

Protecting BC's Children.

SPORT

Safe

Creating a
Safer Environment
for Sport and Recreation



Sample Anti-Violence Policy for Recreation Facilities

Creating a safer environment for kids in sport and recreation is everyone's responsibility ... participants, parents, coaches, volunteers, sport and recreation organizations, local clubs and associations, schools, facility owners, all levels of government.

Many sport and recreation activity centres have developed measures to ensure the sport and recreation environment is a healthy and respectful one. One of these tools is a **Facility Anti-Violence Policy**.

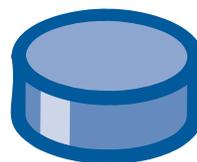
Such a policy can give facility staff the right to eject and if necessary, ban unruly spectators and facility users. In 1997, the City of Hamilton established an anti-violence policy for its city-owned facilities and in its first two years of implementation, the number of reported incidents dropped by 50 per cent each year.

While this policy would not be able to influence conduct on the ice, or on the playing field - which should be effectively addressed through the game's or league's rules - it helps to establish a culture where violence and anti-social behaviour is not acceptable.

Facility policies should be supported by other tools such as codes of conduct, effective game management (e.g. rule enforcement); fair play practices and programs implemented by sport groups using the facilities. For more resources, visit the SportSafe program website at www.hls.gov.bc.ca/sport/library.htm

In the next few pages is a sample **Facility Anti-Violence Policy**. Facilities may adopt or adapt to suit their needs.

Be Involved
We're all part of the solution.





Facility Anti-Violence Policy

Sport and recreation facilities can play an important role in promoting a safe, fun and positive experience for kids – and indeed, all participants – involved in sport and physical activity. One tool for facility operators is a **Facility Anti-Violence Policy**.

The key to the success of this policy lies in two areas – education and enforcement. The cornerstones of this policy are:

- raising awareness among spectators and parents of their role and influence in creating a positive environment for kids participating in sport;
- ensuring that this policy has “teeth” and volunteers and staff have the mandate and means to deal with violent and anti-social behaviour.

This policy should complement efforts by the sport and recreation system already underway to address violence and anti-social behaviour – tools such as harassment and abuse policies and procedures, fair play programs, parent contracts, athlete and coach code of conducts and the games’ own diligence in interpreting and applying its safety and fairness rules and regulations.

Definition of Violence:

For the purposes of this policy, the focus is on the behaviour of non-players, except in a situation in which a player leaves the area of play to engage in a violent act. Violence is seen to be the following behaviour:

- Loud verbal assaults
- Threats and attempts to intimidate
- Throwing of articles in a deliberate or aggressive manner
- Aggressive approaches to another individual
- Physical striking of another individual
- Attempts to goad or incite violence in others

Policy Statement:

This local government’s recreation facilities – arenas, recreation centres, outdoor pools and parks, playing fields – exist to provide residents with opportunities to participate in sport and recreational activities in a safe and positive environment. By implementing this policy, the local government shows its commitment to providing facilities which try to achieve an atmosphere where kids can enjoy sport and physical activity and which values participation, teamwork, safety and fair play.

Objectives:

- To reduce or eliminate violence and antisocial behaviour from recreation facilities (both indoor and outdoor).
- To ensure a positive, safe and encouraging environment for spectators, volunteers, staff and participants – a culture which supports safety, fair play and positive sport experiences for children and youth.
- To give facility staff and volunteers the authorization to deal with unruly and violent behaviour with appropriate sanctions.

Guiding Principles:

- Violent, abusive or anti-social behaviour, such as verbal threats and insults, attempts to intimidate as well as physical assault and battery have no place in local government facilities.
- The B.C. sport and recreation systems are driven by hard-working committed volunteers and staff members who dedicate time and energy to allow children and youth to participate safely in sport. These community-minded citizens contribute in many ways to the success of local sport and recreation activities and should have the ability to work in a safe and positive environment.
- Sport and physical activity teach children and youth important social skills such as teamwork, goal-setting, and fair play and promote healthy lifestyles. Violence, harassment and anti-social behaviour can turn a positive experience into a negative one.
- Sport rules and regulations exist to protect the players. Referees and officials are charged with ensuring the fair and even application of the rules to ensure safety of the players and integrity of the game.
- Promotion of this policy and positive spectator behaviour will assist in the reduction of violent behaviours and contribute to a safer and fun sport experience for kids.

Roles and Responsibilities:

The rules of the game and officials of minor sports retain responsibility for managing excessive violence on the field of play. Associations and groups are responsible for managing the behaviour of coaches, volunteers and spectators. Local government staff will be available and ready to support the officials, coaches and other volunteers and implement the ejection and banning component of the policy.

The responsibility of local government to maintain safe facilities comes out of the *Occupiers Liability Act*, which generally requires all owners and occupiers of land and buildings to take care to ensure that persons will be reasonably safe when using their premises. In cases of assault and battery, the Criminal Code of Canada would apply.

Consequences:

Individuals who engage in any of the above behaviours will be subject to immediate ejection from the facility by a person(s) designated by the recreation facility and a further ban from all local government recreation facilities for a period of time to be determined by the person in charge of recreation facilities (or person authorized by local government).

Incidents of a verbal nature may be tolerated initially with a warning from facility staff, but will be noted and reported to the organization using the facility.

Serious and physical assault incidents will be reported to the local police authorities.

Subsequent violent behaviours by individuals using facilities may prohibit their organization from future facility access.

If an individual asked to leave the facility refuses to do so, facility staff or an adult associated with the teams using the facility (e.g. referee, coach, commissioner) will stop the game until the individual leaves. If this doesn't work, the local police may be called in.

Education and Awareness:

Local government, with its sport partners, will undertake a promotional and educational campaign aimed at raising awareness of the **Anti-Violence Policy** among parents, volunteers, and spectators, and, in particular, the importance of their role and influence in creating a positive sport environment for kids and facility users. This campaign may include posters hung in all facilities, circulation of the policy to all stakeholders as well as posting of the policy in all municipal/regional district facilities and reference to this document's policy statement (or variation) in rental agreements, local government and affiliate program guides, newsletters/notices.

