



Complaint Process

What is the complaint process for?

A member of VPH may, at any time, file a complaint against another member (or program) of VPH if they feel that a breach of VPH rules, codes, or policies has been committed.

First steps are always venue or program specific. So if the problem happens at the slam, then the first step is to bring the problem to the attention of the slam staff or slammaster. In the vast majority of cases, this will resolve the situation. Our staff are trained in conflict resolution.

If it doesn't moderate the behaviour, then complaints are filed with the VPH's Board of Directors for resolution. Their ruling is final.

What are the steps?

1. Make sure you understand your behavioural obligations at VPH events.
2. If something upsets you at a VPH event, you can try an Active Listener. If that doesn't help, then you can go to a staff member and report the problem. Make sure that you challenge the behaviour, not the person.
3. If the staff gets involved and the behaviour is not moderated, or the behaviour is that of the staff member, you can submit an email to the Board of Directors – admin@vancouverpoetryhouse.com

What does the email look like?

The email must include the following:

- Your name
- The date
- Your email address and/or phone number
- The name of the person or program against which you are filing a complaint, if not the subject of your complaint, the name of the person to whom you raised the concern
- Contact information for this person or program, if available
- The details of your concern
- What specific VPH policy, rule, or code do you feel has been breached
- What has been done about your concern to date
- What is your desired outcome regarding this concern
- Is there anything else about the concern that you feel that the Board should know



- An acknowledgment that by submitting this complaint the VPH Board of Directors you are, to the best of your ability, providing accurate and truthful information about your concern and the event
- An acknowledgment that you may be requested to attend a Board led mediation meeting
- An acknowledgment that you agree to abide by the ruling made by the VPH Board of Directors

What will the Board do?

VPH's Board of Directors will initially discuss the complaint in an in camera session. This strictly confidential meeting is meant to ensure the safety of all parties.

The board will first determine if the concern does indeed fall under our purview. If it does not you will be notified in writing with the reason why. If it does, the board will then determine, based on the nature of the concern, if the issue can be handled immediately by their body or if it requires a deeper level of investigation and/or representation. A deeper level of investigation may involve, but not be limited to: contacting the person or program staff against which the complaint has been filed for information/documentation, and/or asking the complainant for further information/documentation.

If the board determines that the issue requires no further investigation and/or advocacy, a ruling on the complaint can usually be issued within 14 days. If the 14 days cannot be met, you will be advised and provided an updated date for a response.

If the board determines that a complaint is too complex to be handled by the board, then advocacy and/or mediation may come into play. Advocacy and mediation involves an outside person with deep conflict resolution training being brought in to find a solution to the situation. As such, this is rarely used, and only in the most extreme cases.

The Board of Directors will use some or all of the following documents to adjudicate complaints:

- VPH By-laws (governs the overall operation of Vancouver Poetry House, applies to all members)
- VPH Policy & Procedure Manual (governs all members of Vancouver Poetry House, and guides Board behaviour and decisions)
- Any contracts that may be in force upon the people involved in the complaint at the time of occurrence

If the board determines that an actionable breach has occurred, then it will act. How it acts depends on the complaint. Our goal is to support and nurture the organization. This includes creating and maintaining safe spaces for performers and audience members alike. We will act in



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a way that is inline with our organizational policies, procedures, mission and bylaws. Please see the *Sanction Process Guidelines* for further details.

If you're not sure this is really a complaint to send to the VPH Board

email someone on the Board and ask for a meeting. You can reach us at admin@vancouverpoetryhouse.com. Our names are on the website at <http://www.vancouverpoetryhouse.com/about/board-of-directors/>