



## **FAST Action Plan to Address Bullying**

### **Updated 03/21/2023**

*The following policy is based on the model Action Plan to Address Bullying produced by USA Swimming.*

### **PURPOSE**

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at FAST Falcons (the “Club”) and will not be tolerated. Bullying is counterproductive to team spirit and can be devastating to a victim. The Club 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 incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. Anyone who knows bullying is happening is expected to tell a coach, another athlete or swimmer, or any member of the FAST Falcons Club.

Objectives of FAST’s Bullying Policy and Action Plan:

1. To make it clear that FAST will not tolerate bullying or cyberbullying in any form.
2. To define bullying and give all coaches, parents, and swimmers a good understanding of what bullying and/or cyberbullying 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, understandable, and accessible.
5. To spread the word that FAST takes all bullying seriously and that all swimmers and parents can be assured they will be supported when bullying is reported.

### **WHAT IS BULLYING?**

The USA Swimming Code of Conduct prohibits bullying. Generally, bullying is the use of unwanted aggression, observed or perceived power imbalance, repetition or high likelihood of repetition of bullying behavior, whether intentional or not, which hurts another person. Bullying results in pain and distress.

The USA Swimming Code of Conduct defines bullying in 304.3.7. 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 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 causing physical or emotional harm to the other member or damage to the other person's property, including:

1. Placing the other member in reasonable fear of harm to themselves or of damage to their property.
2. Creating a hostile environment for the other member at any USA Swimming activity;  
*or*
3. Infringing on the rights of the other members at any USA Swimming activity; *or*
4. 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 or has seen bullying behavior is asked to do one or more of the following things:

- Talk to your parents, friends, and support structure.
- Talk to a Club Coach, team member, or Head Coach.
- Write a letter or email to the Club Coach or Head Coach.
- Make a report to the USA Swimming Safe Sport Staff.

There is no express 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 memories are fresh, and behavior can be accurately recalled, and the bullying behavior can be stopped as soon as possible, whether it is you or a team mate.

## **HOW WE HANDLE BULLYING**

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

1. Intervene immediately. It is okay to get another adult to help.
2. Separate the member or athlete involved.
3. Make sure everyone is safe.
4. Meet any immediate medical or mental health needs.
5. Stay calm. Reassure the member or athlete involved, including bystanders.
6. Model respectful behavior when you intervene.

If bullying is occurring at our club or it is reported to be occurring at our club, we address the bullying by **FINDING OUT WHAT HAPPENED** and **SUPPORTING THE MEMBER OR ATHLETE/ATHLETES INVOLVED** using the following approach:

## ***FINDING OUT WHAT HAPPENED***

### **1. First, we get the facts.**

- a. Keep all the involved children separate.
- b. Get the story from several sources, both adults and member or athlete.
- c. Listen without blaming.
- d. We don't call the act "bullying" while we 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.

- a. Review the USA Swimming definition of bullying.
- b. To determine if the behavior is bullying or something else, consider the following questions:
  - What is the history between the member or athlete involved?
  - 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?
- c. Remember it may not matter "who started it." Some members or athletes who are bullied may be seen as annoying or provoking, but this does not excuse the bullying behavior.
- d. Once you have determined if the situation is bullying, support all the members or athletes involved.

### **3. Support the members or the athletes who are being bullied**

- a. Listen and focus on the member or athlete. Learn what's been going on and show you want to help. Assure the member or athlete that bullying is not their fault.
- b. Work together to resolve the situation and protect the bullied member or athlete. The member or athlete, parents, and fellow team members and coaches may all have valuable input. It may help to:
  - Ask the child being bullied what can be done to make him or her feel safe. Remember 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.

- Develop a game plan. Maintain open communication between FAST and parents. Discuss the steps that will be taken and how bullying will be addressed going forward.

*Be persistent. Bullying may not end overnight. Commit to making it stop and consistently support the bullied child.*

#### **4. Address bullying behavior**

1. Make sure the member or athlete knows what the problem behavior is. Young people who bully must learn their behavior is wrong and harms others.
2. Show students and athletes bullying is taken seriously. Calmly tell the child bullying will not be tolerated. Model respectful behavior when addressing a problem.
3. Work with the member/athlete to understand some of the reasons he or she is bullied. For example:
  - Sometimes children bully to fit in or just to make fun of someone who is a little different from them. In other words, there may be some insecurity involved.
  - Other times a member or athlete act out because of something else—issues at home, abuse, stress—is going on in their lives. They also may have been bullied. These members or athletes may need additional support.
4. Involve the member/athlete who bullied in making amends or repairing the situation. The goal is to help them see how their actions affect others. For example, the child can:
  - Write a letter apologizing to the athlete who was bullied.
  - Do a good deed for the person who was bullied, for FAST, or for others in your community.
  - Clean up, repair, or pay for any property they damaged.
5. Avoid strategies that don't work or have negative consequences:
  - Zero tolerance or "three strikes, you're out" strategies don't work. Suspending or removing swimmers from the team who bully does not reduce bullying behavior. Swimmers may be less likely to report and address bullying if suspension or getting kicked off the team is the consequence.
  - Conflict resolution and peer mediation don't work for bullying. Bullying is not a conflict between people of equal power who share equal blame. Facing those who have bullied may further upset members or athlete(s) who have been bullied.
6. Follow-up. After the bullying issue is resolved, continue finding ways to help the member/athlete who is bullied to understand how what they do affects other

people. For example, praise acts of kindness or talk about what it means to be a good teammate.

### **5. Support bystanders who witness bullying.**

Every day, a member, or an athlete witness bullying. They want to help, but don't know how. Fortunately, there are a few simple, safe ways that athletes can help stop bullying when they see it happening:

- a. Be a friend to the person being bullied.
- b. Tell a trusted adult – your parent, coach, or any club administration.
- c. Help the member or athlete 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.

#### **Additional Resources:**

Teens: [pacerteensagainstbullying.org](http://pacerteensagainstbullying.org)

Parents: [parentcenterhub.org/bullying](http://parentcenterhub.org/bullying)

Member or athlete: [athletesagainstbullying.org](http://athletesagainstbullying.org)

All: [Stopbullying.gov](http://Stopbullying.gov)

[Stompoutbullying.org](http://Stompoutbullying.org)

[Thebullyproject.com](http://Thebullyproject.com)