

Informal Conflict Management Program

Guidebook for Managers

Conflict is natural; neither positive nor negative, it just is... It is not whether you have conflict in your life. It's what you do with that conflict that makes a difference.

"The Magic of Conflict," Thomas F. Crum

Many workplace conflicts result in wasted time and money, decreased mental health, lost resources, physical illness, and the decline of collegial and organizational trust.

If managed properly, conflict can also be constructive in promoting communication, joint problem-solving, growth and positive change.

The chance of successfully resolving workplace conflict is much greater when dealt with early and informally.

The RCMP is committed to providing a healthy, productive, and respectful workplace for all its employees and recognizes the importance of dealing with workplace conflicts and issues informally, at the lowest possible level, and in a timely manner before the situation escalates. As such, the Informal Conflict Management Program (ICMP) seeks to promote and sustain a work environment that encourages team building, open communication and mutual respect for all RCMP employees.

This guidebook covers the administrative details about the ICMP and its application.

For your information and reference, **Appendix A** includes links to several policies, programs, and services that are fundamental to supporting RCMP employees and contributing to a safe, healthy and respectful workplace, such as the Staff Relations Representative Program (SRRP), bargaining agents, labour relations, values and ethics, employee assistance, official languages, employment equity, disability management, health and safety, and internal communications.

Informal Conflict Management Program – Administration

The ICMP is guided by the [Informal Conflict Management Program Policy](#) (launched June 2014), developed in consultation with senior management,

bargaining agents and the SRRP and applicable to all RCMP members and public service employees – including indeterminate, temporary, term, and casual employees.

Authority

The ICMP Policy Centre – under the authority of the Director General of Occupational Health and Safety/Workplace Relations Services – is responsible for creating a national, standardized program (which includes service offerings, qualification of practitioners, and training programs) overseen by a national manager and implemented by informal conflict management practitioners at the divisional level, under the direction of the Commanding Officers.

Data Collection

For further information please see the Evaluation, Reporting and Data Collection section of the *Health Services Manual* – [Ch. 3.3.7.1](#). Informal Conflict Management Program.

Principles

The ICMP is an *informal, confidential* and *voluntary* alternative or complement to formal dispute mechanisms, such as grievances, harassment complaints, adjudications, appeals and litigation.

Informal: the parties must agree to put all other recourse processes in abeyance in accordance with the rules of these processes and take no new steps in any other recourse process while using informal conflict resolution. The ICMP does not conduct inquiries or issue decisions; it provides guidance to individuals or groups in finding practical ways to achieve their own constructive outcomes.

Confidential: Subject to disclosures required by legislation, confidentiality will be maintained by participants in an ICMP process.

Voluntary: While participation in any ICMP service is strongly encouraged, participation must be of the individual's free choice, and no employee is obligated to participate in an ICMP service.

The RCMP recognizes the necessity of impartiality by ICM practitioners who conduct informal conflict management system processes. The practitioner must not have a personal interest in the issues at hand, nor any bias or preference towards the outcome of a process. He/she does not act as a

judge and does not make a determination for the parties – in fact, the parties talk to each other, not the practitioner.

Benefits

When used appropriately, the ICMP:

- takes less time than formal grievances and complaints and is more likely to lead to good long-term relationships between the parties;
- is non-adversarial in nature, creating a culture that encourages resolution of conflict at the lowest level through face-to-face dialogue between the parties involved;
- allows managers and employees to deal with conflict effectively by participating in conflict management training;
- offers informal recourse options for addressing conflict—self-resolution, conflict coaching, facilitation, mediation, conflict assessments, group intervention;
- allows employees to move from formal processes (grievances/harassment complaints) to informal recourse options without jeopardizing their rights to return to the formal processes, should they wish to do so; and
- helps managers and employees interact better with each other, creating a positive, respectful work environment.

Some of the benefits of dealing with conflict at the lowest possible level include:

- increased productivity;
- reduced stress;
- improved morale;
- developing the collaborative relationships between managers and employees/among employees needed to achieve organizational goals;
- less demands on human and financial resources;
- relationships are protected;
- less stress and health problems created;
- more control of outcome;
- stronger, more durable outcomes; and
- mitigating future issues.

Informal Conflict Management Program – Application

It is the intent of the program to equip RCMP employees at all levels with the skills, knowledge and abilities to manage and resolve their issues,

disagreements and/or conflicts at the earliest moment, while maintaining their right to use existing formal dispute resolution mechanisms.

Goals

Short-term: to assist with the management of an issue, disagreement and/or conflict in a productive and efficient way.

Long-term: to enhance the effective conflict prevention skills within the workforce by assisting all employees in the prevention, intervention and management of workplace disputes.

Ultimate: to provide the RCMP with the necessary infrastructure, awareness and skills required to increase individual and organizational competency related to conflict, creating a positive, healthy and respectful work environment.

Services

Preventative activities and assisted informal conflict management processes are provided through the ICMP. Services are available when people are unable to resolve—or would like assistance with—managing their own conflicts; they include:

- **Confidential consultations:** an opportunity for employees to talk with a divisional ICM Practitioner and explore options available to them to help resolve their issues.
- **Individual conflict coaching:** one-on-one support to help a person deal with a conflict situation.
- **Facilitated discussions:** using techniques designed to improve the flow of information between parties in a dispute.
- **Mediation:** a voluntary process in which an impartial and neutral third party assists employees to create a mutually acceptable solution to their problem.
- **Workplace assessments:** a process to identify various group dynamics that contribute to workplace conflict.
- **Group interventions:** an opportunity for group members to identify issues that are causing difficulties, and to explore ways of improving the work environment.
- **Awareness sessions and skills training:** the focus of awareness sessions is to educate employees on the existence of the ICMP and ways to engage these services. Skill training focuses on increased self-awareness of conflict triggers, various styles of conflict, effective communication skills, and learning positive conflict resolution skills.

The first step is to contact your divisional practitioner to discuss the conflict. Although ICMP does track the calls they receive, they do not track the content and no “file” is opened at the consultation stage. Initially, they just want to hear from employees and have a *confidential conversation* as per ICMP policy, to understand the situation and how they may be able to help.

When to use the ICMP

Employees seeking to resolve a conflict are encouraged to use an informal conflict management process as an alternative or complement to a formal dispute mechanism. Managers are often expected to deal with conflicts and need some direction or assistance. For more information on the ICMP, employees should contact: their divisional practitioner, supervisor, manager, union or SRRP representative, Peer to Peer Advisor, or the ICMP Policy Centre.

ICMP may be appropriate—but not limited to—when:

- Individuals involved are willing to address and settle the issue (voluntarily).
- They want an informal and flexible process.
- They have the authority to make most or all necessary decisions required to settle the dispute.
- Ignoring the problem is not feasible.
- Individuals can manage strong emotions sufficiently to provide for a safe and positive process.
- Other options for resolving the dispute are not preferable to them.
- There is interest in maintaining the relationship.
- A situation is complex and requires a creative solution.
- They prefer to resolve their dispute in private.

ICMP may not be appropriate when:

- An employee is challenging a law, policy, collective agreement, etc.
- There is a need to set a precedent with regard to the issue of law.
- The issue is one that should be debated publicly.
- There is risk of violence/retribution between the parties.
- The parties are not voluntarily undertaking the informal conflict management process.

Informal Conflict Management Program – Contacts

National

[ICMP /NAT/ PGIC \(RCMP/GRC\)](#)

Headquarters (NHQ)

[ICMP /HQ/ PGIC \(RCMP/GRC\)](#)

B, H Division

[ICMP /B H/ PGIC \(RCMP/GRC\)](#)

C Division

[ICMP /C/ PGIC \(RCMP/GRC\)](#)

D, V Division

[ICMP /D V/ PGIC \(RCMP/GRC\)](#)

E, M Division

[ICMP /E M/ PGIC \(RCMP/GRC\)](#)

F, Depot Division

[ICMP /F T/ PGIC \(RCMP/GRC\)](#)

K, G Division

[ICMP /K G/ PGIC \(RCMP/GRC\)](#)

National Policy Centre

[ICMPNationalPolicyCentre -PGICCentreDePolitiquesNationale \(RCMP/GRC\)](#)

O Division

[ICMP /O/ PGIC \(RCMP/GRC\)](#)

J, L Division

[ICMP /J L/ PGIC \(RCMP/GRC\)](#)

Appendix A – Useful Links

Employee Wellness

- [Employee Assistance Program](#)
- [Peer to Peer system](#)
- [Workplace Accommodation](#)
- [Informal Conflict Management Program](#)
- [Fitness](#)
- [Disability Management](#)
- [Work/Life Balance](#)
- [Handling Disability Management Cases - Return to Work](#)

Health and Safety

- [Your Health](#)
- [Your Safety](#)
- [Violence Prevention in the Workplace](#)

Employee Conduct

- [Harassment Prevention and Resolution](#)
- [Harassment Complaint Investigation and Resolution Process](#)
- [*The Amended Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act*](#)
- [PS Labour Relations](#)
- [Professional Ethics](#)
- [Conflict of Interest Directive and Interpersonal Workplace Relationship Policy](#)
- [Employee Conduct](#)
- [Disclosure of Wrongdoing in the Workplace](#)

Supporting employees

- [Recognition](#)
- [Staff Relations Representative Program](#)
- [Bargaining Agents](#)
- [Workplace Reporting System](#)
- [Official Languages](#)
- [Internal Communication Toolkit](#)
- [Employment Equity, Diversity and Inclusion](#)
- [Restoring The Workplace Following A Harassment Complaint](#)
- Fallen Member Guide (available by email at: [Fallen Member Guide - Infoweb](#))
- [Compensation](#)