

BOTMDG Complaint Policies and Procedures

Interim procedures October 2025 - March 2026.

Introduction & Purpose

The Bloomington Old-Time Music and Dance Group (BOTMDG) sponsors a variety of traditional dance and music events. As a Country Dance & Song Society (CDSS) affiliate, we are committed to empowering everyone who wants to participate in these traditions to do so with a full sense of safety and belonging.

This includes people who have been historically underrepresented or denied access based on age, body size or type, citizenship status, disability, gender identity or expression, veteran status, national, regional, or ethnic origin, race, religion, sexual or romantic orientation, and socioeconomic status. (Adapted from [CDSS statement on Cultural Equity](#)).

This document describes **BOTMDG's complaint response process**: the policies and procedures for responding to behavior guideline violations, protecting participants from harm, and supporting healing when incidents occur. BOTMDG has a separate [Safe Space Policy](#).

Guiding Philosophy

- **Support for complainants.** Every report is taken seriously. Leaders (Board and Safety Committee members) listen with empathy, sincerity, and respect.
- **Fairness for all.** Conflicting perspectives and misperceptions are possible. False accusations are harmful too. We strive for fairness while maintaining safety.
- **Terminology.** In this document, the individual identified in a complaint is the “person named.” BOTMDG avoids pejorative or judgmental wording in public contexts.
- **Constructive response.** Our goal is education, awareness, and constructive resolution whenever possible.
- **Continuum of behavior.** Inappropriate behavior ranges from minor missteps to severe harms. Responses match the seriousness of the issue.

BOTMDG's actions are **protective, not punitive or judicial**. We do not investigate like a court or law enforcement body, nor do we provide redress or compensation. Our role is to keep events safe and welcoming.

Scope

These guidelines apply to behavior at BOTMDG events, and in some cases, to behavior outside events that has a direct impact on community safety.

We address issues that are more serious than simple personal disputes yet less serious than crimes requiring law enforcement.

BOTMDG is **not an investigative body** and does not have the resources for full investigations. We act on information provided by participants.

Section 1. Categories of Inappropriate Behavior

1.1 Low-Level Complaints (education and awareness)

- Lifting or dipping without permission
- Dancing too closely/intimately without permission
- Grabbing hands too forcefully, holding too long, or forcing spins
- Leading moves after refusal (verbal or nonverbal)
- Dancers throwing themselves into moves not led
- Flourishes disruptive to others (taking too much space, “selfish” dancing)
- Not accepting “no,” pressuring or complaining about refusals

1.2 Medium-Level Complaints (treated as Low or High depending on circumstances)

- Low-level behaviors causing or risking physical harm
- Patterns of repeated low-level offenses with little remorse or change
- Unwanted flirting or attention
- Interfering with dance hosts, musicians, staff, or volunteers
- Dancing while impaired
- Disrespecting someone’s individuality (demeaning words or actions)
- Harassment through social media, texting, or similar channels that affect BOTMDG participation
- Unauthorized use or storage of BOTMDG property

1.3 High-Level Complaints (serious, may warrant suspension or ban)

- Pursuing romantic/sexual relationships between a minor and an adult
 - Stalking
 - Sexual harassment
 - Threats of violence or harm
 - Physical or sexual assault
 - Criminal activity such as theft or vandalism
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Section 2. Making a Complaint

2.1 Reporting

- **At an event:** Participants are encouraged to report harmful or uncomfortable behavior immediately to a Board or Safety Committee member. Reports can also be made when a third party (including a Board or Safety Committee member) observes harmful behavior.
- **After an event:** Complaints may be submitted through the [BOTMDG Feedback Form](#).

2.1.1 Non-Specific Complaints

- Examples: “He’s creepy,” “I don’t like dancing with her.”
- Response: Received with respect; not actionable on their own.
- Documentation: Still recorded for organizational awareness.
- Leader Role: May advise the complainant to avoid unwanted partners, switch lines, or simply say no.

2.1.2 Specific Complaints

- Must describe actions or words.
- Example: “He grabbed my hand and didn’t let go when I needed to start the next figure,” “She said X to me.”
- BOTMDG will not accuse someone without specific behavior details.
- Complainant anonymity: honored, but may limit BOTMDG’s ability to act.

2.2 Limits

- BOTMDG does not resolve purely personal disputes unrelated to our events.
 - BOTMDG may suspend participation while legal processes are underway; final outcomes may consider court rulings (e.g., restraining orders).
 - Requests for anonymity may limit possible responses. See below.
 - For confidentiality of the person named, BOTMDG will not share details of responses from the person named with the complainant, unless the person named agrees for something to be shared. BOTMDG can share information about actions taken when requested by the complainant. For example, “the Safety Team decided that the stated behavior was not specific enough to warrant a conversation with the person named,” or “the Safety Team spoke with the person named, following BOTMDG’s procedures.”
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Section 3. Receiving and Responding to Complaints

3.1 Receiving a Complaint

- Listen sincerely and respectfully.
- Express regret that the incident occurred.
- Ask for the complainant's suggestions for resolution.
- Explain BOTMDG's process and provide the Complaint Summary handout.
- Offer referrals to community resources if appropriate.
- Document complaint on the [BOTMDG Feedback Form](#).

3.2 Immediate Response

- **Low-level:** The person receiving the complaint may address it if comfortable. Whether or not it's immediately addressed, document it through the [BOTMDG Feedback Form](#).
- **High-level:** Remove volatile or dangerous individuals immediately. Call outside authorities if needed. Removing someone from the dance protects the immediate safety of those present but does not necessarily mean the person removed is under suspension or ban. The process below will be used to determine BOTMDG's response.

3.3 Responses from the Safety Committee to the Named Person

- Responses seek to create a welcoming, safe community and avoid future harm. Responses match the level of seriousness and potential harm of the offense. All responses are recorded [here](#).
- **Low-level:** verbal discussion, reminders, education.
 - For low-level offenses, the Safety Committee members may take action without Board approval. Action includes dialog with the person named and requests for changed behavior as described below. Action should be documented and shared at the following board meeting.
 - Dialog with named person
 - Conversation should involve two Leaders. The conversation should be private and should be held without significant delay (aiming to meet within three weeks of reported complaints). A Leader should invite the person named to the conversation (not spring it on them). See [sample email](#).
 - Use respectful, constructive communication. Seek acknowledgement, understanding, and commitment to improve.
 - Tell the named person what behavior was reported (balancing transparency with protection of anonymity, when requested. See more on anonymity below).
 - Clarify community norms and share BOTMDG Safe Space Policy.
 - Give the person named an opportunity to respond.

- Check for understanding - ask the person named to summarize the complaint and verbally state a commitment to improve.
 - For first-time, low-level complaints, the Safety Committee may choose to talk one-on-one with the person named in a less formal setting, including at the dance.
- **Medium-level:** flexible response — may escalate to high-level. May include written warnings.
 - For medium-level offenses, the Safety Committee may dialog with the person named without board approval (see above)
 - If the Safety Committee thinks a more robust response is warranted (either before or after talking with the person named or in the case of repeat offenses), the Committee should draft a written warning for Board approval. The warning can include expectations for the person named that safeguard the wellbeing of other dancers and limit the participation of the person named if the person repeats the offending behavior. To ensure timely response to complaints, board approval may be requested over email.
- **High-level:** written warnings, possible suspension or ban.
 - For high level offenses, the Safety Committee will bring the issue to a Board meeting, (or will communicate via text or email on urgent matters). Board approval is required for suspensions and bans. Board approval is not required in the case of someone posing an immediate high-level risk to dancers and needing to be removed for the safety of others.
- **Suspension and banning**
 - Repeated offenses of any kind, with little sign of change, may lead to suspension or ban.
 - For low-level offenses, the Safety Committee will provide at least three communications with the named person, including at least one written warning-- before suspension or banning.
 - Suspension/ban decisions are made by the Board, documented in writing, and added to organizational memory.

3.4 Possible Outcomes

- **Resolution:** education, acknowledgment, commitment to change, possibly apology
 - For first-time, low-level incidents and additional warnings,
 - The person named should demonstrate understanding by being able to state the complaint and the requested behavior change.
 - The person named should verbally state a commitment to improve.

- When applicable, and especially when requested, resolution could include an apology or other healing efforts from the person named to the complainant.
 - The Safety Committee should document everything.
- **Non-Resolution**
 - For first-time, low-level incidents where the person named does not acknowledge a need for change,
 - If the person named is not volatile (no threats, raised voice, physical aggression, etc.) and does not pose likely harm to the community, the incident can be left as “agree to disagree,” with a clear verbal warning.
 - Let the person named know that the incident will be documented, and if complaints of this nature become a pattern, it could lead to a stronger response (which could include suspension or banning).
 - Reiterate the Safe Space Policy.
 - For repeat incidents with clear remorse from the person named,
 - The board will need to decide how much tolerance to grant.
 - When possible (little threat of harm), continue to work with the person named on changes.
 - Community education might also be warranted to help other dance participants know how to respond to this individual.
 - For incidents with likely risk from the person named,
 - If a complaint incident happened outside of a dance, is a one-time incident (not a pattern), and/or comes down to “he said, she said,” a warning might be most appropriate.
 - When attempts at education have been made, the person named is fully informed of the issues, their responses have been duly considered, no positive resolution has been reached, and the situation likely poses a risk to the community
 - A suspension or ban is warranted for the protection of the community.
 - Inform the person named in writing.
 - Document any responses from the person named along with the written notification of suspension or ban.
 - Examples of “likely risk”
 - The person named is defiant or volatile, positive communication techniques don’t work, no acknowledgement of the problem, no sincere commitment to improve
 - High-level issues that pose immediate harm

- Repeat incidents that have become a pattern

3.5 Anonymity

- If the complainant wishes to remain anonymous, the possible responses to the complaint may be limited. If a complainant wishes to keep their identity anonymous but agrees that the specific behavior details may be discussed with the named person, the Safety Committee will follow up accordingly.
- If multiple anonymous complaints form a pattern, Leaders can try to observe the behavior first-hand to be able to speak with the person named based on the leaders first-hand experience.

3.6 Appeals

- Either complainant or person named may submit a written appeal with new information.
- Withdrawn complaints may lead to lifting of bans/suspensions.

3.7 Documentation

- All complaints, responses, and resolutions are documented.

3.8 Non-Admit List

- Maintained by the Safety Committee.
- Includes: name and dates of suspension or ban (all other details should remain confidential).
- Shared with Leaders and Welcome Table volunteers at BOTMDG events.

3.9 Public Disclosure

- BOTMDG may confirm whether an individual is currently banned/suspended if asked by leaders of other traditional dance/music communities.
- Details are not shared publicly.

Section 4. Documentation & Records

4.1 Forms

- [BOTMDG Feedback Form](#)

4.2 Chain of Communication

- Leaders forward complaints to the Safety Committee through the [BOTMDG Feedback Form](#).
- Leaders can share relevant info with Welcome Table volunteers or other volunteers when relevant to their role.

4.3 Storage and Review

- The Safety Committee stores complaint forms (events, dates), a record of response actions taken, and a list of any banned or suspended individuals (name, dates).
- Files are transferred during leadership changes and reviewed annually when a new Board is elected.

4.4 Living Policy

- This is a working policy. Feedback is welcome at [BOTMDG Feedback Form](#)

This document draws significantly from the [Old Farmer's Ball Complaint Policies and Procedures](#) as well as the [CDSS Community Culture and Safety Toolkit](#).