:	Valérie Hémond-Dussault, Research Assistant, Centre for research on Children and Families, McGill University
Date:	August 2022

Introduction:

This report draws attention to the high prevalence of abuse and family dysfunction experiences in childhood and adolescence, as well as abuse experienced in sporting contexts by coaches and teammates. The consequences of traumas and the barriers to disclosure in both contexts are detailed, demonstrating the importance of organizations recognizing the impacts of traumas and developing best practices to ensure trauma-informed responses, policies, and practices in non-sport and sport sectors.

Results:

To better integrate trauma-informed care approaches, organizations and professionals should focus on understanding, considering and respecting the nature and effects of trauma on all levels, based on six principles (SAHMSA, 2014):

- Safety;
- Trustworthiness and transparency;
- Peer-support;
- Collaboration and mutuality;
- Empowerment, voice and choice;
- Cultural, historical and gender issues.

Key recommendations/conclusions:

Recommendations draw attention to individuals' well-being, needs, rights, and preferences, which imply that non-sport and sport organizations should develop policies, train their staff, and implant resources that take the complexity of traumas in consideration. Specific recommendations include:

- To consider all forms of maltreatment, rather than focusing solely on sexual violence;
- To provide mandatory educational training to all staff;
- To develop trauma-informed organizational policies;
- To focus on athletes' well-being first and foremost;

- To develop disclosing resources and helplines that are independent from the organization;
- To provide support resources for victims after disclosing.

Title:	Marginalized Athletes' Experiences with Safe Sport in Canada
Researcher:	Dr Janice Forsyth, PhD, Professor, School of Kinesiology, Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia
Date:	September 2022

Introduction:

The purpose of this knowledge synthesis was to identify the existing literature that focuses on marginalized athletes' experiences with safe sport, describe the findings in a way that can be used to advance the SDRCC's decision-making, and offer recommendations for policy, research, and practice. A scoping review was carried out and identified 19 items for in depth analysis.

Results:

Key findings include:

1. marginalized athletes report higher rates of abuse in sport than athletes who are not marginalized;
2. different groups of marginalized athletes are at higher risk of experiencing different types of abuse;
3. some groups of marginalized athletes are more at risk than others, creating a hierarchy of abuse;
4. different groups of athletes, within the same identity group, experience different types of abuse;
5. small sample sizes, sample composition, and study design need to be considered alongside findings;
6. analyze multiple intersecting risk factors for abuse;
7. understand how individual, organizational, and societal factors work separately and relationally.

Key recommendations:

1. apply an intersectional lens to understand marginalized athletes' experiences with safe sport;
2. integrate a 'whole systems approach' to address abuse in sport;
3. conduct research on marginalized athletes' experiences with safe sport;
4. educate all stakeholders on how to identify and address the abuse marginalized athletes face;
5. engage marginalized athletes in creating a safe sport system that meets their needs and interests.

Main conclusions:

The dearth of information on marginalized athletes' experiences in safe sport is a serious obstacle hindering their health and well-being, sometimes putting them at great risk for increased harms. While research that narrows in on safe sport is still in its infancy, there is a robust body of knowledge that explores marginalized athletes with abuse in sport, including sport in Canada. That corpus can be used to inform safe sport policies and practices while new research, focusing specifically on safe sport as whole system, can be carried out. Researchers and practitioners need to pay careful attention to the complex lived experiences of marginalized athletes by considering the way different factors at the individual, organizational, and societal level, interact and shape their experiences with abuse.

Title:	A Review of Non-Sport Organizations' Complaint Policies and Codes
Researcher:	Daphne Gilbert, L.L.M., Professor, Faculty of Law, University of Ottawa
Date:	August 2022

Introduction:

I was asked to offer a knowledge synthesis on the following topic: “*Review of non-sport organizations’ management of complaints.*” I chose three to describe and compare: (i) The Law Society of Ontario (LSO) Investigation of Complaints pursuant to section 49.3 of the *Law Society Act*, (ii) The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario: Ontario Physicians and Surgeons Discipline Tribunal; (iii) “Policy 67b: The Prevention of Sexual Violence” at the University of Ottawa, Ontario.

I approached each policy/complaint process as if I was the victim of sexual abuse/harassment/violence to determine the accessibility of the policy, the comprehensiveness and comprehensibility of each policy and whether or not it operated from a space of support for victims.

Results:

Highlights from the policies as to some of their strengths and weaknesses:

1. Law Society of Ontario

Strengths: (i) Online complaint form is easy to locate; (ii) The dedicated “complaints” webpage has a useful FAQ link; (iii) The *Rules of Professional Conduct* for lawyers has a comprehensive definition of ‘sexual harassment’ with specific examples of problematic behaviour.

Weaknesses: (i) It took hours to piece together the various elements of the complaint process to figure out the various legal authorities that guide it; (ii) While it is easy to file an online complaint on professional incompetence, it is very difficult to find out what to do if the issue is sexual trauma.

2. College of Physicians and Surgeons

Strengths: (i) The College has a dedicated process for complaints of a sexual nature and has a zero-tolerance policy for any sexual contact between physician and patient; (ii) The College offers funded counselling for victims whether or not a formal complaint is lodged.

Weaknesses: (i) There is little guidance publicly available as to when the College will investigate a complaint and how it determines whether the complaint should proceed to a Hearing; (ii) if the matter proceeds to a hearing, it is conducted in a quasi-judicial fashion that is not survivor-centric.

3. Policy 67b The Prevention of Sexual Violence at uOttawa

Strengths: (i) The Policy is comprehensive and lays out the process in a clear and easily understood way;

(iii) uOttawa has a dedicated office to receive complaints and assist victims;

(iii) Complainants can receive accommodation and/or other interim measures without filing a formal complaint.

Weaknesses: (i) The website has an online disclosure form but does not have the complaint form online, which is a bit confusing; (ii) uOttawa recently amended its policy to do away with an oral hearing which may be helpful to some victims, but others may prefer to tell their story rather than write it.

Recommendations:

After describing and comparing the three policies, these are the features that are “best practices”:

1. A policy on sexual harassment and abuse, and the complaint procedure to trigger it, should be easily accessible by a straightforward google search on the internet;
2. Organizations should have a point person or team for complaints of sexual harassment and abuse who can be contacted by email or telephone and their contact information should be prominent on the website;
3. It should be easy to file a complaint;
4. The complaint process should be easy to understand;
5. Policies should contain clear wording around prohibited conduct and should have comprehensive definitions of sexual abuse/harassment/violence;
6. Policies that address sexual abuse/violence/harassment should be survivor-centric and should offer paths to resolution that do not have to involve formal complaints;
7. Once a formal complaint is filed, policies should have procedural protections in place to minimize the re-traumatization of victims and to respect the rights of respondents;
8. Policies should have a wide range of available consequences/sanctions.

Title:	Best Practices for Athletes to Report Maltreatment
Researcher:	Dr Gretchen Kerr, PhD, Dean and Professor, Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education, University of Toronto
Collaborator:	Erin Willson, MSc, Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education, University of Toronto
Date:	September 2022

Overview of Report:

There has been an increase in athletes’ public disclosures of maltreatment in sport, along with numerous prevalence studies indicating concerning rates of psychological, sexual, physical abuse and neglect. However, a much smaller percentage of athletes submit formal reports of their maltreatment experiences. As such, an investigation is needed into the reasons athletes do not report their experiences, the conditions necessary for athletes to report, and how athletes can be best supported throughout the reporting process. This review of academic literature aims to address these questions.

As reported by athletes, the conditions necessary for them to report their experiences of maltreatment include education for all stakeholders to enhance awareness of maltreatment, the behaviours that constitute maltreatment, and available reporting processes. This education will be important to identify inappropriate and prohibited conduct and dismantle the normalization process. Additionally, athletes are clear that they need a safe and neutral place to report their concerns to eliminate bias and reduce the potential for retribution.

Finally, a trauma-informed approach is recommended to facilitate reporting and support athletes throughout the reporting process. Such an approach involves:

1. Ensuring the physical and emotional safety throughout the reporting process;
2. Emphasizing trustworthiness and transparency of the reporting mechanism;
3. Encouraging collaboration of the survivor and the service providers;
4. A focus on empowering the athlete through the reporting process;
5. Acknowledging structures of oppression that contribute to some groups experiencing maltreatment differently;
6. Providing space for peer support to occur.

Key recommendations:

A synthesis of the relevant literature suggests the following best practices for reporting of maltreatment experiences:

1. Identify barriers to reporting;
2. Provide education to all sport stakeholders regarding inappropriate and prohibited conduct and processes for disclosure and reporting;
3. Ensure the provision of safe, confidential, transparent reporting processes;
4. Ensure processes exist for the receipt of complaints, investigation and adjudication that are independent, external and arms-length from the sport organization;
5. Ensure membership of investigative officers, hearing and adjudication panels represent diverse identities;
6. Include athlete representatives at every level of independent body;
7. Offer both professional and peer-support opportunities for athletes;
8. Ensure trauma-informed principles are embedded in all educational programmes and reporting processes;
9. Invest in measures to prevent maltreatment.

Title:	A Comparative Analysis of Safe Sport Initiatives Worldwide with Emphasis on Grievance Reporting Mechanisms in Sport
Researcher:	Dr Sandra Kirby, PhD, Professor Emerita, University of Winnipeg
Collaborator:	Dr Yetsa A. Tuakli-Wosornu, MD, Associate Professor, Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences, Yale School of Public Health
Collaborator:	Alexandra Trochet, Lausanne
Date:	September 2022

Sport safeguarding is core business for sport (Øvregård, 2019). With the SDRCC moving into the domain of national safeguarding for Canada, this report addresses safe sport initiatives worldwide with a particular focus on the reporting pathway, including mechanisms for case management. The data came from publications, grey literature and consultations with experts and key personnel.

A brief history of safeguarding development is included for the purposes of illustrating the recentness of the work on safeguarding reporting pathways, the contributions of researchers, human rights experts, advocates and administrators and the role that Canadians have played.

The results are as follow:

Reporting pathways
Who reports?
What and when do they report?
Who doesn't report
Before the reporting process
Within the reporting process
The special cases of the USCSS and the Norwegian Olympic Committee

The responding and reporting pathways are the processes athletes (and others in sport) use to raise concerns informally and formally about maltreatment of themselves or of others. However, the larger safeguarding enterprise begins with readiness (education and prevention), the follows through to *recognition, disclosure and reporting, response and remedy* (Tiivas et al., 2021). To this we have added the overarching concern about *redress* for those who enter the reporting pathway. Within these, issues arising included: the principles underpinning reporting processes, working with child sex abuse experts outside of sport, and identifying the athletes as the experiential experts. Special

consideration is given to the metrics: who reports, what and when do they report and who doesn't report. We conclude the first section with a comprehensive look at the outlier, Norwegian Olympic model. The approach there is that, with the support of a sport law, organised sport needs to manage its own safeguarding process (alongside those of the law). We conclude that section with a list of issues arising that might indicate the directions for improving reporting mechanisms.

The next section is on recent initiatives in safeguarding worldwide, with an emphasis on the reporting process.

These highlight the following:

IOC Developments
World Players Association UNI Global Union
Special Olympics International (SOI)
Sport Respects Your Rights
Safe Sport International (SSI)
World Rowing
Commonwealth Games
Global Safe Sport Day
UNICEF/FIFA

In conclusion, steps forward include working with other organizations to find a universal design that allows for seamless safeguarding for all athletes, indeed all people, in sport. The SDRCC reporting processes are in the early phases of development and so, are not yet fixed and should be open to lessons learned in other areas. It is suggested that, in addition to its internal processes, the SDRCC consider what kind of metrics it should keep and the sharing of data with research experts in child protection in and outside of sport. We need to learn from existing cases. Reporting processes are only as good as the athletes trust in them, transparency of the processes and the effectiveness of reaching fair remedy and redress. They must feel open transparent vibrant and responsive. We are mindful that the reporting processes must be fair for all, including those accused of maltreating others. Justice can be enhanced by paying particular attention to the range of different remedies, for victims and for the accused.

Title:	Nothing About us Without us: Positions of Survivors Groups on Maltreatment Complaint Process
Researcher:	Dr Sandra Kirby, PhD, Professor Emerita, University of Winnipeg
Collaborator:	Dr Yetsa A. Tuakli-Wosornu, MD, Associate Professor, Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences, Yale School of Public Health
Collaborator:	Alexandra Trochet, Lausanne
Date:	August 2022

This paper is a synthesis of the positions of survivor groups in the maltreatment process. Given the newness of the topic, our research is only an initial look at what is ‘out there’ in sport and includes some information from outside of sport. We use a rights-based approach for understanding survivors’ and survivor groups’ roles in maltreatment processes. To begin the conversation, we linked the language of maltreatment and the maltreatment process and to global safeguarding language. Then we defined survivors and survivor groups within the human rights context and within sport. Together those address the sport context as a particular environment in which maltreatment processes unfold.

By focusing on the types of abuse and the organizational and individual drivers of abuse, we were able to better understand certain elements of grievance reporting. After a review of the literature, overwhelming the grey literature, focused consultations with 5 experts and conversations with 3 key persons for whom this is a topic of interest and expertise.

Key recommendations/conclusions:

#1	Engage the athletes- self-identified survivors and non-survivors alike	a) Policy contributions
		b) Education and awareness
		c) Research
		d) Grievance reporting processess
		e) Redress
#2	Support the athletes engaged in policy, practice and research	
#3	Selecting the athletes	
#4	Risks of involving survivors/survivor groups in maltreatment reporting pathways	
#5	Measures of success for athletes’/survivors’ involvement	

SDRCC’s success will, we think, largely be determined by the authentic engagement of athletes, including self-identified survivors, in a well-structured, well-researched, and well-staffed safeguarding system which handles and prevents abuse cases from one end of the grievance reporting process to the other.

Title:	Best Practices for Complaint Handling Systems
Researcher:	Dr Eric McIntosh, PhD, Professor, University of Ottawa
Date:	September 2022

The focus of this report is on best practices for complaint handling systems. Given this focus, this report provides some consideration from the perspective of the organization designing and operating the complaint handling system, the person filing the complaint itself, and the person involved in handling the intake. Since handling a complaint is akin to an ‘exchange’ whereby both parties (e.g., the complainant, the respondent) engage in various forms of communication (e.g., written, oral), this report provides some details about the process and, the needs/wants of complainant who may require various forms of additional support. Additionally, the report outlines some ways that the organization and the respondent can simplify the process for the complainant while respecting the independent investigation which may require expertise from outside the organization (e.g., legal).

This report has been compiled to illuminate some of the known ‘best practices’ drawn from the literature on complaint handling within and outside of sport. Details are provided which discuss administrative knowhow to design and operate a best practice complaint handling system. Additionally, consideration for additional expertise is embedded within the report which involves creating and finding support for the victim/survivor while protecting the rights of the accused until an investigation has concluded. Setting up a successful complaint system requires considerable resources and continuous investment in training employee’s, working with a variety of experts, monitoring and evaluating the intake and various processes, and reporting results back to the sport system. This report will highlight the need for continued investment in these areas and address some of the known communication aspects that should be considered to help the organization design and operate a strong complaint system that is more easily navigated by the complainant and has their best interest in mind.

Title:	A Scoping Review of Research on Maltreatment in Community Sport
Researcher:	Dr Katie Misener, PhD, Professor, University of Waterloo
Collaborator:	Haley Baxter, MA, University of Waterloo
Date:	August 2022

Introduction:

The community sport sector delivers recreational and competitive sport participation opportunities for adults and children. In Canada, the community sport sector is comprised of local sport clubs, referred to as Community Sport Organizations (CSOs), which operate primarily as member-based non-profit organizations and rely extensively on volunteers for governance, operations, and coaching. Considering the high percentage of volunteers, children, and families embedded within the community sport system, it is critical for CSOs to provide safe sport opportunities and ensure that programs and spaces are safe from all forms of maltreatment.

Research Method and Objectives:

Our report uses a scoping review methodology (Arksey and O’Malley, 2005; Levac et al., 2010) to explore the empirical (peer-reviewed) literature on maltreatment in community sport. The specific objectives of the scoping review are to: (1) Provide a comprehensive analysis of the empirical, peer-reviewed literature broadly related to maltreatment in community/grassroots level sport; (2) Identify whether and how maltreatment in community sport is understood in the research literature based on the UCCMS, type of stakeholders studied, location of research, and research methods used to date; (3) Identify gaps in research related to maltreatment in community sport that can be addressed in future research and used to inform policy and practice.

Findings:

- Despite community sport comprising of participation opportunities for all-ages, maltreatment research within community sport is primarily conducted within youth sport contexts.
- Interpersonal forms of maltreatment (psychological, physical, and sexual) are the most highly researched areas in community sport, and psychological maltreatment being the most predominant behaviour exhibited across and between stakeholder groups (i.e., coaches, officials, athletes, parents, administrators)
- Several behaviours within the UCCMS remain relatively unexplored in research focused on community sport (e.g., grooming, boundary transgression, discrimination, subjecting a participant to the risk of maltreatment, aiding and abetting, failure to report, intentionally reporting a false allegation, interference with or manipulation of process, and retaliation).

- Maltreatment in community sport is a global concern, with published research spanning 22 countries
- The primary research methods employed in empirical studies on maltreatment in community sport are interviews and surveys.

Key recommendations/conclusions:

- Sport organizations at all levels of the sport system should adopt consistent language and communicate clearly with the public and sport club members in order to promote shared understanding and accountability;
- Governing bodies must provide direct assistance to CSOs to implement policy and code of conduct guidelines;
- Clear reporting and accountability procedures must be developed at the grassroots level, particularly when administrators/leaders hold power but are not educated or equipped. CSOs should be required to submit Safe Sport accountability plans annually to their PTSO and to members (e.g., AGM);
- Coordinate and streamline Safe Sport training for volunteers, parents, and athletes in order to develop materials that are applicable across CSO contexts in a range of sports. Education must incorporate more reflexive training (e.g., self-assessment) including identifying their own history and previous experience with coaches; Training must incorporate education on equity and diversity (e.g., anti-racism) in relation to maltreatment;
- CSOs should enforce strict consequences for parents or coaches who abuse or disrespect officials;
- In order for system-wide change to occur, stronger safe-sport coalitions are needed among politicians, policy makers, school teachers, coaches, and families;
- There is very little data reporting the actual rate of maltreatment in community sport and as a result, statistical prevalence is relatively unknown with the exception of few larger studies;
- There are many opportunities to advance research on maltreatment in community sport, including diversifying the types of methodology employed, the participants studied, and the context (i.e., geographic location, type of sport) as well as further interdisciplinary scholarship.

Title:	Review of Programs Supporting Survivors of Maltreatment in Sport and other Fields
Researcher:	Dr Margo Mountjoy, MD and PhD, Professor, Department of Family Medicine, McMaster University
Collaborator:	Erin Willson, MSc, University of Toronto
Date:	July 2022

Introduction:

Despite the existence of statutory documents identifying the right of athletes to a safe sport environment that is free from maltreatment, the scientific evidence clearly demonstrates that maltreatment is prevalent in all sports and at all levels. The negative impacts of maltreatment in sport on athlete survivor health and well-being can be long-standing and devastating. Sport organizations, therefore, have a duty of care to support athlete survivors of maltreatment in sport.

Results

Results in sport

In the scientific literature, the need for multi-disciplinary support of athlete survivors of maltreatment is well documented thus supporting the requirement for policy and program development. There are no publications in the scientific literature outlining athlete survivor support programs, evaluation of existing programs, or program requirements, thus identifying a significant research gap. Several sport organizations have developed athlete survivor support programs consisting of a variety of services addressing health, legal, and financial needs, published on their respective websites.

Results outside of sport

Survivors of violence seek a variety of formal (e.g., doctors, counsellors, crisis centers, hotlines) and informal supports (e.g., family, friends, colleagues). Survivors typically need a multitude of supports throughout their healing process, therefore, a collaborative network of support can be most effective. Successful support programs are trauma-informed, which place the survivor at the center of their treatment, providing individualized care, choice, and flexibility throughout the healing process.

Key recommendations/conclusions:

Policy

- Evidence-based research supports the development of policies in sport organizations to provide multi-disciplinary, context-specific support for athlete survivors of maltreatment in sport;
- From a review of existing athlete survivor support programs, policy development for support of survivors of maltreatment in sport should address the following

components: physical and mental health needs, ombuds support to navigate reporting and legal processes, legal support, and financial compensation.

Practice

- Based on best practice identified in un-published athlete survivor support programs, a Canadian-wide survivor support program should be designed to include *i)* support for physical and mental health needs; *ii)* support for navigating reporting and legal processes; *iii)* legal support; and *v)* appropriate financial compensation

Research

- Due to the lack of publications on the existence of athlete support programs, evaluation of such programs, and identification of resources required, research gaps exist in all of these domains.
- Implementation analysis frameworks exist in the sport medicine literature to evaluate injury prevention programs and outside of sport in evaluation of public health initiatives. These frameworks can be adapted and utilized to systematically and objectively evaluate the efficacy of athlete survivor support programs.

Title:	From Knowledge to Practice: Insights into and from High-Performance Athlete Experiences of the Safe Sport Complaint Process
Researcher:	Dr Jennifer Walinga, PhD, Professor, School of Communication and Culture, Royal Roads University
Date:	August 2022

Introduction:

This knowledge synthesis of the high-performance (HP) athlete experience with the Safe Sport complaint process in Canada and beyond provides a comprehensive summary of key principles to inform the OSIC Safe Sport complaint process and form a list of metrics and indicators by which to monitor and evaluate the complaint process going forward.

Results:

Key aspect of the complaint process experience:

- Communication and clarity;
- Policy and procedures, support and guidance;
- Independence and power;
- Access.

Which are influenced by broader organizational factors:

- Organizational structures and systems;
- Leadership and culture.

Which are shaped by socio-cultural assumptions:

- Sport is exempt and different - colonialism;
- Leadership is control and dominance- paternalism;
- Sport is masculine - patriarchy;
- Sport leadership is exempt and autonomous - imperialism;
- Medals are the purpose and priority - capitalism;
- High performance is violent- militarism.

Key recommendations/conclusions:

- Reframing the complaint process as part of a broader sport culture of care and responsibility;
- Reframing sport: From pushing through pain to extending beyond limits;
- Reframing the purpose of sport: From dominance and privilege to excellent experience for all;
- Reframing Safe Sport: From surveillance and control to understanding and transparency;
- Reframing sport delivery: From a hierarchical model to a partnership model.

*All projects were funded by the Government of Canada through
the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada*