



# Sport Environment Assessments: A Robust Tool for the Advancement of Safe Sport

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## Introduction

On July 6, 2021, the SDRCC was selected by the Government of Canada to establish and deliver an independent safe sport mechanism. Less than a year later, the SDRCC launched Abuse-Free Sport, a centralized, independent program offering a range of resources and services to support a positive culture shift within Canadian sport.

The Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner (the “OSIC”) serves as the central hub of Abuse-Free Sport. It is responsible for the administration of the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport (the “UCCMS”). The OSIC is guided by trauma-informed processes that ensure fairness, respect and equity for all parties involved.

More concretely, the OSIC administers the UCCMS by way of two distinct and complementary processes: (1) Complaint Management; and (2) Sport Environment Assessments. This article examines the role of the Sport Environment Assessment in delivering on the OSIC’s mandate to create the conditions for safe and enriching experiences for every participant in sport.

## Addressing and Preventing Maltreatment – Where do Sport Environment Assessments Fit?

The OSIC’s [Complaint Management Process](#) addresses allegations of abuse, harassment or discrimination from participants in organizations that have signed on to the Abuse-Free Sport program.

Here are some key aspects of this OSIC process:

- The OSIC has jurisdiction only over complaints where the respondent is under the authority of a Program Signatory (i.e., a sport organization that has joined Abuse-Free Sport);
- Complaint management is retrospective in that it applies to specific events that have already occurred;
- Complaint management is driven by individual participants and does not directly implicate sport organizations as a whole; and
- Investigations are primarily concerned with fact-finding that informs decisions about possible sanctions.



Sport Environment Assessments serve a dual function in both addressing and preventing maltreatment. These assessments are designed to identify and remedy alleged systemic issues with the goal of improving the sport environment for both current and future participants.

Assessments can be requested by individuals or sport organizations; moreover, the OSIC can launch its own if it becomes aware of alleged systemic issues, regardless of whether or not the sport organization/environment is under the authority of a Program Signatory. In addition to looking more broadly at issues of maltreatment, the assessment focuses on finding long-term remedies to systemic issues related to the UCCMS.

Independent assessors are appointed to handle any requests accepted by the OSIC after the scope of the assessment has been carefully defined. All participants in that sport environment have the opportunity to share their concerns and comments. The reviews, based on the OSIC Guidelines Regarding Sport Environment Assessments, are summarized in a public report that makes recommendations to remedy systemic issues. The OSIC may then circle back to ensure those recommendations are actually implemented and that necessary change is effected in a timely manner.

To summarize, Sport Environment Assessments are:

- Available to all participants - regardless of level or whether they are under the authority of a Program Signatory;
- Intended to address systemic issues – those relating more broadly to a culture or environment, and not to a specific event or incident;
- People-centered – participants are provided a safe space to recount their stories and are empowered to choose how they want to proceed;
- Collaborative – a process that encourages participation from athletes, coaches, administrators, etc.; and
- Proactive and solution-oriented – the focus remains on eliminating institutional roadblocks to a safe and inclusive sport environment.

By providing this option for a more comprehensive review, the OSIC hopes that Sport Environment Assessments will identify sustainable solutions that will help prevent future maltreatment. Changing the culture of sport in Canada is everyone's responsibility. Sport Environment Assessments are one of the ways that OSIC and Abuse-Free Sport are supporting this important social movement.

For more information, please consult the [Sport Environment Assessment Process Overview](#).