



IFSC Policy for the Safeguard and Protection of Athletes and Participants in Sport Climbing

A. BACKGROUND

Sport organisations and everyone in sport, have the responsibility to foster a safe, respectful culture so that athletes can thrive without harassment, abuse or violence.

The IFSC – International Federation of Sport Climbing, is committed to strengthen the support offered to all its members by putting climbers, their safety, well-being and welfare, at the centre of our activities.

Everyone in sport has the right to be protected from non-accidental violence, harassment and abuse irrespective of their race, colour, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, disability, physical attributes, athletic ability or other status.

All sport organisations must implement measures to prevent and respond to incidents of non-accidental violence, harassment and abuse. The effectiveness of such measures depends on the IFSC and its national federations, to increase awareness of the indicators and impact of all forms of non-accidental violence. Everyone in sport climbing needs to know how to raise concerns and be confident that these will be responded to in line with their National Federation and/or the IFSC Policy and Procedures. Everyone should be aware of the avenues and means open to them for assistance and support.

1. CONTEXT

Non-accidental violence includes all forms of harassment and abuse and occurs worldwide, including sports environments. We all share in the responsibility to identify the problems and to prevent athletes from suffering.

The International Olympic Committee, in its Agenda 2020, has made strong recommendations to International Federations and has provided a framework outlining the key components required for athlete welfare.

The IFSC is committed to develop further supporting documents, policy and procedures which are intended to assist its member federations and serve as the acceptable standards when adopting and implementing national safeguarding systems.

Everyone in the climbing community has the responsibility to identify and respond to harassment and abuse. Our National Federations must demonstrate strong leadership by identifying and eradicating unacceptable practices and implementing preventative programmes.



2. DEFINITIONS

Harassment and abuse can be expressed in many forms which may occur in combination or in isolation. The following are based on the IOC Consensus Statement (2016) as follows:

Psychological abuse

Any unwelcome act including confinement, isolation, verbal assault, humiliation, intimidation, infantilization, or any other treatment, which may diminish an individual sense of identity, dignity and self-worth

Physical abuse

Any deliberate and unwelcome act – such as punching, beating, kicking, biting, and burning – that causes physical trauma or injury. Such acts include forced or inappropriate physical activity (e.g. age, or physically inappropriate and unreasonable training loads or activities, when injured or in pain), forced alcohol or drug consumption or forced doping practices.

Sexual harassment

Any unwanted and unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature, whether verbal, non-verbal or physical. Sexual harassment can take the form of sexual abuse.

Sexual abuse

Conduct of a sexual nature, whether non-contact, contact or penetrative, where consent is coerced or manipulated, and is not, or cannot be given.

Neglect

Neglect means the failure of a coach or other person with a duty of care towards the athlete to provide a minimum level of care, which may cause harm, allow harm or create an imminent danger of harm.

Harassment and abuse can be based on any grounds including race or ethnic origin, culture, religion or belief, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, socio-economic status, physical attributes and athletic ability. It can include a one-off (one time) incident, or a series of incidents. It may be in person or online. Harassment may be intentional, unsolicited, and coercive.

Harassment and abuse often result from an abuse of authority, meaning the misuse of power by people in positions of trust, influence, and authority (perceived or actual), against another individual.

Some athletes may also carry out acts of harassment and abuse. For young people under the age of eighteen, peer abuse describes incidents when an athlete is exploited, bullied and/or harmed by another athlete or groups of athletes of similar age.

The means and methods by which harassment and abuse is carried out include: contact, non-contact, verbal and abuse by means of electronic communications.

It may involve deliberate acts as well as failure to act and omissions or may take the form of bullying or hazing which are defined as follows:

Bullying

Intentional behaviour usually repeated over time that hurts another individual or group



Hazing

Hazing behaviours are known to occur in many different types of social groups, including sports teams as a way of initiating a new person when they join the group or want to be socially accepted by their peers.

Harassment and abuse are more likely to occur where poor practice, which is defined below, is not immediately challenged.

Poor Practice

Behaviours or inaction which may not always be immediately harmful, but which falls below the required standards and/or code of conduct and should be addressed. Some poor practice may lead to suspicions about an individual's motivation, even where no harm is intended e.g. being alone with a child, excessive or inappropriate touching etc.

3. PURPOSE

The overall purpose of the policy is to ensure athletes and others taking part in sport climbing can do so without fear of harassment or abuse. The key objectives of the Policy are to:

- Ensure everyone in the sport climbing community understands that all forms of non-accidental violence are unacceptable and will not be tolerated;
- Enable anyone who has witnessed or experienced harassment or abuse, within sport climbing, to report the incident without fear of victimisation or retaliation;
- Ensure an appropriate and co-ordinated response to any incidents of harassment or abuse within or connected to participation in sport climbing, irrespective of whether they arise at national or international level;
- Implement effective measures that minimise the likelihood of incidents of harassment and abuse.

B. PROCEDURES

The following procedures apply to any complaints, allegations or concerns of non-accidental violence, harassment and abuse made against a participant that are brought to the attention of the IFSC.

If an alleged incident of harassment and abuse is reported involving participants that belong to the same NF, or if the incident involves participant(s) but took place at an activity under NF jurisdiction, the incident shall be dealt with by such NF, provided that it has a policy and procedures for safeguarding participants in accordance with IFSC Policy.

Where the alleged perpetrator is a NF which has policies and procedures in place, the IFSC may refer the case to be dealt with by the NF under their procedures.

In all other cases, including where:

- a. A NF which has policies and procedures for safeguarding participants, does not, in the opinion of the IFSC, safeguard such participant (e.g. by taking any disciplinary action); or
- b. A NF does not have policies and procedures for safeguarding participants;

the present IFSC Policy will apply.

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Any participant in sport climbing who reports an incident of harassment and abuse that involves a person or persons outside IFSC or NF jurisdiction will be provided with support from the IFSC. In addition, support may be available from the NOC or Human Rights Commission.

These procedures do not provide a route of appeal for decisions made by NFs or NOCs except in cases where it is alleged that the NF or NOC has failed to apply appropriate procedures. In this case, the NF may direct the matter to the IFSC Ethics Commission.

1. REPORTING PROCEDURES

The IFSC can receive reports of an incident of harassment or abuse through:

- The IFSC support email: support@ifsc-climbing.org or
- The IFSC Ethics Commission email: ethics@ifsc-climbing.org or
- The IFSC Athletes' Commission or Athletes' representative email: athletes@ifsc-climbing.org; or
- During major IFSC events, to the Technical Delegate.

Although incidents can be reported directly by the affected individual, incidents can also be reported by others (whistle-blowing) relating to the conduct of an individual or the practices of a NF. In such cases, confidentiality relating to the identity of the whistle-blower will be respected.

Any person who reports a concern in good faith will not be subject to reprisal or other adverse consequences because of submitting a report. These protections shall not apply to a person who intentionally makes false accusations.

1.1. Assessment Process

Any allegation or concern pursuant to this policy received by the IFSC, will be forwarded to the IFSC Ethics Commission and IFSC Executive Board. The IFSC Ethics Commission, in cooperation with the IFSC Office, shall make an initial assessment of the complaint to determine whether the complaint relates to a participant and whether the complaint is under the IFSC jurisdiction.

The IFSC Ethics Commission will assess the seriousness of the complaint and may recommend to:

- Refer the matter to the police, other relevant authorities and/or regulatory bodies where it meets the relevant criminal threshold;
- Refer the matter to an NF;
- Refer the complaint to another organisation;
- Proceed with further internal investigation and;
- Either dismiss the complaint as unfounded or as insufficiently serious to require any further action or may propose a temporary suspension to the IFSC Executive Board.

If the matter is reported to the police, the IFSC will not share any information about the incident without prior authorisation.

Irrespective of jurisdiction, consideration will be given towards any support required for the affected parties.



1.2. Investigation procedure

If the allegations are not of criminal nature but need further investigation, the IFSC Ethics Commission, in accord with the Executive Board, shall assign an individual or a group who shall be responsible for carrying out the investigation, in accordance with these procedures and to an appropriate timeline agreed upon. Where relevant, the investigator may request information from the police and any other relevant organisations.

The investigator may require written or oral representations from relevant parties, taking special care if interviewing vulnerable witnesses. Failure to co-operate with a request to provide relevant information may itself be considered misconduct.

The investigator shall prepare a report and include all relevant evidence for consideration by the Ethics Commission who may determine that:

- The matter is referred to the Disciplinary Commission for consideration;
- Further investigations are instigated;
- A risk assessment is completed;
- Instructions, advice or guidance is provided to the relevant parties; or
- No further action is taken.

If the allegations are of criminal nature, once the matter has been referred back from the police, the objective will be to conclude all investigations in a timely manner, ideally within two months.

2. DISCIPLINE AND APPEALS

Any disciplinary proceedings, including the right of appeal, will be conducted in accordance with the IFSC Disciplinary Rules. The standard of proof is as per the determination in the IFSC Disciplinary Rules. Consequently, the IFSC may seek to take disciplinary action irrespective of the outcome of any criminal proceedings. The IFSC will provide appropriate support and guidance to ensure participants involved in this process understand the disciplinary and appeal procedures, especially if minors are involved.

3. CRIMINAL CONVICTIONS AND NFS FINDINGS OF FACT

The IFSC through its Disciplinary Commission, shall establish that an incident of harassment and abuse has occurred where:

- A participant is convicted of a criminal offence; or
- An NF authorised to deal with a complaint under these procedures has determined that an allegation(s) of harassment or abuse against an IFSC participant is/are proven.

The Disciplinary Commission having considered any written representations made by the participant and any other affected parties, may further investigate the case if needed or determine, based on the criminal conviction, that it is appropriate for the IFSC to impose a sanction relating to IFSC activities. The Disciplinary Commission may apply to the NF a sanction to some or all IFSC activities or determine its own sanction(s).

Any sanction imposed by the Disciplinary Commission shall be subject to a right of appeal in accordance with the IFSC Disciplinary Rules.

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4. NON-RECENT ABUSE CASES / LIMITATION PERIODS

The IFSC does not impose limitation periods for the report of allegations of sexual abuse, harassment, etc. Where a serious allegation of sexual abuse is received, the IFSC will:

- Clarify whether there is a current risk to participants; and may take immediate provisional measures; and
- Advise the individual to make a formal complaint to the police; and
- Provide support and further assistance if deemed appropriate by the Ethics Commission.

Such allegations must be treated in accordance with IFSC procedures.

5. CONFIDENTIALITY AND INFORMATION SHARING

Any information pertaining to an alleged incident of harassment and abuse shall be regarded as confidential. The IFSC may disclose confidential information to appropriate individuals, authorities or other organisations where it is deemed necessary to comply with these procedures or where failure to disclose such information may result in harm to others.

The IFSC will be kept informed by the Ethics Commission of any relevant decisions and where appropriate will be responsible for implementing the judgements of the Disciplinary Commission or Appeal Commission.

Any affected individual will be notified by the IFSC of the outcome of any disciplinary or appeal panel decisions. The publication of decisions of the Disciplinary Commission and Appeal Commission are set out in the IFSC Disciplinary Rules.

6. RETENTION OF RECORDS

Any information relating to allegations of non-accidental violence, harassment and abuse will be securely stored and may be retained by the IFSC Disciplinary Commission in accordance with Swiss law.

7. TERMINOLOGY

The terms used in this policy shall be interpreted as follows:

National Federation (NF): shall mean the members of the IFSC.

IFSC Activity: shall mean any activities under the direct jurisdiction of the IFSC. It shall not include IFSC sanctioned events run by NFs.

IFSC Disciplinary / Ethics Commission: shall mean the independent body designated by the IFSC with responsibility to deal with reports of harassment and abuse.