

## **WETT SWIM CLUB ANTI-BULLY POLICY**

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WETT has zero tolerance when it comes to bullying. Our mission statement involves to balance camaraderie in a safe and supportive environment. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at WETT and will not be tolerated. Bullying is counterproductive to team spirit and can be devastating to anybody this happens to. WETT is committed to providing a safe, caring and friendly environment for all our members. If bullying does occur, all athletes and parents should know that such incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. Anyone who knows that bullying is happening is expected to notify a coach, board member or mentor.

Remember: The best way to stop a bully is for bystanders to stand up to the bully and support the victim. The more people does this, the more we show bullying is not tolerated.

Objectives of WETT's Bullying Policy and Action Plan:

1. To make it clear that WETT will not tolerate bullying in any form or from anybody.
2. To define bullying and give all board members, coaches, parents and swimmers a good understanding of what bullying is.
3. To make it known to all parents, swimmers and coaching staff that there is a policy and protocol should any bullying issues arise.
4. To make how to report bullying clear and understandable.
5. To spread the word that WETT takes bullying seriously and that all swimmers and parents can be assured that they will be supported when bullying is reported.

### **BULLYING?**

Bullying is the use of belittling attitude towards someone. It can range from cold/backhanded comments to more obvious behaviors such as physical aggression. Whether intentional or not, bullying results in pain and emotional distress that can escalate to unforeseen results.

The USA Swimming Code of Conduct defines bullying, Bullying is the severe or repeated use by one or more members via oral, written, electronic or other expression (it be: images, sounds, messages, data or communication of any unwelcomed nature) or a physical act or gesture, or any combination thereof, directed at any other member that to a reasonably objective person has the effect of:

- i. causing physical or emotional harm to the other member or damage to the other member's property.
- ii. placing the other member in reasonable fear of harm to himself/herself or of damage to his/her property.
- iii. creates a hostile environment for the other member at during a USA Swimming activity;
- iv. infringing on the rights of the other member at any USA Swimming activity; or

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- v. materially and substantially disrupting the training process or the orderly operation of any USA Swimming activity (which for the purposes of this section shall include, without limitation, practices, workouts and other events of a member club or LSC).

### **REPORTING PROCEDURE**

An athlete who feels that he or she has been bullied is asked to do one or more of the following things:

- Document it in writing, date, location, situation and persons involved.
- Talk to your parents or a trusted adult;
- Talk to a Club Coach, Board Member, or a designated individual;
- Write a letter or email to the Club Coach, Board Member, or other designated individual; Make a report to the USA Swimming Safe Sport staff.

There is no time limit for initiating a complaint under this procedure, but every effort should be made to bring the complaint to the attention of the appropriate club leadership as soon as possible to make sure that memories are fresh and behavior can be accurately recalled and the bullying behavior can be stopped as soon as possible.

### **HOW WETT HANDLES BULLYING**

If bullying is occurring during team-related activities, we STOP BULLYING ON THE SPOT using the following steps:

1. Keep all involved children separate. Intervene immediately. It is ok to get another adult to help.
2. Make sure everyone is safe.
3. Meet any immediate medical or mental health needs.
4. Stay calm. Reassure the kids involved, including by-standers.
5. Model respectful behavior when you intervene.

If bullying is occurring at our club or it is reported as occurring at our club, we address the situation by FINDING OUT WHAT HAPPENED and SUPPORTING THE KIDS INVOLVED using the following approach:

### **FINDING OUT THE FACTS**

1. First, get the facts:
  - a. Keep all the involved children separate.

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- b. Get the story from several sources, both sides and adults, as well as any witnesses.
  - c. Listen without blaming.
  - d. Don't call the act "bullying" while you are trying to understand what happened.
  - e. It may be difficult to get the whole story, especially if multiple athletes are involved or the bullying involves social bullying or cyber bullying. Collect all available information.
2. Then, we determine if it's bullying. There are many behaviors that look like bullying but require different approaches. It is important to determine whether the situation is bullying or something else.

As per the [www.usaswimming.org](http://www.usaswimming.org) rulebook 2021 by the USA Swimming Organization the definition of bullying is:

The severe or repeated use, regardless of when or where it may occur, by one or more USA Swimming members of an oral, written, electronic or other technological expression, image, sound, data or intelligence of any nature (regardless of the method of transmission), or a physical act or gesture, or any combination thereof, directed at any other member or Participating Non- Member that to a reasonably objective person has the effect of: (i) causing physical or emotional harm to the other person or damage to the other person's property; (ii) placing the other person in reasonable fear of harm to himself/herself or of damage to his/her property; (iii) creating a hostile environment for the other person at any USA Swimming activity; (iv) infringing on the rights of the other person at any USA Swimming activity; or (v) materially and substantially disrupting the training process or the orderly operation of any USA Swimming activity (which shall include, without limitation, practices, workouts and other events of a member club, LSC or Zone)

- a. To determine if the behavior is bullying or something else, consider the following questions:

- Listen to all the versions of the situation. All stories have at least three versions
- Have there been past conflicts?
- Is there a power imbalance? Remember that a power imbalance is not limited to physical strength. It is sometimes not easily recognized. If the targeted child feels like there is a power imbalance, there probably is.
- Has this happened before? Is the child worried it will happen again?
- Remember that it may not matter "who started it." Some kids who are bullied may be seen as annoying or provoking, but this does not excuse the bullying behavior.

Once you have determined if the situation is bullying, give the appropriate support to all kids involved.

## **SUPPORTING THE KIDS INVOLVED**

Support the kids who are being bullied

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- a. Listen and focus on the child. Learn what's been going on and show you want to help. Assure the child that bullying is not their fault.
- b. Work together to resolve the situation and protect the bullied child. The child, parents, and fellow team members and coaches may all have valuable input. It may help to:
  - i. Ask the child being bullied what can be done to make him or her feel safe. Remember that changes to routine should be minimized. He or she is not at fault and should not be singled out. For example, consider rearranging lane assignments for everyone. If bigger moves are necessary, such as switching practice groups, the child who is bullied should not be forced to change.
  - ii. Develop a game plan. Maintain open communication between the Club and parents. Discuss the steps that will be taken and how bullying will be addressed going forward.
- c. Be persistent. Bullying may not end overnight. Commit to making it stop and consistently support the bullied child.
  - a. Address bullying behavior
  - b. Make sure the child knows what the problem behavior is. Young people who bully must learn their behavior is wrong and harms others.
- c. Show kids that bullying is taken seriously. Calmly tell the child that bullying will not be tolerated. Model respectful behavior when addressing the problem.
- d. Work with the child to understand some of the reasons he or she bullied.
  - a. For example:
    - e. Sometimes children bully to fit in or just to make fun of someone is a little different from them. In other words, there may be some insecurity involved.
    - f. Other times kids act out because something else—issues at home, abuse, stress—is going on in their lives. They also may have been bullied. These kids may be in need of additional support.
  - g. Involve the kid who bullied in making amends or repairing the situation. The goal is to help them see how their actions affect others.
    - a. For example, the bully can:
      - h. Write a letter apologizing to the athlete who was bullied.
      - i. Do a good deed for the person who was bullied, for the Club, or for others in your community.
      - j. Be responsible for your acts and own up to your behaviors. Repair, pay and or cleanup for any property they damaged.
    - k. Avoid strategies that have negative consequences or could potentially put others in danger:
  - l. Zero tolerance, 2<sup>nd</sup> chances don't work when it comes to bullying. If there is bullying, there will be consequences. These consequences may vary depending on the offense and could go from getting suspended to being removed from the team.

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- m. Conflict resolution and peer mediation don't work for bullying. Bullying is not a conflict between people of equal power who share equal blame. It is an imbalance of judgement that places the bullied into an embarrassing position.
- n. Follow-up. After the bullying issue is resolved, continue finding ways to help the child who bullied to understand how what they do affects other people.
  - i. For example, praise acts of kindness or talk about what it means to be a good teammate.
- o. Same as the bully is trained on how not to bully, the targeted victim shall be advised on how to overcome bullies and how to not be a target. First and foremost they must understand it is not their fault. The bully is just looking for dominance and prays on those who he/she foresees to be easy to control, this way the bully establishes his/her dominance over that person or a group of people if the bullying is public. There are norms and standards that align with social standards, if a person does not shower, does not put deodorant, etc. these are things that most people see as abnormal and aggressive behavior people might find these traits as excuses to pick on someone.
- p. The bully must know that if there is something not in line with his/her standards, beliefs or patterns, it is not an excuse to mistreat others. It is everybody's responsibility to be kind and considerate and if they find themselves so annoyed by other people's behavior, they must instead kindly inform the other person what bothers them about that certain behavior. If you feel you need help to bring an issue up to someone and don't know how to tackle the conversation, reach out to a responsible adult (it being your parents, a coach or a trusted adult) to help you out.

Here are some samples on how to help stop bullying if they see it happening:

- a Be a friend to the person being bullied.
- b Tell a trusted adult – your parent, coach, or club board member.
- c Help the kid being bullied get away from the situation. Create a distraction, focus the attention on something else, or offer a way for the target to get out of the situation. "Let's go, practice is about to start."
- d Set a good example by not bullying others.
- e Don't give the bully an audience. Bullies are encouraged by the attention they get from bystanders. If you do nothing else, just walk away.

Parents talk to your kids about bullying. Run scenarios with them on how to react to different situations. Many kids witness bullying and are faced with it at some point in their life. Help them figure out how to stand up to it and how to resolve issues about it. For some more information on how to deal with this problem not only at club team level but in all aspects of your everyday life, check out [wwwhttps://uscenterforsafesport.org/wpcontent/uploads/2020/09/MAAPP\\_Manual\\_Finalv2.pdf](https://uscenterforsafesport.org/wpcontent/uploads/2020/09/MAAPP_Manual_Finalv2.pdf), <https://www.kidshealth.org/>; <https://www.nasponline.org/>; [www.stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov); [www.Bullypolice.org](http://www.Bullypolice.org).

You can also check out:

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### Understanding Bullying

<http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/bullyingfactsheet2012-a.pdf>

### Technology and Youth: Protecting your Child from Electronic Aggression

<http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/ea-tipsheet-a.pdf>

Also, it is very important that you as a parent realize that all these links and information is only to be better informed and make you aware of the sometimes very subtle signs of danger. When there is communication and the openness to talk to your child about any topic, they tend to feel better understood and less alone. Communicate, observe and talk about different topics with your child, this gives them tools to be mentally stronger and harder to fall victims of bullying.