



# TABLE TENNIS CANADA TENNIS DE TABLE HARASSMENT AND ABUSE FACT SHEET

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### 1. What is harassment?

Harassment is any behavior by a person or organization which offends, humiliates or interferes with your athletic performance and:

- Is any unwanted physical or verbal conducts;
- Is offensive, abusive, belittling or threatening;
- Creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment;
- Is directed at any other person or group of people;
- Refers to a particular characteristic of that person or group of people.

Harassment is a type of discrimination. It can take many forms such as:

- Jokes, gestures, threats, innuendos, taunts, intimidation or verbal abuse;
- Unwelcome remarks or jokes about subjects like race, religion, disability or age;
- Displaying sexist, racist or other offensive pictures or posters;
- Sexual demands, favors, suggestive remarks or gestures;
- Inappropriate physical contact – touching, patting, pinching or punching;
- Emotional abuse, neglect or abuse of power;
- Physical assault, including sexual assault or hazing.

The point of view of the person receiving harassment is what helps determine whether an action or behavior is considered harassment. This behaviour must also be assessed objectively in that it must be the type of behavior that a reasonable person would find unwelcome. Harassment will be considered to have taken place if a reasonable person ought to have known that the behaviour was unwelcome.

Someone is **harassing** you if they are:

- Doing things to make you feel uncomfortable;
- Saying things to make you feel uncomfortable;
- Putting you at risk in some way.

### 2. What is Abuse?

Abuse may be perpetrated by an adult or child and the victim of abuse may be an adult or child. Abuse is any form of physical, emotional and/or sexual mistreatment or lack of care where the act or omission results in:

- Physical injury;
- Emotional damage;
- Sexual exploitation

Abuse may take the following forms:

- **Child Abuse** is an abuse of power or authority and/or breach of trust by an adult over a child.
- **Emotional Abuse** is a chronic attack on a person's self-esteem and is psychologically destructive behavior by a person in a position of power, authority and trust. It can take the form of name-calling, threatening, berating, ridiculing, intimidating, isolating, hazing or ignoring a person's needs.

- **Physical Abuse** is when a person in a position of power or trust purposefully injures or threatens to injure another person. This may take the forms of slapping, hitting, shaking, kicking, pulling hair or ears, throwing, shoving, grabbing, hazing or excessive exercise as a form of punishment.
- **Neglect** is a form of abuse that relates to chronic inattention to basic necessities of life such as clothing, shelter, nutritious diets, education, good hygiene, supervision, medical and dental care, adequate rest, safe environment, moral guidance and discipline, exercise and fresh air.
- **Sexual Abuse** is when a person uses another person for his or her own sexual stimulation or gratification without consent. There are two categories of sexual abuse:
  - Contact which may include the following:
    - Touched or fondled in sexual areas;
    - Forced to touch another person's sexual areas;
    - Kissed or held in a sexual manner;
    - Forced to perform oral sex or intercourse;
    - Sexual oriented hazing
  - Non-Contact, which may include the following:
    - Invitation to sexual touching
    - Obscene remarks on the phone, computer or in notes;
    - Voyeurism;
    - Forced viewing of pornography;
    - Forced to watch sexual acts;
    - Sexually intrusive questions or comments;
    - Forced to pose for sexual photographs or videos; or
    - Forced to self-masturbate or forced to watch others masturbate.

### 3. How do you define Abuse and Harassment?

It is difficult, if not impossible, to define harassment or abuse in black and white terms. At its worst, harassing or abusing behaviour is easy to determine, but there are also grey areas since not everyone perceives behavior in the same way. Thus, any definition of harassment or abuse will contain a certain subjective element. This makes it difficult to describe acceptable norms of behaviour and to provide the clear and specific guidelines for behavior some people look for, and even others appear to need.

Not everyone views behavior the same way, and this is particularly true as one moves away from the extreme examples of unacceptable behaviour to what we might call the "grey" zone of conduct.

For example, what one person might view as acceptable another might define as harassment or abuse. Similarly, what one might see or intend as a joke, another may view as insulting or embarrassing. An invasion of personal space might seem intrusive to one person but may reflect another person's more physical or tactile way of relating to people. A coaching strategy intended to produce peak performance in an athlete or team may be viewed by one person as strident and aggressive but by another person as abusive. A congratulatory hug, kiss or pat on the "behind" might be perfectly acceptable to some but could make others feel uneasy and vulnerable. Finally cultural differences can give rise to behavior or conduct, which is acceptable to some but invasive to others.

It is not just the conduct itself that makes certain behavior inappropriate, but the context in which the behavior occurs or its repetitive nature. Individuals who experience harassment or abuse often describe not simply the incidents of harassment or abuse, but the environment around them as cold, hostile or alienating. In fact, human rights legislation and case law refer to such an environment as being “chilly” or “poisoned” without referring to a specific incident. Behavior or conduct that contributes to, supports or condones such behaviour is very likely harassing or abusive behavior.

#### 4. What is Bullying?

“Bullying” is a form of harassment, but also has some of its own defining characteristics. Harassment is illegal and is always wrong and should never be condoned, let alone be allowed to exist within an organization.

Bullies are mean. They engage in nasty, disrespectful, hurtful behaviour. Their intention, whether conscious or unconscious, is to control. To do this, they diminish, humiliate and sabotage other people. The top 10 bullying behaviors include:

- Yelling and screaming
- Blaming the ‘victim’ for ‘errors’
- Criticism of the ‘victims’ abilities
- Applying rules inconsistency
- Threatening loss of opportunity
- Insults and putting-down
- Discounting or denying accomplishments
- Excluding or ostracizing the target
- Stealing credit from others

#### 5. What to do about Abuse, Harassment and Bullying?

There are four general categories of response to a situation of abuse, harassment and bullying:

**Avoidance** – the least assertive of the responses, examples of avoidance include ignoring the harassment, abuse or bullying and distancing oneself from the cause of the problem or in the extreme, removing oneself from the environment completely perhaps by quitting a team, a club or even the sport altogether. Avoidance is usually the first way that people respond to abuse, harassment or bullying.

**Defusion** – responses in this slightly more active category involve trying to “normalize” the situation by going along with the behavior, trying to make a joke about it, or confiding in personal friends in an attempt to make the situation more tolerable. Defusing behaviors may be misinterpreted as acceptance of the abuse, harassment or bullying.

**Negotiation** – a more direct category of responses, it involves negotiating with the abuser, harasser or bully to stop. This is often risky as the individual may retaliate or isolate the victim even further and the situation may escalate.

**Confrontation** – typically the response of the last resort, this is the most assertive category on the continuum of responses. It has two components: aggressive personal responses or requesting help from the organization through a formal complaint.

**Report It** – We now know that reporting is usually the last response and we can infer that many people who experience harassment or bullying never even take this final step believing they won't be supported or believed. Do not ignore harassment. Report it.

If you are abused, harassed or bullied, there are several steps you can take:

1. Make it clear to the individual that his or her actions are not welcome.
2. Document your case. Keep a written record of the incidents, including times, places and witnesses.
3. Report the abuse, harassment or bullying to the appropriate person identified in your organization's harassment policy.
4. If these steps do not get appropriate results, and the harassment is based on one of the **11 grounds of discrimination** prohibited under the *Canadian Human Rights Act*, you may wish to file a complaint with the Canadian Human Rights Commission at:

National Office  
344 Slater St. 8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Ottawa, ON K1A 1E1  
Phone: (613) 995-1151  
Toll Free: 1-888-214-1090  
TTY: 1-888-643-3304  
Fax: (613) 996-9661

## 6. How do I recognize harassment as a parent?

Look for signs that a child is not his or her normal self and may be unusually withdrawn, disinterested, unhappy or angry. There are many signs, both physical and behavioral, to suggest possible harassment. Unexplained injuries, sexual explicit actions or language beyond their age, new friendships with older persons, or sudden changes in behavior are just a few examples.

You can protect a child both at home and in the environment in which they participate. Parents should encourage their children to talk openly about their activities and let them know that it's okay to tell them when something isn't right. In addition, you should:

- Be aware of your child's sport or recreation environment;
- Get involved in their activities by getting to know their coaches, volunteers and other parents;
- Talk to your child and their coach about what's okay behavior and what your child wants to get out of their activity;
- Ensure their sport or recreation association has a harassment policy and a screening process in place for staff and volunteers;
- Know how to voice your own concerns;
- Listen to your child's complaint and no matter how far-fetched it seems, check it out;
- If the problem is not sexual or physical abuse, try to resolve it with league or club officials before approaching other community services;
- Have the situation corrected and, if necessary, remove your child from the activity.

## **7. How do I recognize a child who has been sexually abused?**

A child who has been the victim of sexual abuse is not always capable of voluntarily informing those around him or her of the situation. However, certain indicators should suffice to alert you that something is wrong and prompt you to look into the situation more closely. Indirect clues may include:

- An obvious loss of interest in the activity
- Difficulty sleeping, changes in appetite, abdominal discomfort, vomiting and nose bleeds;
- A tendency to avoid certain persons, situations or locations;
- A desire to be alone and withdrawn
- Depression, negative attitude, self-destructive behavior and irritability;
- Physical evidence: bruises, burns, sexually transmitted diseases;
- An unusual need for positive reinforcement;
- Inappropriate sexual behavior for the child's age

This evidence does not necessarily constitute proof that a child has been the victim of sexual abuse, but should be enough to suggest that something is wrong.

## **8. How do I protect my child from abuse?**

- Ensure the club or sport organization has conducted criminal checks and screening for those individuals who work closely with children.
- Be involved and be around the training area at least part of the time your child is receiving instruction so you are able to observe all interaction.
- Keep the lines of communication open with your child so they will feel free to confide in you if they need to.
- Ensure your sport organization adheres to policies on conduct and that coaches are aware of proper protocols.

## **9. Does TTCAN have a Harassment and Abuse Policy?**

TTCAN has a Harassment and Abuse Policy, which applies to TTCAN employees, directors, officers, volunteers, coaches, athletes, officials and members of TTCAN. A copy of the policy can be found on the website.

Employees or members of TTCAN against whom a complaint of harassment or abuse is substantiated may be severely disciplined, up to and including employment dismissal or termination of membership.