Westmarch Official Complaint Handbook

Version 2.0 - Summer 2025

This handbook is a guide for handling official complaints within the Kingdom of Westmarch, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit Amtgard chapter. This document ensures fairness, clarity, and legality when managing issues involving all participants. This process aligns with Amtgard's Rules of Play, the Westmarch Corpora, all California and federal nonprofit laws. The goal of this document is to protect & support our community, promote accountability, and ensure due process. Anyone may contact Westmarch via email at Westmarch.Amtgard@gmail.com

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Foreword

The Westmarch Complaint Process Handbook was created to provide awareness and also to support monarchy and committee volunteers in handling complaints and investigations efficiently within the Kingdom of Westmarch. Updated from the original existing document in summer 2025, this is a living document intended for inclusion in Westmarch law and subject to updates through the Althing process as outlined in the Westmarch Corpora.

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How to submit a complaint

The official Westmarch Complaint Form is available on the CAAmtgard Documents webpage **HERE**. This form allows participants to submit concerns or complaints to the Westmarch CoC team regarding behavior they believe violates federal, state, or local law, the Amtgard Code of Conduct or other rules or laws. For matters that do not constitute a complaint, please use **the general incident form**. Anonymous complaints are allowed but discouraged; the CoC team reserves the right to disregard any or all anonymous submissions at any time for any reason.

Definitions

- CoC team is composed of the monarch, prime minister, guild master of reeves.
- The Investigation Panel is composed of any members appointed by the CoC team.

Types of Complaints

This section outlines common categories of complaints addressed through the Westmarch Complaint Process. This section serves as a reference for participants, members of the CoC team, and the Investigation Panel. It is not an exhaustive or fully comprehensive list.

A) Online
Complaints may arise from any online platform, whether within or outside of Amtgard. This includes but is not limited to Discord, Facebook, forums, and other chat groups connected to Amtgard.

> Examples include: harassment, threats, spreading misinformation, hate speech, repeated rude or inappropriate conduct, failure to follow the Westmarch Safety Statement or DEI policy, or violations of federal, state, or local laws.

B) Park Days
Park Days refer to regular in-person meetups. Complaints related to these gatherings are typically first reported to the local Monarchy.

> Examples include: unsafe equipment, physical, mental, or verbal abuse, discrimination, cheating, harassment, violations of the Westmarch Corpora or Amtgard Rules of Play, and breaches of federal, state, or local laws.

C) Events
Events are larger gatherings, often organized or sponsored by Westmarch.

Examples include: alcohol or drug misuse, theft, harassment, property damage, unsafe equipment, abuse, discrimination, cheating, violations of the Westmarch Corpora, Amtgard Rules of Play, or Westmarch Safety Statement or DEI policy, and breaches of federal, state, or local laws.

D) Outside of Amtgard

Conduct occurring outside the game that directly impacts the Kingdom of Westmarch may be subject to complaint.

Examples include: public hate speech, violent criminal activity, threats against participants, abuse or harassment, discrimination, and violations of the Westmarch Safety Statement, DEI policy, or any applicable law.

How Westmarch should Handle the Complaint Intake Process

- Submitters must use the official complaint submission form found HERE. In the event that the online form is inaccessible all available information should be reported to and collected by a sitting member of the Westmarch CoC team.
- The submitter may choose to not submit information they do not feel comfortable sharing.
    - Complainant Information
        - The mundane (out-of-game) name of the individual initiating the complaint (Complainant).
        - The persona (in-game) name of the individual initiating the complaint (Complainant).
        - Land of the person initiating the complaint (Complainant).
        - Contact information for the person making the complaint (Complainant).
        - Date that the complaint is being initiated.
    - Incident Information
        - The mundane (out-of-game) name of the member(s) involved in the incident or issue (Complainee(s)).
        - The persona (in-game) name of the member(s) involved in the incident or issue (Complainee(s)).
        - Land of the person(s) involved in the complaint (Complainanee(s)).
        - Contact information for the person(s) involved in the complaint (Complainee(s)).
        - Date that the incident or issue occurred.

        - If this is an on-going issue, when did the issue first occur? How often does this issue occur?
    - All individuals who were present at the time of the reported incident.
    - Steps that have been taken to resolve the issue or incident prior to initiating the formal complaint.
        - If an attempt to resolve the issue has already taken place, what steps were taken? If mundane laws have been broken, have the police or other authorities been contacted?
    - For the person affected by the complaint, how seriously do they consider this issue being described in the complaint?
    - What would they like to see happen as an end result? It is important to note, that this should NOT be the end that the Monarchy should work towards in resolving the complaint. The purpose of this is to help gauge how the person affected feels about the complaint, the behavior, and take into account what they would like to see happen.
- If a complaint is taken without the official complaint form, the Westmarch CoC team Member who collected the information is charged with documenting that information using the online form so it can be maintained and reviewed.
- *For ANY and ALL urgent safety concerns please follow all applicable state, local, and federal laws (reporting and otherwise) and then continue the below process.*
- The Prime Minister will confirm in writing the receipt of the complaint to the submitter if contact information is available, and assign a lead CoC team member - which may be themselves.
- The CoC team member will confirm the actionability of the complaint and decide if this complaint is eligible for investigation. That member may choose to consult with the monarch on the actionability of the claim.
- IF NO – then the appointed team member will respond in writing details of the denial of the claim and log the report in the Westmarch Google Drive.
    - If no actionability is found and the complaint is anonymous - then the Prime Minister will log that the claim is not actionable in the Westmarch Google Drive.
- The submitter of the complaint may appeal to the Westmarch monarch if they disagree with the CoC team member's decision and would like the actionability of the complaint to be reconsidered.
- A second member of the CoC team would then review the complaint via the same above steps. There would be no third review if no actionability is found.
- IF actionability of the complaint is found to be viable – **Then panel creation occurs.**

How to form an Investigation Panel

- An Investigation Panel creation is typically between 3–5 members but can be more, however never less than 3.
- Investigation Panels must initially include the Westmarch Prime Minister, Westmarch Monarch, and Westmarch Guildmaster of Reeves.
- Additional members of the Investigation Panel may be selected by the CoC team.
- One member of the Investigation Panel will be chosen as Lead to oversee the process and serve as the main point of contact.
- The Investigation Panel will also designate a member as Bias Monitor. (Bias Monitor Guide.)
- Any and all members of the Investigation Panel named in the complaint are not allowed to be part of the Investigation Panel. They may be included as witnesses.
- Any members of the CoC team or Investigation Panel closely connected to those named in the complaint are not allowed to be part of the Investigation Panel.
- Any members that must be replaced on the Investigation Panel are replaced by members of the Westmarch Monarchy or a monarchy approved representative.
    - Members of the Investigation Panel, including replacements or additions need to be disclosed to the Complainant and Complainee during the investigation.
    - The Complainant or Complainee may request to recuse members of the Investigation Panel. If the request is made, the Investigation Panel should take a simple majority vote on the recusal request, and the CoC team should then replace that member of the Investigation Panel.
- The CoC team, and all members of the Investigation Panel, must state that they recognize and adhere to the confidentiality statement found at the end of this document. This statement will be logged by the Prime Minister via e-signature for all members of the panel.
- The Investigation Panel may assign roles such as Recordkeeper or Coordinator if needed.
- The Code of Conduct team is granted the same authority as outlined in the WestMarch Corpora section 11.2. This includes the ability to issue temporary bans or restrictions on individuals pending the completion of an investigation in order to maintain the safety and integrity of the Kingdom and its populace.

Recusal Clause

Any member of the CoC team or the Investigation Panel may recuse themselves from the investigation for any reason at any time without explanation.

Official Representative Replacement Protocol Statement:
If the Westmarch Prime Minister, Westmarch Monarch, or Westmarch Guildmaster of Reeves are named in the complaint or choose to recuse themselves from the investigation, they are replaced by another current elected monarchy member, using the order of presidence in the Westmarch corpora, or by an appointed representative named by an eligible member of the CoC team.

How to handle Interview and Review Process

First Steps:

- The Investigation Panel will begin by reviewing the submitted complaint in full.
- The Investigation Panel then discusses and agrees upon a clear plan to complete the review process.
- The Investigation Panel then establishes the preferred and most reliable method of communication between members.
- Any communication among Investigation Panel members regarding the complaint must be logged and included with the final complaint resolution submission.
- The Investigation Panel should outline their chosen process for gathering relevant information.
- The Investigation Panel identifies all individuals who should be interviewed as part of the investigation based on the information provided in the complaint.
- The Investigation Panel will notify the individuals of their status in the complaint.

Interview Process:

- The Investigation Panel will contact the individual(s) who submitted the complaint to schedule a private interview.
- The Investigation Panel will also reach out to the individual(s) named in the complaint to schedule a separate private interview.
- The Investigation Panel will also reach out to any witness(es) named in the complaint to schedule a separate private interview.
- The complainant and complainee and witness(es) may request to have a support person/advocate of their choice sit in during the investigatory process. That person is subject to the same confidentiality concerns as discussed throughout this document.
- Each interview will be conducted privately to ensure confidentiality and allow for open communication.
- It is recommended that in-person conversations follow specific guidelines:

    - The discussion should take place in a neutral location if it cannot happen at an Amtgard park.
    - There should always be a witness to the discussion, with at least two members of the Investigation Panel participating in any in-person conversations.
    - If a discussion becomes heated or emotional, the conversation should be concluded immediately until all members are able to continue appropriately.

- All interviews must be documented and logged for inclusion in the final complaint resolution submission. Notes should be taken of all interviews - Any interviews conducted orally or via video, audio or other accessible formats will be summarized in writing and shared with the parties interviewed for confirmation of accuracy and completeness of the information being collected. This information should be shared privately and securely.

    - Important: It is CRITICAL, for the safety of all members, that these notes are confidential and are only available to the Investigation team during the Investigation. Post investigation, the notes can be provided to the sitting Monarchy as needed.

Suggested Interview Questions:
Use discretion and tailor your questions appropriately based on the nature and sensitivity of the incident.

- Were there any events leading up to the incident?
- What caused the incident to occur, from your perspective?
- Were there any prior incidents involving the same individuals?
- Does the individual named in the complaint have a history of disruptive behavior or personal conflict on the field?
- Does the Complainant have a history of disruptive behavior or personal conflict on the field?
- Were any steps taken to resolve or mitigate the issue before this complaint was submitted?

  Gathering accurate context is essential to understanding what occurred and why. These details will help the panel evaluate the situation fairly and reach an informed resolution.

Reviewing Evidence:

- The Investigation Panel will review evidence as a group and come to a conclusion on information gathered. Video or audio meetings should have written

notes taken and logged with evidence. Video and audio recordings should not be part of logged evidence due to file size.

Fairness and exceptions:

- Respondents to the complaint must know the details of the complaint.
- Who filed the complaint is never revealed to the Complainee.
- Every individual mentioned in the complaint must be offered a chance to speak to the panel before the process can be completed.
- IF an individual refuses to communicate with the Investigation Panel that is their right and must be respected.
- IF an individual refuses to make time to communicate then the decision process can be moved forward without interviewing the individual in question with the full agreement of the panel. A reasonable effort must be made to allow individuals the opportunity to give their statements.

Final Steps

Panel Final Deliberation

- Decisions on how to move forward with the completion of the complaint review process is done by private discussion among members of the Investigation Panel, culminating in a majority vote by all panel members. Any expulsion, suspension, or termination must be done in good faith and in a fair and reasonable manner.

Possible Outcomes: *examples including but not limited to:*

- *No Action*
- *Written or Verbal Warning*
- *Suspension (0–6 months)*
- *Expulsion (permanent ban)*
- *Reporting individual to proper authorities*
- *Mediation between parties*
- *Alternative Dispute Resolution*

Reporting the Decision

- The Investigation Panel will notify the Westmarch CoC team of the results of the investigation, as well as their recommended outcome..
- The Investigation Panel's decision is only advisory. The CoC team must make the final decision.

- Refer to the Monarchy Order of Precedence as outlined within the Westmarch Corpora when members of the monarchy are parties to the investigation.
- The CoC team lead will notify Complainant(s) and Complainee(s) of the complaint review process and the decision separately.
    - The affected member must be given 15 calendar days notice of the expulsion, suspension or termination, before the decision is disclosed to the public. Notice must be given to the member in writing.
    - An opportunity to make an initial appeal must be provided to the member (in oral, written or other accessible formats).
    - The opportunity to be heard on initial appeal (if requested) must be given not less than five calendar days before the effective date of the expulsion, suspension or termination by a person or body authorized to decide that the proposed expulsion, termination or suspension not take place. Any appeal must be reviewed by the Investigation Panel and the decision reported to the CoC team.
- Details of the decision are NEVER made public. Additionally; there are to be no public discussions or responses of the CoC team or its findings beyond the statement; “All procedures as required by the Corpora and RoP have been followed. Any concerns about the process can be brought up on appeal.”
- Provide all responses to all parties in writing.
- Include findings, result, and if requested by individuals involved in the complaint process, how to appeal.
- CoC team will make a public statement only if necessary. Necessary situations include, but are not limited to: outcomes resulting in expulsion (termination of membership) and suspension. Use the form letter below if a public statement is needed.

  By unanimous agreement of Player name and legal name (Monarch), Player name and legal name(Prime Minster), Player name and legal name(GMR)

  Player name and legal name has received this consequence for this long. This ban does/ does not propagate to other kingdoms. The Amtgard RoP, Westmarch corpora and Westmarch CoC handbook were followed during the investigation and deliberation of this action.

  Anyone wishing to appeal this finalized decision may appeal to the Kingdom Althing with a petition signed by 20% of voting eligible members. Overturning the decision requires a ⅔ approval of an Althing vote.

- As a reminder, all Monarchy, CoC team and Investigation Panel members involved in the process are not to post or discuss any details with anyone outside of the CoC team or the Investigation Panel. If a Ban or disciplinary action is

warranted, the result may be published, but no reasoning or further details of the investigation should be provided.
- It is requested that during the investigative process, any parties to the Complainant, witnesses, or the Complainee, refrain from posting or discussing details as well to maintain the integrity of the investigation.

Logging the Decision

- For any Bans – note the duration and make a Westmarch Google calendar reminder of the duration of the ban.
- Westmarch must save all documents including: complaint form, notes of interviews, panel discussion, evidence, and final ruling in the Westmarch Google Drive.
- Ensure all details of the investigation are logged with the final report.
- Westmarch will keep all files for a minimum of 5 years in Google Drive.
- Any and all complaint process files should only be accessible by the CoC team.
- Close case in official log and host all evidence on Google Drive by player name and year of investigation. Example: Player X 2025

Introduction to Conflict Resolution

This section outlines the basic expectations that members of Amtgard within the Kingdom of Westmarch should have when participating as a member of the Kingdom of Westmarch. These are considered the “Rights and Responsibilities” of every member of the Kingdom of Westmarch.

● It is expected that every member will, to the best of their ability, play in accordance with the Amtgard Rules of Play (ROP) and follow the Code of Conduct (CoC) as defined in the Westmarch Corpora.

● If a concern or problem arises between members of Westmarch, it is expected that those members will attempt to resolve any differences between each other first. In the event that the concern is in regards to dangerous, unsafe, or illegal behavior, it is not expected that members will confront each other or attempt a resolution.

Note: Behaviors that are dangerous, unsafe, or illegal should immediately be reported to the Monarchy or Event Staff.

In cases where there is no resolution to repeated and problematic behavior, members may need assistance. When members do not behave in accordance with the expected behaviors generalized above, this can cause disruption in other members' ability to play and enjoy the game and – as a result – may lead to disciplinary action. If a member finds that someone else is disrupting their ability to play and enjoy the game, there are several options at their disposal:

● The member can address the person directly.

● The member can make a formal complaint with a Reeve or local Monarchy.

● The member can take the complaint to the Westmarch kingdom level Monarchy.

● The member can report the issue or behavior to the local authorities.

Member to Member Conflict Resolution

Prior to making a formal complaint with local or Kingdom level Monarchy, members are encouraged to attempt to resolve any disputes with other members directly. During an attempt to resolve an issue, there are a number of steps that can be taken to help address the conflict.

Important: Do not attempt to address the issue while emotions are high. If the issue has just occurred and one or both members are angry or upset, it is best to wait to address the issue when all members have calmed down.

● Once calm, ask the other member if they would be comfortable discussing the issue or the concern.

● Clarify the issue or disagreement.

● Always consider implementing a mediator or witnesses to any conversation.

● Establish a common goal for both members.

● Determine barriers to meeting the common goal.

● Discuss how all members can work together to meet the common goal.

● Attempt to come to agreement on the best way to resolve the conflict.

● Acknowledge the agreed upon solution and determine the responsibilities that each member has in the resolution.

It is important to note that not all conflicts can be reasonably addressed at the more personal level. In such situations where a member might feel unsafe attempting to engage in conflict resolution with another member without Monarchy input, members are advised to make a formal complaint. If an attempt at these steps has been taken and it is determined that neither party is fully satisfied with the outcome, bringing the complaint to the local Monarchy is advised.

Document continued below

Westmarch Complaint Handling Process Checklist

This checklist is to ensure all steps are followed. Panels will submit the checklist with the final decision of the process. Additional details on how to complete each step can be found within the COC handbook.

☐ 1. Complaint Received by Monarchy/CoC Team

☐ 2. Acknowledgment Sent to Complaint submitter

- Monarchy/CoC Team Responds in writing that the submission has been received.

☐ 3. Preliminary Jurisdiction Review

- IF NO forward movement – then notify the complaint submitter and Move to step 9.

☐ 4. Create Investigation Panel

☐ **5. Begin Investigation**

- Gather statements, documents, and witness input. Record everything.
- Notify Complainee and Complainant of who is on panel.
- Notify Complainee, Complainant and witnesses of their status within the investigation.
- Interview Complainee, Complainant, and all witnesses.

☐ **6. Investigation Panel Votes on Recommendation**

- Choose No Action, Warning, Suspension, ban, or other.

☐ **7. Monarchy/CoC Team Review**

- Monarchy/CoC Team approves or questions decisions.
- Monarchy/CoC Team reserves the right to send the investigation back to the panel for re-review.

☐ **8. Notify All Parties Separately**

- Use written (digital or otherwise) notifications only.
- Allow opportunity to appeal if requested.

☐ **9. Log and Archive Case**

- Save ALL records securely and privately in the Westmarch Google Drive.

Westmarch Complaint Review Panel Confidentiality Agreement

This section ensures that all members of a Westmarch Complaint Review Panel uphold privacy standards in accordance with Westmarch rules and policies. Participation in the complaint review process requires agreement to the following:

I, (NAME), as a selected member of a Westmarch Complaint Review Panel, understand that I may be given access to confidential and sensitive information related to this investigation. I agree to:

- Keep all details of the complaint and investigation strictly confidential.

- Not discuss the case with anyone outside the panel, the individuals designated for interview by the panel, or the sitting Westmarch Monarchy.

- Not post or share any information about the details of an investigation or involved individuals online, in person, or in public forums.

I understand that any breach of confidentiality may result in disciplinary action. The above does not preclude the Panel or handling Monarchy from divulging the result of an investigation, such as notification that an individual is the subject of disciplinary action. This document will be kept on file in the Westmarch Drive along with the investigation results.

For signature

X_____

Appendix A: Bias Monitor's Guide

The Bias Monitor position is designed to ensure impartiality by all members involved in the complaint process. Bias Monitors should use this guide before, during, and after handling a complaint or conflict. This guide is here to help you, as a Bias Monitor, to support fair judgment, hold space for different perspectives, and keep the process rooted in awareness, equality, and fairness.

This role exists because bias is real, and it often shows up quietly. Your job is to help the group stay curious, notice when power or assumptions are steering the conversation, and make room for complexity.

It’s not about invalidating anyone’s experience. All feelings are real.
This guide is here to help the group **respond to those feelings thoughtfully**, not reflexively.

What You’re Watching For

You don’t need a degree in bias psychology, just keep an eye out for these patterns:

- **Familiar = Safe**
  Favoring someone because they “feel like us” or are easier to talk to.
- **First Story Wins**
  Locking into the version you heard first, even as new info comes in.
- **Reputation Leads**
  Letting someone’s history override what’s actually happening now.
- **Tone Policing**
  Discrediting people for being too emotional, too flat, too quiet, too angry.
- **Assuming One Story Fits All**
  Thinking one person speaks for a whole group or identity.
- **Default Norms**
  Reading someone’s behavior through your own cultural lens, not theirs.

What You Can Say (Without Derailing Things)

You don’t need perfect language, just something that helps people stop and think:

- “Can we pause for a second? I think we might be making assumptions.”
- “Are we responding to what’s being said - or how it’s being said?”
- “Would we see this the same way if someone else did it?”
- “I’m wondering if tone or reputation is shaping how we’re reading this.”
- “Have we asked what people need to fully take part in this process?”

You’re not calling people out. You’re naming what might be invisible in the moment.

When to Speak Up

Trust your gut. Step in when you notice:

- One person getting more space or benefit of the doubt than others
- Emotional responses being used as “proof” for or against someone
- The group rushing to a decision without hearing all sides
- No one naming a power dynamic that’s clearly in the room
- People feeling confused, unheard, or shut down

After the Process

Help the group reflect. You might offer:

- A short note about what you noticed - where bias popped up, where the group slowed down in a good way
- A reminder to check in with folks who were part of the process: Did they feel heard? Did the process make sense?
- A few quiet minutes to jot down personal reflections

You can also reflect on your own role:
What made it easier or harder to speak up? What might you try differently next time?

Final Thoughts

Investigating fairly doesn't mean being neutral, perfect, or detached.
It means staying open. Asking hard questions. Slowing down just enough to ask: *What lens am I using right now - and who might be left out of it?* You're not here to stop the process. You're here to keep it honest. And that's what makes trust possible.

Handbook References

- Amtgard Rules of Play: https://www.amtgard.com/documents
- Westmarch Governing Documents: https://caamtgard.com/events/?q=Documents
- Westmarch BoD Info: https://wiki.amtgard.com/Westmarch_BoD
- CA Corporations Code §5341: https://codes.findlaw.com/ca/corporations-code/corp-sect-5341/
- CA Corporations Code §5340: https://codes.findlaw.com/ca/corporations-code/corp-sect-5340/
- IRS Pub. 4221-PC: 501(c)(3) Guide: https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p4221pc.pdf
- Westmarch Site & Event Policies: https://caamtgard.com/events/?q=Documents
- Westmarch Complaint form direct link: Complaint form
