



## CONFLICT RESOLUTION POLICY

### OVERVIEW

Despite the efforts of VAFC club and team officials, disputes or disagreements may arise from time to time among participants (player, parent or guardian, team or club official) in soccer. To uphold the VAFC and BCSA philosophies of player development, fair play, good citizenship and maintaining the integrity of the game of soccer, a conflict resolution policy is essential.

In formulating this Policy, VAFC has relied on the following principles:

- Effective conflict management and dispute resolution requires:
  - Relevant discussion among the individuals affected.
  - A clear understanding by the parties of the roles and responsibilities of VAFC members, team and club officials.
  - Recognition of the authority of team officials, almost all of whom are volunteers, to manage the affairs of their teams and of the authority of the club to resolve disputes that cannot be resolved by the parties on their own.
  - The right of each of the affected parties to hear the case against them, to have an opportunity to respond and to be provided clear reasons for any decision affecting them.
  - A clearly articulated process for appealing any decision affecting a member, team or club official.

It is the policy of VAFC that members should seek to resolve conflicts or disputes first through meaningful, respectful dialogue between or among the individuals involved. If emotions are running too high, individuals involved in a conflict or dispute are expected to seek assistance from another team official or parent prior to escalating the conflict or dispute to the club level. Solutions imposed from above are rarely as effective as those mutually agreed upon by the individuals involved.

VAFC is responsible for and empowered to conduct inquiries into the conduct of any member (player, parent or guardian, team official or club official) if a complaint is made or a conflict is brought to the attention of club officials.

As set out in the Bylaws of VAFC, the club maintains the authority to impose discipline on any member, including removal of a director, club or team official or member. VAFC may impose discipline in addition to or absent discipline imposed by the Canadian Soccer Association, the BCSA or any district association.



## **COMPLAINT PROCEDURE:**

A person seeking to make a complaint has the responsibility to act in accordance with this Policy and to follow the procedure set out below:

1. Ensure your complaint is clear, well-articulated and, if possible, documented. Save all relevant communications with team and club officials or other individuals regarding your complaint. Keep specific notes of incidents, dates, times, etc. Documentation of events and communications is critical, particularly if the complaint must be escalated within the club.
2. A complainant should first discuss their complaint directly with the individual(s) involved. At all times be courteous and respectful, recognizing, in particular, that with very few exceptions, team and club officials are volunteers who spend countless hours providing soccer playing opportunities for children registered at VAFC.
3. If a complainant is unsuccessful in resolving a dispute or conflict through direct communication with the party(ies) involved or has a reasonable basis for believing that such discussion would lead to further conflict or recrimination, the complainant should seek assistance from another team official or parent from the team. Team officials have the immediate authority and obligation to resolve disputes.
4. If informal discussions fail to resolve a dispute or conflict, the complainant should escalate the complaint or seek assistance in escalating the complaint to the specific Age Group Coordinator. The Age Group Coordinator may seek input or assistance from the House League or Divisional Coordinator, as applicable, or VAFC Head Coach.
5. If the complaint still cannot be resolved at the team, Age Group Coordinator or House League/Divisional Coordinator level, the complainant may request that the complaint be brought to the attention of the VAFC Board of Directors.
6. When a complaint is brought to the attention of the VAFC Board of Directors for resolution, the complainant must prepare a written complaint addressed to the President of VAFC, setting out the nature of the complaint with specific detail about the parties involved, dates, incidents, etc., as well as efforts made to resolve the dispute. The written complaint should also include, where applicable and available, copies of communications among the parties related to the complaint.
7. Upon receipt of a written complaint, the President of VAFC, in his or her sole discretion, may appoint either a specific director or a group of directors to resolve the complaint (a "Conflict Resolution Committee"). A Conflict Resolution Committee must, at all times, include either the President or Vice President of VAFC but not both.
8. The Conflict Resolution Committee shall review the written complaint and shall request written or verbal input from the other parties involved or may request additional information from the complainant. This process shall include providing an opportunity for the individual or individuals who are the subject(s) of the complaint to hear the case against them and to respond.



9. After reviewing the information obtained from the parties, the Conflict Resolution Committee may investigate further, seek to include the parties in a mediated solution, or render a decision to resolve the dispute or implement corrective action without the further input of the parties.
10. The Conflict Resolution Committee may recommend or impose a course of corrective action upon the parties to resolve the dispute or to modify conduct and, if so, shall set out specific actions to be taken and a plan for following up to ensure the corrective action is completed or conduct modified.
11. The Conflict Resolution Committee shall provide a written summary of the decision taken to resolve the complaint or the discipline imposed as a result of the complaint. The summary shall include the details of the decision as well as a brief explanation of the reasons for the decision.
12. If a party wishes to appeal a decision of the Conflict Resolution Committee, he or she must provide written notice to the VAFC Board of Directors within 14 days of receipt of the decision and set out the grounds for the appeal (a "Notice of Appeal").
13. If the VAFC Board of Directors receives a Notice of Appeal, it shall appoint a Conflict Resolution Appeal Committee, consisting of no fewer than 3 directors, including the VAFC President or VAFC Vice President, whichever one did not form part of the Conflict Resolution Committee. No member of a Conflict Resolution Appeal Committee may have been involved in making the decision appealed from.
14. The Conflict Resolution Appeal Committee shall review the written materials submitted by the parties and produced by the Conflict Resolution Committee in rendering the decision. The Conflict Resolution Appeal Committee may also, in its sole discretion, request additional input from the parties involved in the dispute, although generally, an appeal shall not be viewed as an opportunity for the parties to re-argue the merits of their positions in the complaint, dispute or conflict.
15. The Conflict Resolution Appeal Committee may uphold the decision or make its own decision, based on the principles set out in this policy.
16. The Conflict Resolution Appeal Committee will generally seek to uphold the decision of a Conflict Resolution Committee unless such a decision is unreasonable or lacked procedural fairness.
17. Any decision of the Conflict Resolution Appeal Committee is final and may not be appealed, except according to the provisions of the *Society Act*.
18. At all times, the resolution of complaints or imposition of discipline by the VAFC Board of Directors must comply with the Bylaws of VAFC and the provisions of the *Society Act*.
19. In general, the VAFC Board of Directors will seek to resolve disputes amicably in a way that allows the parties to continue to maintain productive, respectful relationships within the club. However, in extreme cases, the VAFC Board of Directors may suspend or dismiss an individual



from a club position (such as coach, manager, club official, etc.) or expel from membership any individual whose conduct is not in keeping with the philosophies of VAFC. Such action shall always be considered a solution of last resort and shall not be taken lightly.