

# CCBC GUIDELINES ON HANDLING COMPLAINTS

The goal of the CCBC is to provide and maintain an environment where people can enjoy a game of bridge. To emphasize the importance of this goal, the club should promote fair play and good sportsmanship. There will be circumstances when a player's disruptive behaviour will interfere with other members' enjoyment. As a director's role is to restore equity rather than penalize an offender, the goal of this complaint procedure is to restore harmony rather than punish offenders. In accordance with the CCBC's focus on harmony, promotion of fair play will be the priority activity. However, should this not be successful, a complaint handling and/or disciplinary procedures will be available.

## 1. Promotion of fair play

Promotion activities can include:

- communicating simple fair play messages via banners, posters, stickers, messages on web-sites
- distributing education brochures about fair play
- instituting a good sports award to present from time to time (for example, when a complainant and respondent peacefully resolve a dispute)
- attach the code of conduct to membership/registration forms and make it a condition of membership
- write an article in a newsletter about appropriate behaviour, focusing attention on the code of conduct
- attach the code of conduct to your club's notice board
- include the code of conduct or education brochures on the club's website

## 2. Complaint handling and disciplinary procedures

- **Self management.** The first step is often complaint self-management where the person with the complaint tries to resolve the problem directly by talking with the other person/s involved. Self management of complaints can quickly resolve many lower level and 'accidental' issues. When the complaint is at the table, the Director may be able to facilitate this by diffusing the situation at the table and encouraging the parties to chat after the session. If self-management does not work, informal or formal procedures are necessary.
- **Activitate the CCBC complaint lodgement procedure.** If a complainant seeks committee or Recorder intervention, he or she must file a written Complaint with a Director, the club Recorder or the committee. The Complaint form is available in the club room and on the website. Without full details it is difficult to ensure procedural fairness for all parties. Disciplinary action may

initially involve a simple gentle warning or mediation, but it could involve suspension or expulsion.

- The complaint process is intended to handle behavioural matters such as psych bidding, abusive or aggressive language or behaviour, prolonged talking about previous hands, unsolicited advice, and generally a lack of common courtesy or respect. Any formal issue relating to decisions of the director should be addressed on the appropriate appeals form. Complaints about committee decisions should be directed through letters to the secretary of the committee.

### **Informal Procedures**

The emphasis here is on resolution, not substantiation. While the procedures are informal, a complete written complaint must be filed. Informal procedures are appropriate when:

- allegations are less serious or allegations are admitted
- complainant prefers an informal resolution

Informal procedures include counselling, mediation and education.

### **Formal procedures**

The club's constitution contains a formal procedure for the discipline of members who breach the code of conduct.

From complaint to outcome, a formal process will follow this path:

- **A complaint** – The complaint must be written
- **An investigation** - to determine substance i.e. the facts followed by a finding or a report with recommendations to the club's management. The goal of the investigation is to understand what happened, not to substantiate the complaint. In conducting this investigation it is essential to treat the complainant, respondent, and witnesses with courtesy and respect. A thorough investigation is necessary to understand what actually happened.
- **Sometimes conciliation/mediation**
- **An appropriate outcome** - The outcome may involve counselling or education or more formal sanctions in line with the club's constitution. The formal procedure includes an appeals process to ensure procedural fairness.