



BC SOCCER

Safe Sport Program Assessment Report Response & Plan

Board Approved – May 9, 2020

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Introduction & Background

Following publication of a blog in February 2019 containing troubling accounts from within a higher performance team environment, and assertions of systemic cultural behaviours within our sport, BC Soccer's Board of Directors determined the association must conduct a thorough third-party review focusing on safety in the sport of soccer in our province.

Rubin Thomlinson LLP was retained as the independent investigators in Spring 2019 and the process of gathering information began, starting with an open invitation to participate in a wider ranging survey, followed by targeted surveys within the BC Soccer Premier League, Provincial soccer programs, and finally one-on-one interviews of individuals who volunteered to do so. The procedure also included a full review of the bylaws, rules and policies of BC Soccer.

Rubin Thomlinson LLP led by Marisha Roman, finalized the report on December 19, 2019 and provided it to BC Soccer. On December 20, 2019, the Report was shared publicly on BC Soccer's website and through direct communication to members and affiliated clubs across BC Soccer's social media channels. Within the report, Rubin Thomlinson LLP provide suggested recommendations to BC Soccer to improve the manner in which it, as the governing body for the sport of soccer in BC, supports safety and addresses concerns about safety in the sport of soccer in BC. In turn, this report responds openly to the recommendations within the report.

Position Statement

BC Soccer believes that everyone involved in soccer has the right to participate in safe and inclusive environments free of abuse, harassment, discrimination, and to enjoy the sport at whatever level or capacity they participate in.

The welfare of everyone involved in soccer is the foremost consideration and in particular, the protection of children in the sport is the responsibility of everyone involved.

Rubin Thomlinson Recommendations and BC Soccer’s response

<u>Recommendation 1 – Share the results of ‘the’ review</u>	<u>BC Soccer response & plan</u>
<p>We recommend that a version of this report be shared publicly. Through the course of the review, we received many enquiries about when the results of this project would be available. The soccer community is interested in safety and showed its interest by participating in great numbers. We also recommend that a written plan to respond to the recommendations in the report be prepared by BC Soccer and shared publicly.</p> <p>BC Soccer should solicit and consider feedback on its plan from interested parties, including, but not limited to, soccer participants, referees, league/association and team/club leadership and the Safe Sport Advisory Group, as discussed below.</p> <p>As we heard from respondents that communication is very important, we recommend that BC Soccer commit to providing periodic updates to its members and the soccer community on its implementation of the plan.</p>	<p>BC Soccer supports this recommendation.</p> <p>BC Soccer released the Rubin Thomlinson’s Safe Sport Program Assessment Report within 24 hours of it being finalized and receiving it from Rubin Thomlinson. The report was posted publicly on the BC Soccer website and circulated to BC Soccer members and their affiliated clubs.</p> <p>BC Soccer shares this “Response and Plan Report” with its members, affiliated clubs and has publicly via its website.</p>
<u>Recommendation 2 – Develop and adopt a safe sport position statement</u>	<u>BC Soccer response & plan</u>
<p>To ensure that BC Soccer’s message regarding its commitment to safe sport and safety in the sport of soccer in BC is clear, we recommend that BC Soccer develop and adopt a safe sport position statement and include this statement along with its Mission and Vision statements on its website. We also recommend that BC Soccer include this statement in all BC Soccer safe sport resources and communications. Repetition of this statement will underline BC Soccer’s commitment to safety in the sport of soccer in BC. As a starting point, BC Soccer may consider building from its current statement in its Criminal Record Check Policy:</p> <p><i>As the governing body for soccer in British Columbia, BC Soccer, in conjunction with its members and affiliated organizations, is responsible for providing safe environments for every participant of our game.</i></p>	<p>BC Soccer supports this recommendation.</p> <p>As a result of this recommendation, BC Soccer has provided its newly established Safe Sport Position Statement, which is restated below.</p> <p><i>BC Soccer believes that everyone involved in soccer has the right to participate in safe and inclusive environments free of abuse, harassment, discrimination, and to enjoy the sport at whatever level or capacity they participate in.</i></p> <p><i>The welfare of everyone involved in soccer is the foremost consideration and in particular, the protection of children in the sport is the responsibility of everyone involved.</i></p> <p>BC Soccer commits to posting its newly established Safe Sport Position Statement on the corporate website alongside the association’s mission and vision statements and will include, as applicable, in all safe sport resources and communications.</p>

Recommendation 3 – Review internal policies and resources	BC Soccer response & plan
<p>Based on our review of BC Soccer’s policies, as well as feedback received from the surveys and telephone interviews, we recommend that BC Soccer review its policies, procedures, protocols, and good practice guides for the purpose of creating a cohesive safe sport policy framework. As part of this process, we recommend that BC Soccer enhance its resources and update its policies as noted in this report, including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure its policies are up to date; • Create a space for safe sport resources on its website that is easy to locate; • Ensure its resources and forms are accessible in relation to the various levels of ability, age and literacy of the soccer community as well as access to computers and the internet; • Amend the By-Laws to reflect that the qualifications of Directors include a background check; • Establish a stand-alone Code of Conduct or clarify the location of the Code of Conduct and its complaint procedures; • Update its Communication and Social Media policy • Update its Privacy Policy • Update its Parent Code of Conduct. <p>We also recommend that BC Soccer commit the safe sport best practice approach of the Responsible Coaching Movement and undertake to complete the policy review process identified in the Responsible Coaching Movement Audit Checklist. In enhancing its policies to create a safe sport policy framework, BC Soccer should also add policies, beginning with those identified in the RCM Audit Checklist:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parental Consent Form • Coach Agreement • Athlete Agreement • Travel Policy • Rule of Two Policy <p>As noted above, as the core element of the safe sport policy framework, we recommend that BC Soccer establish a stand-alone Code of Conduct or clarify its location within the Judicial Code and Policies. We also recommend that the Code of Conduct should include a complaint initiation process that allows for protection of vulnerable complainants through the acceptance of anonymous complaints and organization-initiated complaint processes with due consideration for procedural fairness for respondents.</p>	<p>BC Soccer supports this recommendation.</p> <p>By the end of 2022, and in alignment with the 2024 Strategic Plan, BC Soccer commits to ensuring there are enhancements to the governance and policy framework for the association, including improving ease of access to information via the association’s website.</p> <p>BC Soccer also commits to review the information within the Responsible Coach Movement and develop, by end of 2022, the appropriate templates to further support safety in soccer.</p> <p>At BC Soccer’s 2019 AGM, BC Soccer put forward amendments that were approved by the membership to add the following to the rules and regulations which are aligned with the Rule of Two Principle:</p> <p><i>RULE 21 - RULES OF PLAY – YOUTH</i> <i>h) All interactions between a team official and an individual player must take place within earshot and in view of other individuals (team officials, players, parents, match officials and/or association officials)</i></p> <p>Within the Judicial Code and Policies of BC Soccer, there is a comprehensive Conduct and Ethics section where BC Soccer has established its Code of Conduct. The code can be access via clicking on the “Code of Conduct” title with the table of contents. Further, within the same Judicial Code and Policies of BC Soccer document, BC Soccer has an established a well laid out complaints procedure, which again can be easily accessed by click on the “Complaints Procedure” title within the table of content.</p> <p>BC Soccer acknowledges that some individuals may not know where to access the Judicial Code and Policies of BC Soccer were this information is located, therefore commits to working to improve how the information is accessed via its website.</p> <p>CLICK HERE to view the Judicial Code and Policies of BC Soccer.</p> <p>BC Soccer recognizes the importance of ease of access to the <i>Complaints Process</i> as well as the security and privacy of the complainants when appropriate.</p>

<p><u>Recommendation 4 – Endorse the Canada Soccer Safety Guide</u></p>	<p><i>BC Soccer response & plan</i></p>
<p>We recommend that BC Soccer endorse the Canada Soccer Safety Guide, use this guide in its development of its safe sport policy framework and link to this guide through its website.</p>	<p>BC Soccer supports this recommendation.</p> <p>As a member association of Canada Soccer, BC Soccer must comply with all Canada Soccer Bylaws, Rules/Regulations and Policies as demonstrated by the public endorsement by all members of Canada Soccer in May 2019 in relation to the Safety Sport Roster.</p> <p>BC Soccer has posted on its website a link to Canada Soccer’s Safety Guide. https://bcsoccer.net/bylaws</p>
<p><u>Recommendation 5 – Adopt a position statement and take action on equity, diversity and inclusion</u></p>	<p><i>BC Soccer response & plan</i></p>
<p>In concert with enhancing the Code of Conduct, we recommend that BC Soccer adopt a position statement in support of equity, diversity and inclusion in the BC soccer community. This statement could form part of the Code of Conduct. We further recommend that, in conjunction with Recommendation 7, Continued Communication, that BC Soccer undertake a community census to establish a baseline for diversity in the soccer community in BC. BC Soccer should seek external advice on conducting demographic censuses.</p>	<p>BC Soccer supports this recommendation.</p> <p>For the 2019-20 operating cycle, BC Soccer’s Board of Directors have established a Diversity and Inclusion Committee. The goals of the Committee are to oversee and guide the development of the game of soccer in British Columbia as it relates to issues of diversity and inclusion. The Committee will advise the Board of Directors of the Association with respect to the rules, regulations and programming regarding any aspects of diversity with respect to any aspect of the game, its administration or governance.</p> <p>The specific committee deliverables are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop an inclusion policy to support BC Soccer’s objective of increased inclusion including but not limited to Women and Girls, Persons with Disabilities, LGBTQI2S Community, Marginalized Youth, Indigenous People, Socio-economically Disadvantaged, Newcomers to Canada, Rural, Remote and Isolated Regions, and Older Adults. 2. Support activity designed to increase the level of participation and leadership engagement of women, and 3. Be responsible for delivering against additional Board of Director agreed priorities.

Recommendation 6 – Create the role of a Safe Sport Officer	BC Soccer response & plan
<p>To ensure that individuals who have questions about the safe sport policy framework and procedures can find answers to those questions, we recommend that, in addition to or in conjunction with the BC Soccer Privacy Officer, that BC Soccer create the role of Safe Sport Officer. The individual in this role should be neutral and trained on the policies and procedures of the BC Soccer safe sport policy framework. The Safe Sport Officer should undertake to complete the certifications related to safe sport that are offered by Commit2Kids or the Respect Group at a minimum.</p> <p>The role of the Safe Sport Officer would be as an information and referral resource for members of the soccer community. The Safe Sport Officer would not conduct investigations into complaints but could advise individuals about where they may report concerns or submit complaints. As many respondents noted in the survey and interviews, they hesitated to file complaints for fear of being blackballed and they also expressed a lack of trust in the processes of BC Soccer to address their concerns. The role of the Safe Sport Officer could address this concern by following up with individuals who ask questions or express their concerns to ensure that their issues have been responded to.</p> <p>As a further measure to create transparency and accountability for BC Soccer, we recommend that the Safe Sport Officer provide an annual report to the Board of BC Soccer about their interactions with members of the soccer community related to the safe sport policies and identify potential options for action and improvement of the safe sport policy framework by BC Soccer.</p>	<p>BC Soccer commits, by the end of 2022 and in alignment with the 2024 Strategic Plan, to conducting a cost–benefit analysis/review on the need to introduce this role, while taking into consideration the other roles within the association.</p> <p>Regardless of having a dedicated Safe Sport Officer, in alignment with Via Sport, BC Soccer commits to having all board and staff members involved in developing and implementing policy and sport programming, and/or recruiting and overseeing coaching and officials complete:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Commit to Kids training by September 30, 2020. https://commit2kids.ca/en/# and - the Respect In Sport Activity Leader training by December 31, 2020 https://www.respectgroupinc.com/respect-in-sport/#activity-leaders-program <p>BC Soccer also confirms that the current complaints review process is led by an independent Judicial Chair that is at arm’s length from the BC Soccer board of directors and staff. As part of the Judicial Chair role, a regular report is provided to the BC Soccer Board of Directors detailing the number and types of complaints and activity occurring with the judicial processes.</p>

Recommendation 7 – Commit to continued communication with the BC soccer community	BC Soccer response & plan
<p>We recommend that BC Soccer continue to communicate with the broader soccer community in BC about safe sport and related issues, including but not limited to equity, diversity and inclusion, through regular (annual or semi-annual) online surveys and that it post survey results publicly on its website. The Safe Sport Officer could review the survey results and incorporate feedback into their report to the BC Soccer board of directors with recommendations for action and improvement for the safe sport policy framework.</p> <p>We also recommend that BC Soccer commit to detailed and transparent public reporting on the types of safe sport complaints that it receives and the manner in which those complaints are addressed. The report should be sufficiently general so as not to identify any personal information, while also being sufficiently specific about BC Soccer’s response to provide a snapshot of the effectiveness of BC Soccer’s safe sport program.</p>	<p>BC Soccer supports the intent behind this recommendation, and any action in this area must be in compliance with the governance framework, bylaws, rules, regulations, and policies of both BC Soccer and Canada Soccer.</p> <p>To support the above commitment an in alignment with the response to recommendation 9, BC Soccer will create a space for safe sport resources on its website which will include information and linked, including but not limited to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BC Soccer’s Safe Sport Position Statement - Any BC Soccer safe sport documents - Commit to Kids training information https://commit2kids.ca/en/# and - Respect In Sport Activity Leader training https://www.respectgroupinc.com/respect-in-sport/#activity-leaders-program - Canada Soccer’s Safety Guide https://bcsoccer.net/bylaws - All the information and contact information to report abuse or maltreatment https://bcsoccer.net/safe-sport-risk-management - Safe Sport Training for Coaches https://safesport.coach.ca/

Recommendation 8 – Take the Responsible Coaching Movement Pledge	BC Soccer response & plan
<p>We recommend that BC Soccer join the more than forty BC PSOs (24) and BC soccer organizations (20) and publicly commit to RCM by signing on to its Pledge by 2020 and incorporate into its practice the recommendations of Phase I of the RCM:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt the Rule of Two; • Conduct background screening for all coaches and volunteers; and • Support training in ethics and respect for all participants, parents, coaches, volunteers and others involved in sport. 	<p>BC Soccer supports this recommendation.</p> <p>BC Soccer adopted the principle of the Rule of Two, which was formalized at the 2019 AGM, with the following being added to the rules and regulations:</p> <p><i>RULE 21 - RULES OF PLAY – YOUTH</i> <i>h) All interactions between a team official and an individual player must take place within earshot and in view of other individuals (team officials, players, parents, match officials and/or association officials)</i></p> <p>BC Soccer Rule 18, Criminal Record Checks, already requires all involved in soccer to have completed a Criminal Record Check and/or Vulnerable Sector Check or Enhanced Police Information Check.</p> <p><i>RULE 18 – CRIMINAL RECORD CHECKS</i> <i>All BC Soccer directors and every volunteer or employee of BC Soccer or an affiliated BC Soccer organization aged 19 years or older must have completed a Criminal Record Check and/or Vulnerable Sector Check or Enhanced Police Information Check on file in accordance with BC Soccer’s Criminal Record Check Policy.</i></p> <p>BC Soccer commits to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working with Respect in Sport and specifically the Respect in Sport Activity Leader/Coach Program designed to educate youth leaders, coaches, officials and participants (14-years and up) to recognize, understand and respond to issues of bullying, abuse, harassment and discrimination (BAHD), and - In addition to Rule 18 as noted above, conduct enhanced background screening when appropriate for all personnel directly assigned by BC Soccer.

Recommendation 9 – Develop a safe sport communication and education strategy	BC Soccer response & plan
<p>In conjunction with the development of the safe sport policy framework and accompanying policy changes, such revisions should trigger education and training for BC Soccer members relating to safe sport policy procedures and their compliance requirements and responsibilities under these policies. This training should be made available to individual participants as well.</p> <p>To address the geographic realities of BC, we recommend that BC Soccer develop online training materials that are accessible and intended for all ages and abilities and utilize its Youtube channel to promote these resources.</p> <p>We also recommend that BC Soccer update and expand its current parent resource, The Educated Parent, to include information such as specific safety issues, including field conditions, heading and the concussion protocol, parents’ responsibilities in relation to safety including their conduct and BC Soccer’s enforcement of conduct standards and the role of coaches and refs in ensuring safety.</p>	<p>BC Soccer supports this recommendation and commits to increasing communication on the principles of safe sport and sharing the association position statement in this area.</p> <p>BC Soccer further commits to developing (or sourcing) information and educational resources videos highlighting the content of safety in sport polices, rules, etc. on an ongoing basis and in conjunction with the completion of recommendation three. As part of this BC Soccer’s Educated Parent will be reviewed.</p> <p>To support the above commitments, BC Soccer will create a space for safe sport resources on its website which will include information and linked, including but not limited to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BC Soccer’s Safe Sport Position Statement - Any BC Soccer safe sport documents - Commit to Kids training information https://commit2kids.ca/en/# and - Respect In Sport Activity Leader training https://www.respectgroupinc.com/respect-in-sport/#activity-leaders-program - Canada Soccer’s Safety Guide https://bcsoccer.net/bylaws - All the information and contact information to report abuse or maltreatment https://bcsoccer.net/safe-sport-risk-management - Safe Sport Training for Coaches https://safesport.coach.ca/

Recommendation 10 – Establish a Safe Sport Advisory Committee	BC Soccer response & plan
<p>As these recommendations arose from the feedback gathered from survey and telephone interview respondents through this review process, we recommend that BC Soccer develop terms of reference for and establish a BC Soccer Safe Sport Advisory Group, which will include diverse representatives from equity-seeking communities and geographic locations and will feature gender parity. The specific constitution of the BC Soccer Safe Sport Advisory Committee will include one or more individuals from the following stakeholder groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current youth player • Current adult player • Former elite or BC SPL player • Parent • Coach • Technical Director • Referee • League/Association board member • Individual(s) with expertise in workplace and organizational investigations into harassment, discrimination, sexual violence, with particular focus on investigations involving youth <p>Among the objects of the Safe Sport Advisory Group will be to develop options for BC Soccer to consider in addressing the negative impact of historical misconduct within the sport of soccer in BC and institutional responses to reports and concerns. We further recommend that the Safe Sport Advisory Group also consider and develop options, with consideration for its mandate, for BC Soccer to address the issue of field conditions.</p> <p>The BC Soccer Safe Sport Advisory Group will meet with the BC Soccer Safe Sport Officer to provide feedback and inform the Safe Sport Officer’s report to the Board of Directors.</p>	<p>BC Soccer supports the intent behind this recommendation.</p> <p>BC Soccer’s position, in the first instance, is that it would be better for the sport system in BC if this is done in collaboration with the wider sport sector and not isolated to soccer, therefore, in 2020 (and 2021) BC Soccer commits to having its Executive Director as the PSO (Provincial Sport Organization) represented on Via Sport’s Safe Sport Program Advisory Committee which was established in January 2020. In addition to the PSO representative, the committee will be comprised of a Via Sport Board Member and a minimum of three members with legal experience.</p> <p>The duties associated with Via Sport’s Safe Sport Program Advisory Committee are:</p> <p><i>The Committee acts in an advisory capacity and does not have any decision-making authority.</i></p> <p><i>Subject to the above, the Committee shall be responsible for:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Overseeing the creation and operation of the Safe Sport Program including but not limited to the Helpline, Sport Integrity Unit, Prevention Activities, and Compliance.</i> 2. <i>Formulating recommendations with regards to, among others:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>Risk and liability related to the program.</i> b) <i>The contract with the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada to leverage the existing National Helpline and Investigation Unit</i> c) <i>Approval of the SDRCC Investigator Program</i> d) <i>Policies necessary to implement the Integrity Unit, including a Harmonized Code of Conduct and Sanctions.</i> e) <i>Compliance Mechanisms</i> f) <i>Prevention Mechanisms including Sector Minimum standards administered by viaSport</i> g) <i>The structure, management, delivery, reporting standards and evaluation of the Sport Integrity Unit Pilot Project.</i> 3. <i>Assessing the resources required to implement the above responsibilities, including:</i>

	<p><i>a) viaSport’s capacity and potential role in the delivery of the program;</i> <i>b) The funding model; and</i> <i>c) Funding requirements and opportunities.</i></p> <p>Therefore, BC Soccer commits for 2020 and 2021 to learn from its participation on Via Sport’s Advisory Group with the objective of determining how best to bring the learnings back into the soccer structure and community. From the learnings, in 2020 and 21, BC Soccer would then consider the need for to establish its own Safe Sport Advisory Committee.</p>
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Closing Comments

BC Soccer would like to thank Rubin Thomlinson, and specifically Marisha Roman, for the comprehensiveness of their assessment report. We would especially like to thank those who provided the valuable feedback that will help ensure our sport is safe now, and into the future.

BC Soccer believes that everyone involved in soccer has the right to participate in safe and inclusive environments free of abuse, harassment, discrimination, and to enjoy the sport at whatever level or capacity they participate in.

The welfare of everyone involved in soccer is the foremost consideration and in particular, the protection of children in the sport is the responsibility of everyone involved.