



Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada

National Consultations on the Independent Safe Sport Mechanism

Summary Report

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Section 1 - Introduction

The following report synthesizes the main themes to emerge from a national consultation with federally-funded sport organizations to elicit feedback on the design and implementation of Canada's new independent safe sport mechanism.

In advance of the sessions, participants were supplied with a detailed information package and encouraged to reflect on the key topics to be addressed during the online discussions: the current approach to safe sport, membership, alignment and jurisdiction, and potential barriers to engagement with the new service.

From August 23rd to October 12th, 2021, the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada (SDRCC), with facilitation and note-taking support from Face Value Communications Inc., conducted 21 focus group sessions with a total of 77 National Sport Organizations (NSOs), Multisport Service Organizations (MSOs) or National Sport Centres and Institutes.

This report draws from the summary notes that were circulated to participants for review and validation after each stakeholder session. It is also informed by a series of productive discussions with government officials and sport leaders in each of the provinces and territories.

The next phase of the SDRCC's work will include regular engagement with a recently formed Athlete Advocacy Committee and consultations with experts to update the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport (UCCMS). The SDRCC is prepared to offer interim services to sport organizations that have yet to invest in their own safe sport programs.

Other short-term priorities include the hiring by February 2022 of Canada's first Sport Integrity Commissioner and the onboarding of the first program signatories by the end of March 2022.

Note: *The quotes reproduced in this report reflect actual comments made by focus group participants and have been anonymized.*

Section 2 - Current Issues / Landscape

“Our environment is complex. How do all the pieces fit together, and what is the best way to utilize our limited resources? We would not want a piecemeal approach, as safe sport is wrapped up with everything that makes a quality sport experience.”

Throughout the consultation process, one thing that all stakeholders agreed on was the complexity of the current safe sport landscape in Canada and the many challenges that federally-funded organizations are facing as they strive to implement policies and practices that prevent maltreatment and punish bad behaviour.

Lack of Trust and Understanding

Amongst the most significant hurdles is a general lack of understanding on the part of sport participants about how complaint processes work, combined with concerns about systemic bias, conflicts of interest, and a perceived lack of independence.

Potential complainants worry that the process is stacked against them and that their issues will either be swept under the rug or will lead to serious personal repercussions and a damaging impact on their sport careers.

The SDRCC explained that the design of the new safe sport mechanism is based on successful national and international models and aims to make the process as comfortable as possible for anyone coming forward with a safe sport complaint. A trauma-informed approach, for example, will minimize the number of times that an alleged victim is required to tell their story.

Even before a complaint has been filed, there will be support available, including referrals to mental health services and, where applicable, to legal assistance.

To build both understanding and confidence, the SDRCC hopes to foster a network of safe sport coordinators amongst Program Signatories to encourage the sharing of best practices, tools, resources, ideas and experiences, in the same way that sport organizations at the national level have created caucuses to facilitate connections.

The SDRCC also plans to establish suggested timelines and clear communication protocols to ensure that parties remain informed of the status of their case. The new mechanism has been designed to handle cases arising from a large number of organizations and will be resourced accordingly.

Anonymity

Noting that fear of reprisal makes some individuals (complainants or bystanders) reluctant to come forward with information that could help identify and prevent maltreatment, focus group participants have asked for clarification on the capacity to maintain anonymity.

For that reason, anonymous tips will be entertained by the new Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, once established. Individuals offering anonymous tips will nonetheless need to manage their expectations. Information provided without attribution is hard to pursue or investigate; however, a tip can feed into an existing investigation, or be grouped with similar tips to point to a problematic situation. Similarly, a single serious and credible tip may prompt the Sport Integrity Commissioner to initiate an investigation. The SDRCC emphasized that, for some instances of maltreatment, there is a duty to report. The anonymous tip form will also provide a forum for participants to fulfill reporting obligations under the UCCMS.

Risks to Reputation

Potential respondents are concerned about the impact of a safe sport dispute on their reputations both inside and outside sport. Coaches talk about the “weaponization” of safe sport, fearing that athletes’ concerns about selection, playing time, and attention may be framed as safe sport complaints, rather than general sport disputes, putting coaches at risk of being sanctioned.

Focus group participants spoke about a perception amongst coaches of a systemic bias in favour of athletes. This perceived imbalance places coaches in a vulnerable situation, recognizing that it is not possible to “unring the bell” when accusations are made, and particularly if the media gets involved.

Stakeholders pointed to examples of frivolous complaints that caused significant financial hardship on the sport organization and, in some cases, featured serious confidentiality violations (i.e., an unsatisfied complainant leaks false information that discredits the respondent and/or the safe sport process). Rarely are there consequences for these actions, which can have devastating effects on the career of a coach, high performance director, or administrator.

The SDRCC confirmed that there will be consequences for bringing forward knowingly false allegations or breaching confidentiality rules during a complaint management process. The intake process will be rigorous so that cases deemed frivolous are promptly dismissed, and those unrelated to safe sport or inadmissible are directed to the appropriate venue. Stakeholders were nonetheless encouraged to be careful with what may seem like a frivolous complaint: just because an allegation cannot be proven does not mean it did not occur.

Intake Process

Complainants will be encouraged to submit complaints using an online form. Operators with the Canadian Sport Helpline will be available to assist with the completion of the form and will redirect

cases to the appropriate resource, if they are not within the bounds of the independent mechanism. Every effort will be made to ensure that each stage of the process meets accessibility standards.

The SDRCC confirmed that every complaint will undergo a preliminary assessment to determine whether the case falls under the UCCMS and whether it merits an investigation. Assessors will err on the side of accepting a case and launching an investigation to avoid unintentionally discouraging genuine complaints.

During the intake process, provisional measures will also be imposed if deemed necessary. A few focus group participants emphasized the need to clarify whether they will also have the authority to implement their own temporary measures.

There will be no appeal for complaints that are dismissed following the preliminary assessment. The only exception will be cases of alleged sexual maltreatment; if dismissed during the initial assessment or after a full investigation, they will automatically be sent to an external review committee.

Focus group participants were reminded that a significant number of complaints can be resolved through mediation, if appropriate and if all parties consent, avoiding the time, cost and emotional distress of a prolonged investigation. Many claimants simply want to be heard and acknowledged, to receive an apology, and to be reassured that measures have been taken to prevent a repeat incident. In the 2020-2021 fiscal year, seven of nine safe sport complaints brought for mediation through the SDRCC were resolved by settlement agreement. In the current fiscal year, to date, four of five such cases have settled.

Confidentiality

Issues around confidentiality received a fair bit of attention during the consultations as well.

Discussions highlighted that many people do not understand the purpose and value of confidentiality to protect the parties and the integrity of the process. There can be significant damage to the reputations of the complainant, the respondent and the sport organization, particularly in smaller sports where “everyone knows everyone else.” The SDRCC will integrate confidentiality provisions into the procedures that will balance the rights of all parties involved.

There are implications for insurance as well, since insurers require prompt reporting of safe sport complaints.

Capacity / Expertise / Readiness

Capacity remains a pressing concern for federally-funded sport organizations that recognize that safe sport cases can be labour-intensive and that resources available to the provincial/territorial (P/T) and club levels are even more scarce.

“The ecosystem across the country includes thousands of organizations and there is inconsistency in capability, capacity and competency.”

Even in sports where there has been widespread adoption of the UCCMS, there is often not the means, sophistication or structure to implement the policies, particularly beyond the national level. There is a general sense amongst NSOs and MSOs that if they do not deal with safe sport cases (even those that should appropriately be addressed at the club or P/T level), there can be significant reputational consequences for the sport overall.

“We have revised our policies four times; the new mechanism will result in another set of tweaks. Safe sport is only one of the responsibilities we have. I advocated strongly for the national mechanism, but I’m having a hard time bringing the volunteers with me through multiple changes.”

Historical Cases

There is a lot of concern amongst federally-funded sport organizations about how historical cases are going to be handled by the new mechanism. Given the nature and complexity of these situations, the cases are expected to be expensive and time-consuming.

The vast majority of focus group participants agreed that historical cases should be reviewed using the policies in place at the time of the alleged incident. However, it was also noted that it can be very difficult locating the appropriate records that define previous policies that may have been in place at the time.

The SDRCC expects that historical cases will be admissible to the independent mechanism under certain conditions, which have yet to be established. It is also not yet known to what extent, or under what circumstances, Sport Canada will financially support the handling of these cases and how much of the costs, if any, will be borne by the Program Signatories on a fee-for-service basis.

Sanctions Registry

Preventing repeat violations by the same individual is an important consideration for the stakeholders who participated in the national consultation process. Creating a searchable sanctions registry received a lot of support, recognizing there are also weighty privacy issues at play.

It is the SDRCC's expectation that a Program Signatory's safe sport coordinator would be able to liaise with the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner to confirm whether a particular individual has been sanctioned for a UCCMS violation. Non-signatories, as well as provincial/territorial sport organizations (P/TSOs) which have their own independent mechanism, will also be invited to share information pertaining to sanctions and consequences imposed under their regime, and vice versa.

A lot of emphasis will be placed on information sharing between stakeholders and the SDRCC, both at the entry point (i.e., making sure that complaints are directed to the appropriate forum) and at the exit point (i.e., sharing and mutual recognition of consequences/sanctions to prevent violators from simply changing clubs, sports or provinces/territories).

As privacy legislation varies between jurisdictions, a lot of research remains to be done before a policy can be developed and a centralized database put in place.

Cultural Factors

Unique to sports with strong ties to specific countries and cultures, are concerns about behaviours that may be considered acceptable in certain places and situations, but that fall outside what is permitted under Canada's UCCMS.

Stakeholders pointed to examples of new or first-generation Canadian coaches, or foreign coaches hired by Canadian sport clubs, who sometimes use corporal punishment (e.g., smack to the back of the head) or whose coaching style can be perceived as aggressive or harshly critical. Depending on the cultural dynamics, a player or parent may be hesitant to complain about the coach's behaviour, or may turn a blind eye out of fear of retribution.

Education efforts will be required to set standards of behavior that are applied in the same way everywhere in Canadian sport.

Prevention through Education

Consistently, stakeholders lamented the system's reactive posture on safe sport.

"Safe sport won't be scary if it's seen as a set of best practices, rather than solely a mechanism for complaint resolution."

There has been a lot of effort, energy and investment focused on how to manage complaints, they argue, when education and prevention are the best ways to produce long-term impact on sport culture.

An ongoing education campaign is needed to ensure that everyone bound by the UCCMS understands what it means in the day-to-day, their obligations and protections, and the consequences of a failure to comply. Information needs to be presented in a wide variety of user-friendly formats to make it accessible to the broadest possible audience. Many MSOs have offered to collaborate with the SDRCC to promote safe sport educational tools which could be applied in multiple contexts (sport, school, community, etc.)

Amongst other top priorities, according to focus group participants, is defining the behaviours we expect from all sport participants, the behaviours considered out of bounds, and the consequences for violating the UCCMS.

In an effort to ensure consistency and avoid duplication across the sport system, the SDRCC plans to accredit education programs as UCCMS-compliant, with participants able to claim program hours as professional development. Rather than developing its own materials, the SDRCC will invite organizations that deliver safe sport education content to apply for accreditation.

Looking through an accessibility lens makes this factor even more important. An athlete with a disability may need extensive support from an assistant who may not be required to complete safe sport training, but who could interact in many one-on-one situations with the athlete. One can simply consider a scenario where an athlete with a disability needs assistance to lodge a safe sport complaint and the athlete's assistant is also the person alleged to have committed the safe sport violation.

Stakeholders also indicated that communication barriers are amongst the biggest issues being faced by some para athletes. Safe sport resources must be readily accessible to all athletes if the new mechanism is to effectively protect their interests.

Section 3 - Alignment and Jurisdiction

Overview

Conversations with senior representatives across the full spectrum of federally-funded sport organizations have confirmed that there is a strong collective will to get this right - to create an effective safe sport approach across the entire system. There is the realization that these cases are about an individual's welfare, and that there can be no option to "hide behind jurisdiction."

Focus group participants also made it abundantly clear that achieving universal safe sport environments will be a tall order, given the complexities of Canada's federated system.

The new mechanism will be scalable and is meant to be accessible for the wider sport community. NSOs will, at minimum, have the responsibility for cases that arise at the national team level, and other cases will be directed to P/TSOs, or other signatories, if appropriate. There are many moving parts, so the SDRCC continues to engage in conversation with NSOs and MSOs about how far into each organization, and in what contexts, they hold responsibility for managing safe sport complaints. There will be a fee-for-service option available for any complaints not funded by Sport Canada.

Provinces and Territories

The provinces and territories have all acknowledged their commitment to the [Red Deer Declaration](#) and have stated a desire to collaborate fully. The SDRCC remains hopeful that ongoing dialogue will help to ensure that there are similar standards applied in all jurisdictions, that complaints are consistently directed to the right jurisdiction, and that outcomes are shared. All have agreed that the various systems across the country must speak to each other to prevent anyone from falling through the cracks. Participants must be protected both inside and outside their own provinces and across all sports.

Focus group discussions included a lot of concern about developments in Quebec, where the government has mandated all PSOs to follow a prescribed provincial safe sport system. SDRCC management has been in discussion with representatives from Quebec since before they began designing their system. As with every other province and territory, Quebec has expressed a firm commitment to align and collaborate, even if it means not opting into the national mechanism.

The SDRCC has also been working closely with viaSport BC for more than two years to help build their safe sport program, which will closely align with the new independent mechanism.

P/TSOs & Clubs

Implementing the UCCMS at the national level also means respecting jurisdictions and alignment at the P/TSO and club levels. Focus group discussions with NSOs and MSOs reaffirmed that there is a broad spectrum of readiness, alignment and sophistication amongst those organizations.

At one end of the spectrum, there are sports that have developed and implemented safe sport policies through all of their P/TSOs and even through to the club level.

“We have created a one-stop shop for complaint management. Every complaint we receive, no matter what the level, is routed to the same person (independent third party) who routes it based on jurisdiction and the seriousness of the alleged maltreatment.”

At the leading edge of the curve is one sport organization that uses an independent third-party reporting and resolution process managed by an external case manager. Every athlete, coach, official and volunteer from national team to club is protected by, or subject to, the terms of the UCCMS and the organization’s policies.

What was described more often during the consultations was a scenario where the sport organization has not yet fully developed a safe sport policy or, alternatively, implementation of a national policy by the P/TSOs is not uniform or consistent. In some sports, the NSO does not have jurisdiction over the P/TSOs and cannot mandate implementation of a consistent safe sport policy.

“We would like to be aligned throughout our system; however, without authority to impose anything, how do we use the carrot, rather than the stick?”

In other sports, the policy has been developed, but not yet tested by a safe sport complaint.

“We help PSOs establish their policies, but don’t require them to have the same policy as we do. As a result, there are 11 different policies across our organizations, and we would like to navigate toward alignment.”

Typically, there is greater clarity at the national level, where the sport organization uses agreements, contracts and policies to bind staff, board members, national team athletes, coaches, volunteers and officials to the UCCMS. However, moving closer to the provincial and club system, the situation is more difficult to decipher.

“We oversee national teams, volunteers and staff; however, the PSOs have jurisdiction over the bulk of the members. We are still gathering information to determine what alignment will mean and how it should work.”

Covered Individuals

For the time being, the new independent mechanism is only mandated to accept safe sport complaints that meet strict criteria:

1. The alleged violations fall within the terms of the UCCMS; and
2. They involve covered individuals who fall under the jurisdiction of organizations that have chosen to sign on as Program Signatories.

The cost for sport organizations to join the new mechanism will be calculated based on the number of covered individuals protected by, or subject to, the terms of the UCCMS.

Individuals participating in an event sanctioned by a Program Signatory should be required to sign a binding agreement that includes reference to the UCCMS. If a complaint arises during the event, the respondent should not be able to avoid the process by claiming not to be subject to the UCCMS.

Range of Models

Reflective of the complex jurisdictional patchwork that characterizes Canada's sport system, there is a mixed bag of models across federally-funded organizations: from those that formally register everyone involved in the sport to those that recognize only a fraction of the total participant population as covered individuals.

"The provinces are members of our NSO, and we have (thousands of) participants across Canada. We have no jurisdiction over those participants unless they attend national events, training camps or participate in the high performance system. Everyone is covered by our code of conduct, though our jurisdiction is the national team, officials, and coaches. Our ability to act depends on the relationship with the PSO."

At one end of the spectrum are sport organizations where athletes, coaches, board members, officials, athlete support personnel, retired athletes and volunteers are all bound by the UCCMS through direct registration with the national body. Formal agreements spell out their obligations under the terms of the UCCMS. For a sport organization using this model, the number of covered individuals can run into the tens of thousands, in a few cases even into the hundreds of thousands.

At the other end are sports where coverage is restricted to only those individuals involved at the national level - national team athletes and coaches, NSO/MSO employees and board members, as well as others who contribute to NSO/MSO-sanctioned activities (e.g., volunteers, contractors).

Depending on the sport organization, covered individuals can be bound to the UCCMS through a variety of means: registration agreements, employment agreements, selection criteria for national teams, insurance, event sanctioning/registration, funding agreements, coach licensing, and international federation licensing.

Unique Scenarios

The consultation sessions identified a wide range of scenarios where jurisdiction may not be clearly defined: a university or club coach, for example, working with national team athletes, or a multisport environment such as sport centres and institutes, or a delegation at multisport games, where it may not be clearly defined as to which organization or jurisdiction, should be responsible for dealing with a particular safe sport complaint.

Several NSO representatives reported taking on cases from P/TSOs that did not have the capacity or expertise, or where there was a perceived conflict of interest. The latter scenario seems particularly relevant to smaller sports where “everybody knows everybody.” Complaints are also escalated to NSOs when complainants are not satisfied with the outcome at other levels.

If they have not already experienced it, NSOs are expecting that they will inevitably have to deal with complaints generated at the club and P/TSO levels. It can be even more complicated for organizations overseeing sport for persons with a disability as P/T partners often deliver multiple sports, which can lead to confusion about which NSO’s policies would apply in the case of a safe sport complaint.

“Sometimes complaints escalate to the NSO level when the PSO can’t take it on. Where do we draw the line, and what happens below that line?”

Risk Management

Several focus group participants noted that risk is driving many of the decisions around jurisdiction: how broadly might a particular complaint impact the reputation of the sport? NSOs will lean towards accepting a safe sport complaint from the club or P/T levels if there is significant reputational risk and a concern about insufficient capacity and/or expertise.

“It has helped our alignment efforts to include safe sport in the risk management conversation. People are familiar with the topic of risk, as it relates to sport. Safe sport is simply a new addition to that risk conversation. Linking the two concepts provides a context that people can understand.”

Community Level

If the picture is blurry at the P/TSO level, grassroots sport is even less decipherable from a safe sport perspective.

For many NSOs, their members are the provincial and territorial associations, which creates a straight-line relationship, even if it doesn't necessarily imply full alignment on programs and policies. Clubs are rarely required to be members of their respective NSOs, which leaves the vast majority of grassroots administrators without ready access to the necessary resources, expertise or capacity to create safe sport environments.

Focus group participants also pointed out that the pandemic has had a devastating impact on club registrations, forcing hundreds of sport organizations into bankruptcy. For very practical reasons, return-to-sport issues are getting more attention than safe sport for many local sport clubs.

"We hear from grassroots organizations that most of them aren't even aware of the UCCMS or its implementation. There is no trickle-down from NSOs and PSOs, so local organizations have no idea what the UCCMS is. No resources have been provided, and there is no capacity to ensure it sticks at the club level."

Several focus group participants noted that this leads to a disturbing scenario where the level that delivers far more organized sport than the provincial or national levels is actually the least equipped to create safe sport environments. Moreover, one senior leader noted that focusing on the national/provincial/club structure ignores schools, parks and recreation, as well as youth-serving organizations and clubs that make up 80% of the entire system, which is not captured under the UCCMS.

Private clubs are an integral part of the delivery system for many sports in Canada. And while the focus groups confirmed that the majority of these club owners appreciate the importance of safe sport, there is no organization to impose standards on those facilities nor to hold them accountable. Worse still are the so-called "rogue programs" that offer sport experiences for children and youth outside of any formal relationship with the sport's governing bodies.

Other Applications

Jurisdictional issues also extend to sport at the high school, college and university levels. Typically, there is no direct link from an NSO to high school sport, yet there are reputational risks to the NSO if there are cases of abuse, discrimination or harassment happening at that level. Depending on the sport, high school and university/college varsity athletes might compete at an event hosted by a NSO or MSO; in those cases, it is not always clear which organization each athlete is representing, and whether or not they fall under the terms of the UCCMS.

For college and university sport, nearly all safe sport complaints must be dealt with by the academic institution and not the NSO, PSO or MSO. Post-secondary institutions generally view separation from the NSO system as an advantage. Further complicating matters is the fact that the policies and approaches are not the same at all institutions. Many coaches and administrative staff at colleges and universities are unionized, which means that centralized disciplinary processes cannot be imposed.

There are limits for Major Games organizations (e.g., Canadian Olympic Committee, Canadian Paralympic Committee, Canada Games Council) as well when dealing with safe sport complaints. A major games organization, for example, can prohibit an offender from returning to coach at its own subsequent events, but it cannot enforce a sanction within NSOs, PSOs, universities, clubs or other MSOs. One focus group contributor noted that, often, the inappropriate behaviour is repeated - it may start in the NSO environment, then be repeated at a Games environment and, potentially, under international federation rules. It can get confusing quickly, and lead to duplication of processes.

Jurisdictional complexities can apply to other professional roles that are accredited by organizations outside the sport sector. These can include individuals who contribute as sport medicine or sport science practitioners, as well as vendors and contractors who interact with participants. It is unclear as to which organization should be responsible for handling allegations of UCCMS violations by these individuals. Special considerations may also need to be made to address alleged UCCMS violations occurring in a workplace setting.

Section 4 - Barriers to Engagement

Cost

Overwhelmingly, focus group participants named “cost” as the biggest potential barrier to signing on to the new independent mechanism.

They noted that, within the current system, budgeting for safe sport cases is difficult because it is virtually impossible to predict the number or complexity of incoming complaints. Many of the smaller sport organizations have set aside only modest funds and feel fortunate to not have had any formal complaints to date.

“There is a small line item in the budget for safe sport, but a serious complaint would cause us to fold overnight.”

They expressed concern about how much it will cost to become a Program Signatory when - in the absence of any complaints - they are not incurring any expenses now. Some P/TSOs are also hesitant to adopt the UCCMS because of worries about the financial impact.

At the other end of the spectrum, some larger sport organizations, as well as U SPORTS- and CCAA-affiliated institutions have invested heavily in their internal processes for handling misconduct. Focus group participants noted that asking these organizations to step away from their current structures in favour of the new mechanism could be challenging.

It was explained to focus group participants that the SDRCC’s mandate from Sport Canada requires that the costs for the new mechanism be shared between the Government of Canada and the organizations that sign on.

The financial model is based on the principle that government funding will build a solid foundation of prevention, education, research, policy support and capacity-building services through the SDRCC’s Resource Centre. More specifically, Sport Canada contributions will pay for the creation of the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner and cover the delivery of core services: the Canadian Sport Helpline, the complaint intake and preliminary assessments. A full range of services is already offered by the SDRCC’s Dispute Resolution Secretariat (e.g., mediation and arbitration) for all disputes arising from programs offered by federally-funded sport organizations at the national level.

Program Signatories will contribute to a “collective pot” of funds that will cover the costs of investigations and the role of the Director of Sanctions and Outcomes.

Sport Canada has also mandated that the new system is an all-or-nothing proposition - not a menu from which sport organizations at the national level can select some services and not others.

Initially, the cost for each Program Signatory will be based on the number of covered individuals who are protected by, or subject to, the UCCMS. Several focus group participants expressed concern about the funding model, arguing that a large membership does not inherently translate into a higher number of safe sport cases.

In subsequent years, it is expected that annual costs will be modeled on the typical insurance policy: if an organization's use of the program is disproportionately high, its fees might be increased in the subsequent year, and vice versa.

It is anticipated that diligence around education and prevention will help reduce costs for Program Signatories and that the fees to join the new mechanism will be less than what sport organizations are currently paying for their own independent processes.

However, several participants offered the opinion that the number of complaints does not necessarily reflect effectiveness or prevention. Better education leads to greater awareness, they noted, which can generate more complaints, at least over the short term. The SDRCC will establish a working group to address the question of cost per member.

Throughout the consultations process, there was a lot of support for a registry of all sanctions that would be managed by the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner and made available to designated staff within organizations that sign on to the new mechanism. Such a registry would prevent individuals who have violated the UCCMS from moving undetected to another province, territory, club or sport.

However, there was disagreement about the idea of making the registry available to the public, with opponents arguing that it could create significant liability issues for sport organization boards.

Section 5 - Stakeholder Guidance

“We are sport people, not lawyers, and this can be quite overwhelming. Education at all levels of the sport system is going to be absolutely critical to ensuring that we all get this right.”

Stakeholders put a lot of emphasis on the importance of education and communication to build credibility, trust and confidence in the system. They stated that individuals need to understand what it means to be bound by the UCCMS, including expectations for appropriate behaviour. Resource materials will be needed to provide clarity on how the system works, what the options are, who provides what services, and what constitutes a UCCMS violation.

There was general agreement amongst focus group participants that federally-funded sport organizations have taken a reactive posture on safe sport, when what is needed is a shared, inclusive, and proactive commitment to prevention, research, knowledge transfer, and collaboration. It was noted that there are huge information gaps at the grassroots level which potentially put at risk a massive pool of participants. The SDRCC was encouraged to disseminate education and training resources throughout all levels of the system, targeting the broadest possible number of audiences and communities.

Several participants encouraged the SDRCC to continue engaging the sport community through interactive discussions as the new mechanism becomes operational. It was also strongly recommended that the SDRCC consults leading advocates to ensure that education materials are fully accessible to persons with disabilities.

Focus groups also spent a lot of time discussing the administration of discipline. The same infraction can result in a two-week suspension in one sport and lifetime expulsion from another, noted one participant. It is hoped that the new mechanism will bring consistency and reliability to the issuing of sanctions and that Program Signatories will be given access to a national registry.

Several participating organizations noted that their existing safe sport policies and practices are working well. Before signing on to the new independent mechanism, they will need to be convinced of the value proposition.