

Action Plan of SouthWest Stars to Address Bullying

PURPOSE:

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at SouthWest Stars and will not be tolerated. Bullying is counterproductive to team spirit and can be devastating to a victim. SouthWest Stars 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 that bullying is happening is expected to tell a coach or administrator.

Objectives of SouthWest Stars Bullying Policy and Action Plan:

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

WHAT IS BULLYING?

The USA Swimming Code of Conduct defines bullying in section 304.3.7. Bullying is the severe or repeated use by one or more USA Swimming members of 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 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. Creating a hostile environment for the other member at any USA Swimming activity;
- iv. Infringing on the rights of the other member at any USA Swimming activity; or
- v. Materially and substantially disrupting the training process or the orderly operation of any USA Swimming activity (which for the purpose of this section shall include, without limitation, practices, workouts, and other events of a member club or LSC).

Generally, bullying is the use of aggression, whether intentional or not, which hurts another person. Bullying results in pain and distress.

Source: www.stopbullying.gov – a federal government website managed by the U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services

SOUTHWEST STARS REPORTING PROCEDURE

ATHLETE:

1. Talk to your parents
2. Talk to a coach or administrator
3. Write a letter or email a club coach or administrator.

HOW WE HANDLE BULLYING:

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

FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED:

1. Get the facts.
 - a. Keep all the involved children separate.
 - b. Get the story from several sources, both adults and kids.
 - 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.
 - f. Collect all available information.
1. Determine if it is bullying.
 - a. Review the USA Swimming definition
 - b. Consider the following questions:
 - What is the history between the kids involved?
 - Have there been past conflicts?
 - Is there a power imbalance?
 - Has this happened before?
 - c. It may not matter who started it. Some who are bullied may be seen as annoying or provoking, but this does not excuse the behavior.
 - d. Support all kids involved.

SUPPORTING THE KIDS INVOLVED:

- a. Person being bullied
 - a. Listen and focus on child. Learn what's been going on and show you want to help. Assure them it 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 them what can be done to make him or her feel safe. Changes to routine should be minimal and not forced.

- ii. Develop a game plan, maintain open communication between club and parents. Discuss steps that will be taken and how addressed going forward.
- b. Be persistent. Commit to making it stop, and consistently support the child.
- c. The Bully
 - a. Make sure they know what the problem behavior is, that it is wrong, and harms others.
 - b. Let them know it is taken seriously and won't be tolerated.
 - c. Work with them to help understand some of the reasons they bully.
 - To fit in or make fun of someone different than them, maybe some insecurity involved.
 - Issues at home, abuse, stress, maybe they have been bullied (warrants additional support).
- b. Involve them in making amends or repairing the situation. The goal is to help them see how their actions affect others.
 - Write a letter apologizing to the bullied person
 - Do a good deed for the person, for the club, or for others in community.
 - Clean up, repair, or pay for any property damage.
 - b. Avoid negative consequences:
 - Zero tolerance or "three strikes you're out"
 - Suspending or removing from team
 - Conflict resolution and peer mediation do not work because there is not equal power or blame
 - b. Follow up. Continue to find ways to help how actions affect others. Praise for acts of kindness or talk about what it means to be a good teammate.
- b. Bystanders/Witnesses – review techniques to use when witnessing bullying
 - a. Be a friend
 - b. Tell a trusted adult
 - c. Help the kid being bullied get away from situation, create a distraction
 - d. Set a good example by not bullying others
 - e. Don't give the bully an audience – just walk away.

DEVELOP A SAFETY PLAN - This is an accountability tool to help the child demonstrate appropriate behavior and must include the following:

1. Completed with aggressor child and his/her parents
2. Contain behavioral expectations
3. Include consequences for behavior that violates the plan
4. Specify the duration of the safety plan
5. Is private, but not confidential

Through the structured safety plan, the goal is to prevent future abusive situations from happening while emphasizing an educational approach that can allow the child who demonstrated inappropriate behavior to remain on the team and learn to make better choices in the future. (Safety Plan Worksheets are available in the Swim Office)