



How to Intervene Safely as a Bystander

2024

Introduction

At Bowls Alberta, we are committed to fostering a culture of integrity, inclusion, collaboration, and stewardship, as outlined in our core values. Ensuring a safe, respectful, and welcoming environment for all participants is central to this commitment. Bystander intervention plays a crucial role in maintaining the integrity of our sport by allowing individuals to act when they witness inappropriate or harmful behaviors such as harassment, bullying, or misconduct.

This report offers guidance to Bowls Alberta's member clubs and their members on how to intervene safely as bystanders, in line with Bowls Alberta's mission to provide leadership and support that advances the sport of lawn bowls in Alberta.

Bystander Intervention and Bowls Alberta's Mission

As we cultivate a culture that brings people together and allows participants to achieve their goals in lawn bowls, the role of bystanders is essential in upholding our vision. Whether at a local tournament, practice, or social event, the actions of bystanders can prevent harm, protect the integrity of the sport, and enhance the experience of all members.

The Five D's of Bystander Intervention in Lawn Bowls

To ensure that intervention aligns with Bowls Alberta's values, we recommend adopting the "Five D's" approach to bystander intervention. These methods allow for safe, thoughtful intervention, respecting the need to maintain a positive environment on and off the greens.

1. Distract

In non-confrontational ways, distraction helps interrupt a harmful situation without directly engaging the aggressor. This can defuse tension while maintaining respect for all parties involved.

Example: If you witness a player being verbally harassed, you could step in and start a casual conversation with the victim, ask for advice on a game situation, or simply create a diversion to shift the focus away from the harmful interaction.

2. Delegate

If you feel uncomfortable intervening directly, delegate the situation to someone in authority, such as a club manager, coach, or event official. Engaging those who have the training and responsibility to manage conflicts aligns with Bowls Alberta's mission to provide leadership and guidance.

Example: During a tournament, if you observe inappropriate conduct, approach the tournament director or umpire and inform them of the situation. They can take appropriate action according to the club's code of conduct.

3. Document

Documenting an incident can be helpful in certain situations, particularly if the issue escalates and requires further investigation. However, documentation should always prioritize the privacy and dignity of those involved. In line with Bowls Alberta's value of transparency, this

documentation should only be shared with the appropriate parties, such as club officials or Bowls Alberta representatives.

Example: If you witness persistent misconduct, you might discreetly note the details of the incident—such as the time, location, and individuals involved—and share this information with club leadership.

4. **Direct**

Direct intervention involves calmly addressing the inappropriate behavior. It is important to remain respectful and avoid escalating the situation. Addressing the behavior directly, with honesty and integrity, ensures that the intervention is constructive and aligned with Bowls Alberta's value of fostering a safe and welcoming environment.

Example: If you hear someone making an inappropriate comment, you might say, "This kind of language isn't acceptable here. Let's keep it respectful," reinforcing the club's code of conduct.

5. **Delay**

If the situation doesn't allow for immediate intervention, you can still check in with the victim afterward. Offering support demonstrates the collaborative nature of Bowls Alberta's community, fostering a culture of care and inclusion.

Example: After witnessing a negative interaction, you might approach the individual involved and ask if they are okay, or offer to accompany them to report the issue to club leadership or Bowls Alberta.

Steps for Safe Bystander Intervention in Lawn Bowls

1. Assess the Situation

Before intervening, consider the risks to your safety and to those involved. In situations where emotions are heightened, it's important to assess whether the behavior is an immediate threat or can be managed by club officials. Always prioritize creating a respectful and safe environment, as outlined in Bowls Alberta's mission.

2. Gauge the Severity

The level of your intervention should correspond to the severity of the behavior. For example, minor incidents may be addressed with a simple distraction or by involving club leadership, while more serious instances (such as aggression or discrimination) may require direct intervention or documentation for future action.

3. Stay Calm and Respectful

Bystander intervention in lawn bowls must always be conducted with calmness and respect. A composed demeanor prevents escalation and aligns with Bowls Alberta's value of integrity. Speaking clearly and calmly, without raising your voice or appearing confrontational, is key to a successful intervention.

4. Enlist Help

Collaboration is one of Bowls Alberta's core values, and it extends to bystander intervention. If you feel unsure about intervening alone, ask other members or officials to assist in the situation. Working together not only increases safety but also strengthens community bonds within the club.

5. Provide Support to the Victim

Offering support to the individual affected by the harmful behavior, whether during or after the incident, demonstrates Bowls Alberta's commitment to inclusion. Check in with them, offer to accompany them to report the incident, or provide information about support resources available through the club or Bowls Alberta.

Addressing Challenges in Bystander Intervention

At Bowls Alberta and its member clubs, we recognize that bystanders may face certain challenges when deciding whether to intervene:

- **Diffusion of Responsibility:** In large groups, individuals may feel that someone else will take action. We encourage all members to recognize their responsibility in maintaining a respectful, safe community.
- **Fear of Retaliation:** Bystanders may fear becoming targets if they intervene. By promoting non-confrontational methods like distraction or delegation, Bowls Alberta ensures members feel empowered to act without putting themselves at undue risk.
- **Lack of Knowledge:** Some members may not be aware of what constitutes harmful behavior or how to intervene.

Conclusion

Bystander intervention is a key element in supporting Bowls Alberta's mission of advancing and enhancing the sport of lawn bowls. By adopting safe, respectful, and collaborative intervention methods, we can ensure that our member clubs remain inclusive spaces where all participants feel valued and supported.

Through the "Five D's" of intervention—Distract, Delegate, Document, Direct, and Delay—members can step in when necessary while prioritizing their safety and the safety of others. This aligns with Bowls Alberta's vision of cultivating a lawn bowls culture that brings people together and allows all participants to achieve their goals.