



LIFESAVING SOCIETY

*The Lifeguarding Experts*

## COMPLAINT & CERTIFICATION REVIEW POLICY

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### COMPLAINT AND CERTIFICATION REVIEW POLICY

**Last Updated: September 2026**

#### PURPOSE

The purpose of the Complaint and Certification Review Policy (the “Policy”) is to establish a clear and consistent process and structure for addressing complaints, certification reviews, and related issues concerning member certification or conduct.

This Policy is intended to protect the reputation and integrity of the Lifesaving Society, British Columbia & Yukon Branch (the “Lifesaving Society”, the “Society”, the “Branch”, “our”, “us”, or “we”) by ensuring that all actions align its standards, policies, procedures, and values.

#### SCOPE

This Policy applies primarily to leadership roles, including instructors, examiners, and trainers responsible for delivering Lifesaving Society programs. It may also extend to other award holders, such as lifeguards who fail to uphold or represent Lifesaving Society standards, and Affiliates.

This Policy applies to complaints and certification review matters arising within the authority of the Branch.

Employment-related issues are not covered under this Policy.

#### POLICY STATEMENTS

The Branch will address complaints and conduct investigations, certification reviews, and appeals in accordance with this Policy.

Any member has the right to appeal a Branch decision if it is alleged to be inconsistent with bylaws, policies, procedures; if it is alleged to be biased; or if it is alleged to carry an undue adverse impact.

#### DEFINITIONS

**Appeal:** An appeal conducted in line with the applicable Branch appeal procedure.

**Certification Review Chair:** A designated individual who oversees the certification review processes.

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#### BC & Yukon Branch

112 - 3989 Henning Drive

Burnaby, BC V5C 6N5

Telephone: 604.299.5450

E-mail: [info@lifesaving.bc.ca](mailto:info@lifesaving.bc.ca)

[www.lifesaving.bc.ca](http://www.lifesaving.bc.ca)

**Investigation:** A systematic process of inquiry or examination carried out to uncover facts, gather evidence, and arrive at conclusions about an event, issue, or allegation.

**Investigator:** A person who conducts a formal and systematic inquiry or examination to uncover facts, gather evidence, and determine the truth about a specific issue, event, or allegation.

**Member:** An individual who has earned a specific award certification from the Lifesaving Society; or, an Affiliate (an Affiliate may be any one of the following: a responsible agency, corporation, association, organization, or individual recognized by the Lifesaving Society, that has paid the required membership fee and is in good standing with the Lifesaving Society.)

**Review Committee:** A group of individuals tasked with evaluating performance against set criteria and providing recommendations or decisions based on their findings.

## **STRUCTURE**

1. The Complaint and Certification Review Process can include two steps: (1) the investigation; and (2) the review process (the “Review”).

1.1 The Certification Review Chair (the “Chair”) may be a senior staff person appointed by the Branch, provided no conflict of interest exists (defined as a personal or direct professional relationship with the member in question). If a conflict is present, the next most senior, unconflicted staff person should serve as Chair.

1.2 The Chair appoints a Review Committee of at least two additional people, such as Branch Advisory Group/Committee Chairs or National Trainers with relevant portfolios. The Branch may involve a Board member at this stage or reserve their involvement for an appeal. The Chair should ensure no Review Committee member has a conflict of interest with the complaint or the individual under review.

1.3 A staff person or delegate (the “Investigator”) conducts the investigation and produces a report for the Review Committee. The Investigator consults with the Chair to determine whether a Review is warranted. If a Review is warranted, then the Review Committee evaluates whether relevant certification policies, procedures, or standards were compromised, and if the Review Committee finds they have been compromised, then the Chair submits the Review Committee’s recommended sanctions to the Executive Director for final confirmation.

## **PRINCIPLES**

2. The Branch recognizes that individuals work long and hard to earn their awards and that any decision which alters or revokes that status is a serious matter. The Branch also knows that deviations from expected conduct or the lowering of standards could endanger lives. Ultimately, Lifesaving Society has a responsibility to protect the public interest by overseeing the quality of its programs and the character or behaviour of its volunteers, appointees and award- holders.

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The procedures set out are based upon the following principles to help guide the processes and decisions to ensure accountability and integrity in the review system:

- **Fairness:** Ensure an unbiased and impartial approach in handling reviews and complaints (e.g. listen to all sides of the issue).
- **Transparency:** Maintain open and clear communication throughout the process.
- **Consistency:** Align decisions with established standards, policies, and past precedents.
- **Privacy:** Ensure confidentiality is maintained throughout the process to protect all parties.
- **Professional Judgment:** Apply thoughtful, deliberate decision-making with a focus on fairness and ethics.
- **Public Interest:** Act in a manner that upholds and protects public trust and the integrity of the organization.

## PROCESS

**3.** When a complaint or issue involving a member arises, it is referred to an Investigator. Complaints should be submitted in writing and should pertain to a Policy, procedure, code of conduct, or standard that has allegedly been violated.

- Complaints are handled confidentially and can be submitted anonymously. However, anonymity may limit the depth of the investigation. Information about the complainant, including their name or correspondence, will only be disclosed if necessary to protect the Society's integrity.

**4.** The Investigator documents the complaint and conducts a thorough investigation.

- The Investigator consults with individuals directly involved in the complaint.
- Members under investigation are notified in writing (via email or registered mail) and/or by phone of the complaint, the actions being taken, their rights (including representation and parental support for minors), and the certification review process. All reasonable efforts will be made to ensure the member is informed.
- If a member remains uncooperative within 30 days, the Chair may proceed with a Review Committee meeting in their absence.

**5.** In cases involving serious criminal charges or critical concerns (e.g., safety, abuse, or integrity threats), senior staff or the Chair may take immediate action, such as suspending awards or privileges, before a formal Review.

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- If criminal charges are involved, the Review may be delayed until legal proceedings conclude, unless requested earlier by the member.
- Conviction of a serious crime may lead to revocation or decertification of awards, unless the member requests a Review within 60 days of the conviction.

6. Complaints may be resolved during the investigation phase if appropriate.

7. The Chair convenes a Review Committee meeting to review all documents. The accused member is provided with the documents in advance and invited to present their explanations during the Review Committee interview.

8. The Chair determines any necessary actions, including drafting communication letters and preparing reports for the Executive Director.

9. Any sanctions approved by the Executive Director are implemented and communicated to relevant parties. Member database files are updated by senior staff accordingly.

10. A report of the Review Committee's findings and Executive Director-approved sanctions are submitted by the Chair to the Executive Director for presentation to the Board of Directors.

## **SANCTIONS**

11. The Branch may impose the following sanctions or disciplinary actions based on the outcome of an investigation or review:

- **No action required:** it has been determined after investigation that Lifesaving Society policies, procedures, code of conduct or standard in question were not compromised.
- **Written Reprimand:** may be issued by an Investigator or Chair without convening a Review. Reprimands will be written for insertion in the member's file.
- **Probation:** a corrective measure aimed at addressing deficiencies, improving behavior, or enabling ongoing assessment of the member's conduct.
- **Suspension:** a serious action to temporarily remove the member from their role as a representative of the Lifesaving Society. Suspension is designed to protect the public and the integrity of the Lifesaving Society, with reinstatement contingent upon compliance with specified conditions.
- **Revocation of Appointment or Decertification:** the most severe action, taken to safeguard the public and preserve the Lifesaving Society's integrity. This sanction requires approval from the Board of Directors.

Additional Notes:

- **Combination of Sanctions:** Sanctions are not mutually exclusive and may be combined if deemed appropriate.

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- **Severity-Based Decision-Making:** The choice of sanction is based on the seriousness of the complaint and consideration of past sanctions in similar situations.
- **Conditional Sanctions:** Probation and suspension require the member to meet outlined conditions before the sanction is lifted, as detailed in the Notification of Sanctions letter.

## APPEALS

**12.** Any member subject to suspension or revocation/decertification has the right to appeal a decision made by the Review Committee. The notification of sanction should inform them of their right to an appeal. Appeal requests must be submitted in writing to the Branch within 10 business days of receiving notification of sanction.

### **13.** Formation of Appeals Committee

- The Chair appoints an Appeals Committee consisting of three individuals who were not involved in the initial review.
- Members of the committee may include a Board of Directors member; Branch Past President; Branch Advisory Group/Committee Chair; National Trainer; or an individual external to the Society's operations, with an understanding of its aims, structure, awards, and procedures.
- The Chair serves as a non-voting member of the Appeals Committee.

### **14.** Scope of the Appeal

- The Appeals Committee evaluates whether the recommendations from the Review Committee and/or the Executive Director's decisions were reasonable.

### **15.** Final Decision

- The Appeals Committee's decision to uphold, alter, or rescind the sanction is final and binding.

### **16.** Appeal to Lifesaving Society Canada

- If unsatisfied with the resolution at the Branch level, the member may escalate their appeal to Lifesaving Society Canada. The option to appeal to Lifesaving Society Canada only applies to National Mandatory or Endorsed programs and Code of Conduct issues.
- The appeal must be submitted in writing to the Lifesaving Society Canada CEO within 10 business days of receiving the Branch-level appeal decision.
- The Lifesaving Society Canada CEO will evaluate if the appeal meets the threshold for consideration as per the current National Appeals Policy and SOP.

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- If the appeal threshold is met, the Lifesaving Society Canada CEO will implement the National Appeal SOP.

## COMPLETION

17. The Certification Review Process is considered complete when:

- **No Appeal is Requested:** The Chair has informed the member of the decision, and the member has not requested an appeal within the specified timeframe.
- **Appeal Outcome is Finalized:** The Appeals Committee has communicated its decision to the member, whether the appeal was allowed, denied, or modified.

## CHANGES TO THIS POLICY

This Policy is subject to updates from time to time. The Society reserves the right to review and revise the Policy as required and without notice. We will post any change to this Policy on our website.

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