



Starting September 1, 2021, all USA Swimming member clubs and LSCs are required to implement the updated Minor Athlete Abuse Protection Policy (MAAPP) in full. This resource is intended to provide information to the Electronic Communication section of the policy.

Electronic Communications

Private electronic communications between an Adult Participant and a minor athlete present an opportunity for the Adult Participant to initiate grooming behaviors that may lead to abuse. Just as one-on-one interactions between an Adult Participant and a minor athlete must be observable and interruptible, any communications between an Adult Participant and a minor athlete should be open and transparent. Additionally, electronic communications between an Adult Participant and a minor athlete must involve the minor's legal guardian and take place during reasonable hours.

Before MAAPP, USA Swimming rules required every team establish a social media/electronic communication policy. This section of MAAPP replaces that requirement. Members will note that this section of the MAAPP is similar to the USA Swimming's previous Model Policy on Electronic Communication and published Best Practice Guidelines.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: If an athlete member turns 18 years old and becomes an Adult Participant, can that athlete member still communicate with minor athlete friends and teammates through social media and electronic communication?

A: If the adult athlete does not have authority over the minor athlete, and is no more than four years older than the minor athlete, they can communicate one-on-one with the minor athlete. If the adult athlete does not meet this exception, the adult athlete will need have to follow the electronic communications section of MAAPP.

Q: How should an Adult Participant respond if they receive a call or text from a minor athlete?

A: The Adult Participant should include the minor athlete's parent/legal guardian unless another exception applies.

Q: What does Electronic Communication include?

A: Electronic communication includes but is not limited to phone calls, video calls, texts, social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, Snapchat, etc.), fitness applications, emails, and direct messaging that occurs between an Adult Participant and Minor Athlete(s).

Q: Can our team still use our Electronic Communication Policy instead of this one?

A: No, you cannot use the Electronic Communication Policy that you have had to this point. Every team is required to adopt this policy, including the Social Media and Electronic Communications section, in full.

Q: Are minor athletes still allowed to follow their favorite celebrity swimmer on a fan page?

A: Yes, under the policy, a minor athlete can follow or friend a celebrity swimmers fan page.

Q: What do I do about my pre-existing social media connections with minor athletes?

A: Adult Participants are required to discontinue existing social media connections with minor athletes.

Q: When does a minor athlete's legal guardian need to be copied on an electronic communication to a minor athlete?

A: An Adult Participant with authority over minor athletes must not send a one-on-one communication to a minor athlete. A minor athlete's legal guardian must be copied on an electronic communication sent by an Adult Participant with authority over minor athletes to the minor athlete.

Q: How should an Adult Participant communicate with the team or a group of minor athletes?

A: If an Adult Participant sends a message to a group of minor athletes or an entire team, another Adult Participant must be copied on the communication. It is not required that each minor athlete's legal



guardian be copied on an electronic communication sent by an Adult Participant to a group of minor athletes or an entire team.

Q: What would be an emergency circumstance?

A: An emergency circumstance should be an isolated incident that is an objectively reasonable emergency in order to justify an electronic communication sent outside of 5:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m. An example would be to notify the team that early morning practice is cancelled at the last minute.

Q: Can a team change the hours during which electronic communications can be sent to a time period other than 5:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.?

A: No.

Q: Can an LSC send communications to a committee including an athlete representative outside of 5:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.?

A: No. LSC staff and board members are Adult Participants with authority over minor athletes. Electronic communications sent to minor athletes must only be sent between the hours of 5:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m.

Q: Can an LSC or USA Swimming committee with minor athlete representatives conduct a telephone or videoconference meeting after 9:00p.m.?

A: Telephones and videoconferences are considered electronic communications and are not permitted to be conducted with a minor athlete between the hours of 9:00p.m. – 5:00a.m.

Q: What participant's time zone does this apply to?

A: The time zone where the minor athlete is located.