



## A Guide to HCA Swimming

2025

# HILL COUNTRY AQUATICS TEAM HANDBOOK

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## **WELCOME LETTER**

Welcome to Hill Country Aquatics! Whether you're a first-time swim parent or a swim team veteran, we're thrilled to have you join our swimming family. This handbook outlines our team philosophy, expectations, policies, and practices to ensure a positive and successful experience for every swimmer and family.

– The HCA Coaching Staff

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## **ABOUT HILL COUNTRY AQUATICS**

Hill Country Aquatics trains at the St. Stephen's Aquatic Center located on the St. Stephen's Episcopal School campus at 6500 St. Stephen's Dr. in Austin, Texas. The St. Stephen's Aquatic Center, completed in the fall of 2025, houses a fifty-meter Myrtha pool that features 22 lanes of 25 yards (short course) and 8 lanes of 50 meters (long course) training and swimming. The state-of-the-art facility provides a unique and scenic training environment for all HCA swimmers and plenty of space for spectators.

Hill Country Aquatics exists to offer programs for various segments of the community, including:

- Year-round/USA Swimming
- Clinics
- Camps
- Private Lessons
- College training
- Year-round Masters Swimming

All programs operate under the parent company, Hill Country Aquatics, LLC , Inc., a limited liability corporation.

### **Mission Statement**

To train smarter, swim faster and work harder while enjoying every moment of it.

### **Vision Statement**

To inspire both the current and future generations of swimmers to chase their dreams, and to provide those swimmers the tools and training to achieve them.

### **Core Values**

- Perseverance
- Community
- Creativity

- Passion
- Achievement

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## ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

### Coaching Staff

Our coaches are certified by USA Swimming and the American Swimming Coaches Association. They prioritize athlete development, safety, and a positive training culture.

### Affiliations

USA Swimming ([www.usaswimming.org](http://www.usaswimming.org)) is the national governing body for amateur competitive swimming. USA swimming sets rules for competitions, implements policies, conducts national championship meets, and selects athletes to represent the United States in international competitions. USA Swimming requires coaches and officials to be certified according to its standards. USA Swimming is divided into Local Swimming Committees (LSC), which administer USA Swimming activities in smaller geographical areas.

All Hill Country Aquatics swimmers are registered with USA swimming.

The Local Swimming Committee (LSC) is the local level of USA Swimming. Each LSC is a separate entity that acts on behalf of USA swimming on the local level. To learn more about our LSC, South Texas, visit [www.stxswim.org](http://www.stxswim.org).

***Hill Country Aquatics fully supports all measures adopted by the US Center for Safe Sport and USA Swimming, with the sole purpose of protecting all athletes from any form of abuse or mistreatment.***

### Legal Status

Hill Country Aquatics is a limited liability corporation established in 2025.

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## MEMBERSHIP

Hill Country Aquatics is for competitive swimmers. All new members should have competitive experience and be technically proficient in all strokes, as well as starts and turns. Try-outs will be scheduled in August (see [www.hillcountryaquatics.com](http://www.hillcountryaquatics.com) for details) and throughout the year by contacting us at [admin@hillcountryaquatics.com](mailto:admin@hillcountryaquatics.com)

All members of Hill Country Aquatics are expected to:

- Train on a regular basis
- Be training and goal-oriented
- Participate in scheduled meets and team activities

## Group Placement

Swimmers are assigned to practice groups based on skill, age, commitment and level of development, in order to provide them the best opportunity for personal and athletic growth. Coaches use the same criteria when considering the best time to progress a swimmer from one group to the next. Group sizes are also taken into consideration in order to ensure high quality coaching and safety during practices. **Advancement occurs at coaches' discretion.**

The criteria used in placing swimmers in their respective groups will include:

- Performance level
- Attendance/workout commitment history
- Ability to train at full capacity, with training discipline and focus
- Personal and athletic maturity
- Meet commitment
- Team support
- Technique
- Injury

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## GROUP DESCRIPTIONS

### Explorer Group

**Age Range:** Typically 10 and under

This is where it all starts. Swimmers dive into the world of technique and fun, while making new friends and learning to love the sport of swimming.

#### Focus Areas:

- Become proficient in all four competitive strokes
- Build balance, breath control, proper streamlining, and turns
- Learn through games, drills, and encouragement
- **Team Concepts:** Swimmers celebrate each other, cheer often, and begin to understand the meaning of team spirit.

**Dryland:** Agility, core strength and posture, coordination, and athletic movement..

## Adventurer Group

### **Age Range:** Typically 10 to 13

Now that the foundation is strong, it's time to dig deeper. Training gets a little tougher, goals get clearer, and swimmers start to see how purposeful training and hard work pay off.

#### **Focus Areas:**

- Maintain stroke technique under increasing workloads
- Develop mental focus, race preparation, and accountability
- Begin to understand the how effort translates into performance
- Team Concepts: Swimmers learn how to support — and be supported by — each other. Teammates encourage each other through the grind, and learn how to be reliable and inspirational training partners.
- Dryland: Bodyweight strength, mobility, agility training, and posture-based movement.

## Challenger Group

### **Age Range:** Typically 11 to 14

This is where swimmers become students of the sport. Training becomes more intentional and strategic. Athletes begin refining the skills that separate competitors from champions — while investing in the success of their teammates.

#### **Focus Areas:**

- Refine technique: starts, turns, underwaters, and transitions
- Build speed, endurance, and tactical race strategies
- Increase ownership of both training and development
- Team Concepts: Swimmers are expected to lead through their actions — creating energy in practice and demonstrating how individual effort impacts the team.
- Dryland: Functional strength, resistance tools (e.g., med balls, cords), mobility, and injury prevention.

## High Performance Prep Group

### **Age Range:** Typically 11 to 14

This is where swimmers become students of the sport. Training becomes more intentional and strategic. Athletes begin refining the skills that separate competitors from champions — while investing in the success of their teammates.

#### **Focus Areas:**

- Refine technique: starts, turns, underwaters, and transitions
- Build speed, endurance, and tactical race strategies
- Increase ownership of both training and development

- **Team Concepts:** Swimmers are expected to lead through their actions — creating energy in practice and demonstrating how individual effort impacts the team.
- **Dryland:** Functional strength, resistance tools (e.g., med balls, cords), mobility, and injury prevention.

## Senior Group

**Age Range:** Typically 15 and up

This group trains with intention. They understand the value of hard work, the rhythm of consistent training, and the discipline required to progress and achieve.

### Focus Areas:

- Emphasize IM development, race pace work, and aerobic power
- Sharpen race-day execution and technical consistency
- Increased focus on both mental and physical preparation
- **Team Concepts:** Swimmers are expected to lead by example, mentor younger teammates, and elevate team standards through their actions.
- **Dryland:** Structured strength and conditioning focused on explosive movement, mobility, and long-term performance.

## High Performance Group

**Age Range:** Typically 15 and up

This is where it all comes together — skill, mindset, consistency and strengthening team culture. HP swimmers are focused, driven and fully committed to their goals. The HP Group embodies HCA's team identity.

### Focus Areas:

- High-intensity race-focused training
- Continue to refine technique, pacing, and meet preparation
- Target qualifying meets: Futures, Junior Nationals and beyond
- **Team Concepts:** HP sets the tone for the entire team — leading with purpose, integrity, and pride in HCA.
- **Dryland:** Advanced power and strength training with access to the St. Stephen's Spartan Fitness Center.

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## TRAINING GUIDELINES

## Training Schedules

Workout and meet schedules are posted on the team website. There are two different workout schedules throughout the year (with slight adjustments):

Fall/Spring Schedule – September to May

Summer Schedule - June to August (coincides with summer break from school) Workouts are held during most holidays

Hill Country Aquatics (per USA Swimming guidelines) observes a one week break from workouts at the conclusion of the short course season and a two week break at the conclusion of long course season in August.

The meet schedule is subject to change throughout the year.

## Practice Expectations

Practice is the most important aspect to a successful swimming season! Regular, consistent attendance is the best way to get the full training experience. Each group has a training plan for the season, and each practice is purposeful, planned and important. Our coaches take attendance at each practice. Please email your group coach if you will be absent from practice.

## Athlete Expectations

- Arrive early to the start of practice.
- Come prepared; bring all equipment to every session including gear and a water bottle.
- Cell phones, iPad or other electronic devices should not be brought on the pool deck or used in the locker rooms. Taking/recording photos or videos in the locker rooms is strictly prohibited.
- Swimmers must respect their teammates and their belongings, and always keep their hands to themselves.
- Proper attire: traditional training suit (polyester or lycra, one piece for girls, jammer or briefs for boys) Hill Country Aquatics cap worn at all practices, appropriate goggles.
- Follow all facility rules: no running on deck, no glass on the pool deck, no hanging on the lane lines, appropriate locker room behavior.
- When on deck before or after practice swimmers should keep their voices low and remain in the area designated by the coach, etc.
- When a Coach is speaking, the athlete is not speaking. The athlete should listen with their eyes and ears and face the coach when speaking.
- Swimmers may NOT exit the pool during practice, unless instructed by the coach, or with permission from the coach.
- Swimmers are responsible for cleaning up everything brought to training or left on deck during a session.
- Outside lessons – While common in rec swimming, outside lessons are strongly discouraged for many reasons. Any technical need should be addressed with the

primary coach. With outside lessons, swimmers are receiving instruction from individuals who do not see them train on a daily basis and who do not know what is being taught by the primary coach of the athlete. Swimmers can become confused with conflicting information, language or strategies. Additionally, the staff at Hill Country Aquatics is very experienced technically and fully capable of addressing any technical need.

## **Parent Expectations**

- ***Videotaping and taking pictures are strictly prohibited during training at both facilities***
- Families are responsible for all information provided in the team handbook and weekly newsletter.
- Parents/guardians are NOT allowed on the pool deck during training.
- Parents should not distract their children during training.
- Parents are not required to observe practice, but are welcome to.
- Parents should always be supportive and interested in their athletes' training, but should not criticize a child for their swimming performance at practice.
- Parents should not approach a coach during practice. Please email your group coach to discuss any issues, or set a time to meet.
- Allow coaches to critique, correct and coach.

## **Attire**

Hill Country Aquatics team caps are required in workout at all times. A coach can provide a swimmer with a team cap if one is needed. Swimsuits should be worn appropriately (addressed above).

## **Equipment**

Swimmers are required to have training equipment with them daily. Training equipment is designated by the staff for each group. Training equipment includes such items as kickboards, pull buoys, fins, paddles, snorkel, parachutes, resistance equipment, and specialty devices and will vary by group. These items can be purchased at our team store on line or in person at Swim Freak or . See equipment requirements by group listed below.

### ***Equipment by Group:***

#### **Explorer**

Fins  
Snorkel  
Kickboard  
Pull Buoy  
HCA Cap  
Mesh Equipment Bag  
Jump Rope  
HCA Team Suit

**Adventurer**

Fins  
Snorkel  
Kickboard  
Pull Buoy  
Hand Paddles  
HCA Cap  
Mesh Equipment Bag  
Jump Rope  
HCA Team Suit

**Challenger**

Fins  
Snorkel  
Kickboard  
Pull Buoy  
Hand Paddles  
HCA Cap  
Mesh Equipment Bag  
Jump Rope  
HCA Team Suit

**High Performance Prep**

Fins  
Snorkel  
Kickboard  
Pull Buoy  
Hand Paddles  
Tempo Trainer  
HCA Cap  
Mesh Equipment Bag  
Jump Rope  
HCA Team Suit

**Senior**

Fins  
Snorkel  
Kickboard  
Pull Buoy  
Hand Paddles  
Tempo Trainer  
HCA Cap

Mesh Equipment Bag  
Jump Rope  
HCA Team Suit

### **High Performance**

Fins  
Snorkel  
Kickboard  
Pull Buoy  
Hand Paddles  
Tempo Trainer  
HCA Cap  
Mesh Equipment Bag  
Jump Rope  
HCA Team Suit

Note - Some groups will also frequently use resistance bands and power training equipment such as The Brick kickboard, but those items will be provided by HCA.

### **Private Lessons**

Hill Country Aquatics offers private instruction to its members by our coaching staff, both full-time and part-time. Private lessons can be an excellent way to help your child improve their technique in a focused, one-on-one setting and are recommended for athletes looking to fix one area of their technique. Although lessons can be beneficial for many swimmers, private instruction does NOT replace training and should not be used as such. Private lessons can be helpful when taken in addition to regular training. Please note however, that too many private lessons in addition to training, is against Hill Country Aquatics policy and can be detrimental to a young swimmer's mental and physical training in the pool. You can sign up for lessons through the Hill Country Aquatics website under the "Private Lessons" tab.

#### *Pricing:*

Private Lesson: 30 Minute Lesson \$88  
Private Lesson with Underwater Video: 30 Minute Lesson \$125

#### *Booking Policy:*

Swimmers are permitted to take 1 lesson every 2 weeks, or 2 lessons every month. This policy ensures that no swimmer can monopolize a specific date or time for lessons, and allows for more swimmers to have the opportunity to take lessons. Swimmers are recommended to take lessons with their coach, or with another coach on a consistent basis. If a swimmer is to take a lesson with another coach, we ask that you notify their group coach.

## **College Swimmers**

Hill Country Aquatics offers various membership options for college swimmers. These range from full-time (including all breaks and the summer long-course training and competing), to part-time (school breaks with no summer training or competition). All college swimmers, regardless of the program or commitment, are required by USA Swimming to be registered with Hill Country Aquatics and USA Swimming, and to be fully compliant with the USA Swimming Safe Sport Requirements for adult athletes.

## **Masters**

Hill Country Aquatics runs a USMS (United States Masters Swimming) program at the St. Stephen's Aquatic Center. For more information, please see the Hill Country Aquatics website.

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## **COMPETITION**

### **Meet Schedule / Plan**

In August of each year, the staff will prepare a competition schedule for our swimmers. This will be based on meets scheduled in the South Texas LSC, as well as the training and championship meet cycles that the coaches set for each group.

### **Philosophy**

The competition schedule is planned by the coaches with the following in mind:

- Competition in accordance with the training cycles for the year (September – August)
- Peak meet focus, i.e., winter, spring, and summer
- To allow the coaches to observe athletes in race situations
- To allow swimmers to develop in meet and race situations (race experience)
- To support swimmers to have the best “peak” opportunities in terms of calendar timing, location/facility, meet competitiveness, and finals opportunities

### **Team Meets**

We ask that all swimmers and families respect the meet schedule set by the staff and make every effort to attend these meets. Please let the coach know in advance if there is a conflict. The team attends on average one to two meets per month, with fewer meets held during the December – January period. This presents limited opportunities to “practice” racing (pace, walls, technique, etc.), as well as to develop the skills necessary to be proficient at meet management (warm-up, warm-down, race prep, team support, etc.).

Many meets are impacted and limited in entries. It is common that meets “close” without notice before the stated entry deadline – sometimes soon after they open. Families will be notified by email when a meet opens, and it is their responsibility to enter their swimmer before it closes. Families should assume that neither they nor the coaches have any recourse once a meet closes – even a Hill Country Aquatics -hosted meet.

While on occasion a swimmer may want to enter a meet other than those listed on the schedule, it is not conducive to the team and to the meet plan to have swimmers competing in meets that we do not attend as a team.

## **National Meets**

The Hill Country Aquatics High Performance group will typically attend two to three “national-level” meets each year. These are run by USA Swimming and include Junior Nationals (December and August), Futures (July), and Sectionals (March and July). These meets have competitive qualifying times and are events are entered by the coaches.

## **Meet Entry / Standards**

Time standards can be found on the South Texas LSC website ([stswim.org](http://stswim.org)), under Athletes. Other than a select few team/national meets, all families are required to enter meets on their own. This will be done using our team portal which can be accessed through [www.hillcountryaquatics.com](http://www.hillcountryaquatics.com).

The coaches may advise swimmers as to which events to swim. If the coaches do not, it is always recommended to enter a full range of events (3-4 per day), including longer distance events and “off stroke” events, as well as the IM. Younger swimmers are especially encouraged to have an “all-stroke” mentality when competing, as opposed to fixating simply on their primary strokes. Swimmers can scratch events at a meet as needed, and if deemed appropriate by the coach.

## **OR**

Coaches are responsible for choosing and entering all athletes into the swim meets once they are registered. Swimmers may suggest event preferences, but all final event schedules are at the discretion of the coaching staff.

## **Swimmer Meet Expectations**

- Swimmers are expected to take part in the team dynamic warm up and team cheer.
- Swimmers are expected to be engaged in the meet and limit cell phone usage.
- Swimmers should not leave the pool deck or specified team areas during competition without informing the coach; swimmers and parents should not be meeting during the session.
- Swimmers should treat all coaches, officials and meet staff with respect and gratitude.

## Parent Meet Expectations

- Parents should ensure their swimmer arrives on time and prepared for all meets.
- Parents should support their swimmers in a positive manner.
- Parents are not allowed on the pool deck or the designated team area during swim meets. o Parents should not call/text or distract swimmers during swim meets.
- Parents should never contact the meet host team or personnel.
- Parents may be asked to work as a timer, official, or in other aspects of swim meets, particularly during home meets.

## Swim Meet Best Practices

- Be sure to write down the warm-up times, start times, directions and the events so that you arrive at the meet on time and properly prepared.
- When attending a meet where a heat sheet is printed, make sure your name, events and entry times are listed correctly. Report any errors you may find to the coach immediately.
- Be early! Every swimmer should arrive at a meet at least 15 minutes before the scheduled warmup time and must say goodbye to their coach prior to leaving a meet. (To ensure swimmers don't accidentally leave before an event or relay).
- Items to bring: two or more towels, team suit, team cap, warm-ups or sweats, extra shirt, shoes (i.e. Crocs or sneakers) and goggles. Swimmers may also bring playing cards, books, or small games to longer meets.
- Swimmers are strongly encouraged to use their cell phone ONLY to listen to music during a meet.
- Nutritional snacks are encouraged. To prevent dehydration, fluids need to be consumed during the meet. Water or Gatorade (diluted) is best – we ask that the swimmers avoid candy and sodas.

*Before you leave any swim meet, make sure you:*

- Are not in another event or relay.
- Have cleaned up your area.
- Have all your belongings.
- Say goodbye to your coach.

## Team Area

Team areas are typically established on a first-come basis at meets. For some meets, we ask for assistance from team families in transporting pop-up shelters for our swimmers. All swimmers should remain with the team during the meet. At the conclusion of all meets, Hill Country Aquatics swimmers should either clean up the team area at away meets or assist with “take-down” for team-hosted meets.

## Attire

All swimmers should be in team attire which includes the Hill Country Aquatics cap, designated team shirt, team warm-up jacket and pants, and team backpack. Team parkas and other warm attire should be added for rain and cold as needed.

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## SERVICE POLICY

Our team is able to run due to the hard work and involvement of our parents and families. Over the course of a year, Hill Country Aquatics families will be required to complete 12 service hours of their time to help meets and events run smoothly. Failure to meet the 12-hour requirement will result in a fee of \$25 per hour collected at the end of the summer season. There are many different ways to fulfill this requirement:

### Meet Support

- Timers- at swim meets, timers are assigned to specific lanes and help accurately record the swimmer's times.
- Hospitality- at each home meet, Hill Country Aquatics will be required to provide and distribute food for all volunteers and coaches. You can work with hospitality by managing requested food/drink items, or working the hospitality room.
- Officiate- become a certified USA Swimming official.
- Home meet needs: - Service coordinator - Awards table - Computer system assistance - Runner - Safety marshal

### Team Events Support

As a part of our big picture philosophy, we want to create the best overall swim team experience for our swimmers. We realize that the majority of the experience will come from daily training, swimmer development, friends, and the coach/swimmer relationship, but ***positive social activities certainly enhance the cohesion and enthusiasm of the team.*** Hill Country Aquatics will host events including teambuilding activities, theme weeks, team breakfasts, holiday get-togethers, parent socials, and a year-end banquet.

In August or September, we open job sign-ups for all social events planned through the fall. Families receive an email notification when these sign-ups are scheduled to open. As the next set of events solidifies, we will send out another request for volunteers. We cannot hold these events without a full complement of volunteers, so every family should assume that they will need to fill at least one social job during the course of the year. There is no buy-out option, nor is it appropriate to hire subs for social jobs. The jobs are varied and can be fun, and they offer a great way to meet other parents on the team. We keep track of the families as they fulfill this obligation, so as soon as you see a job that appeals and works with your schedule, you are encouraged to sign-up!

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## TEAM COMMUNICATION

Direct, accurate and **USA Swimming MAAP** compliant communication between the athletes, coaches, and parents is critical to everyone's success and enjoyment. We use many methods of communication to keep all swimmers and families up to date.

**Team Newsletter** - the team newsletter is sent out weekly on **Tuesday** mornings. This is where you can find information about upcoming events, schedule changes and important news. Please read the newsletter each week! All swimmers and families are responsible for the information provided each week in the newsletter. This will be your best guide to all things Hill Country Aquatics.

**Team Website** - [hillcountryswim.com](http://hillcountryswim.com) has information on swim meets, schedules, and many other important topics.

**Group Coach** - If you have a question that cannot be answered through the newsletter or team website, please contact your group coach via email.

**Group Parent** - Each season a parent will be appointed "Group Parent" for each training group. This person is a veteran of the team and will be willing and able to answer questions about Hill Country Aquatics.

**Social Media** - For meet recaps and season highlights, be sure to follow our Instagram account (@hillcountryaquatics).

- Everyone in the Hill Country Aquatics community must exhibit ethical, responsible, and inclusive conduct in all online communications and activities, and respect the rights and privacy of all other athletes.
- Hill Country Aquatics expressly prohibits cyberbullying or cyberstalking of any Hill Country Aquatics athlete by any means or method, including but not limited to the use of Facebook, Instagram, text messaging, instant messaging, Twitter, email, and Snapchat.
- Cyberbullying and cyberstalking are unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Coaches reserve the right to implement particular usage restrictions depending on the nature of the activity/event.

In line with our value of developing responsibility and accountability, we ask that communication to coaches regarding schedule, missed practices, meet entries etc. should come directly from swimmers placed in the high school age groups and above. Any email communication from an athlete must have a parent CC'd to protect the athlete and coach.

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## ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

Hill Country Aquatics recognizes the prevalence of electronic communication and social media in today's world. Many of our swimmers use these means as their primary method of communication. While Hill Country Aquatics acknowledges the value of these methods of communication, we also realize that there are associated risks that must be considered when adults use these methods to communicate with minors.

All communications between a coach or other adult and an athlete must be professional in nature and for the purpose of communicating information about team activities. The content and intent of all electronic communications must adhere to the USA Swimming Code of Conduct regarding Athlete Protection. For example, as with any communication with an athlete, electronic communication should not contain or relate to any of the following:

- drugs or alcohol use
- sexually oriented conversation; sexually explicit language; sexual activity
- the adult's personal life , social activities, relationship or family issues, or personal problems; and inappropriate or sexually explicit pictures

*Note: Any communication concerning an athlete's personal life, social activities, relationship or family issues or personal problems must be transparent, accessible and professional.*

Whether one is an athlete, coach, board member or parent, the guiding principle to always use in communication is to ask: "Is this communication something that someone else would find appropriate or acceptable in a face-to-face meeting?" or "Is this something you would be comfortable saying out loud to the intended recipient of your communication in front of the intended recipient's parents, the coaching staff, the board, or other athletes?" With respect to electronic communications, a simple test that can be used in most cases is whether the electronic communication with swimmers is **Transparent, Accessible and Professional**.

**Transparent:** All electronic communication between coaches and athletes should be transparent. Your communication should not only be clear and direct, but also free of hidden meanings, innuendo and expectations.

**Accessible:** All electronic communication between coaches and athletes should be considered a matter of record and part of Hill Country Aquatics records. Whenever possible, include another coach or parent in the communication so that there is no question regarding accessibility.

**Professional:** All electronic communication between a coach and an athlete should be conducted professionally as a representative of Hill Country Aquatics. This includes word choices, tone, grammar, and subject matter that model the standards and integrity of a staff member. If your communication meets all three of the T.A.P. criteria, then it is likely your method of communication with athletes will be appropriate.

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## SAFE SPORT AND ATHLETE PROTECTION

Hill Country Aquatics follows all USA Swimming Safe Sport guidelines, including the Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policies (see complete **MAAPP Compliance 2025** document in Appendix) and the protocols in the following sections.

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### Hill Country Aquatics Plan to Address Bullying

*The following is a model procedure to implement the USA Swimming rule prohibiting bullying, which is provided to assist USA Swimming member clubs in developing their own procedure. USA Swimming clubs are required to have an action plan to address bullying and the plan must be reviewed with and agreed to by all athletes, parents, coaches, and other adults at Hill Country Aquatics.*

#### Action Plan of Hill Country Aquatics to Address Bullying

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at Hill Country Aquatics and will not be tolerated. Bullying is counterproductive to team spirit and can be devastating to a victim. Hill Country Aquatics is committed to providing a safe, caring and friendly environment for all of 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, board member or athlete/mentor.

Objectives of Hill Country Aquatics' Bullying Policy and Action Plan:

1. To make it clear that Hill Country Aquatics will not tolerate bullying in any form.
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 Hill Country Aquatics 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 prohibits bullying. Generally, bullying is the use of aggression, 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 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 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:

- Talk to your parents;
- Talk to a Hill Country Aquatics Coach or other designated individual;
- Write a letter or email to the Hill Country Aquatics Coach or other designated individual;
- 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 that memories are fresh and behavior can be accurately recalled and the bullying behavior can be stopped as soon as possible.

### **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 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.

If bullying is occurring at Hill Country Aquatics or it is reported to be occurring at our club, we address the bullying by **FINDING OUT WHAT HAPPENED** and **SUPPORTING THE KIDS 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 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. 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 kids 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 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.
- d. Once you have determined if the situation is bullying, support all of the kids involved.

***SUPPORTING THE KIDS INVOLVED***

**3. Support the kids who are being bullied**

- 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.

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

- a. Make sure the child knows what the problem behavior is. Young people who bully must learn their behavior is wrong and harms others.
- b. Show kids that bullying is taken seriously. Calmly tell the child that bullying will not be tolerated. Model respectful behavior when addressing the problem.
- c. Work with the child to understand some of the reasons he or she bullied.  
For example:
  - i. 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.
  - ii. 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.
- d. Involve the kid 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:
  - i. Write a letter apologizing to the athlete who was bullied.
  - ii. Do a good deed for the person who was bullied, for Hill Country Aquatics, or for others in your community.
  - iii. Clean up, repair, or pay for any property they damaged.
- e. Avoid strategies that don't work or have negative consequences:
  - i. Zero tolerance or “three strikes, you’re out” strategies don’t work. Suspending or removing from the team swimmers 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.
  - ii. 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 kids who have been bullied.
- f. 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. 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, kids 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 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.

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.

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## **Codes of Conduct**

### **Athlete Code of Conduct**

This code of conduct is based on the USA Swimming Safe Sport Model Athlete code of conduct. The purpose of the Athlete Code of Conduct is to establish a consistent expectation for athletes' behaviors. By signing this code of conduct, I agree to the following statements:

- I will respect and show courtesy to my teammates and coaches at all times.
- I will demonstrate good sportsmanship at all practices and meets.
- I will set a good example of behavior and work ethic for my younger teammates.
- I will be respectful of my teammates' feelings and personal space. Swimmers who exhibit sexist, racist, homophobic, or otherwise inappropriate behavior will be faced with consequences.
- I will attend all team meetings and training sessions, unless I am excused by my coach.
- I will show respect for all facilities and other property (including locker rooms) used during practices, competitions, and team activities.
- I will refrain from inappropriate language, violence, behavior deemed dishonest, offensive, or illegal.
- If I disagree with an official's call, I will talk with my coach and not approach the official directly.
- I will obey all of USA Swimming's rules and codes of conduct.

### **Parent Code of Conduct**

This code of conduct is based on the USA Swimming Safe Sport Model Parent/Guardian code of conduct. The purpose of a code of conduct for parents is to establish consistent expectations

for behavior by parents. As a parent/guardian, I understand the important growth and developmental support that my child's participation fosters. I also understand that it is essential to provide the coaching staff with respect and the authority to coach the team. I agree with the following statements:

- I will set the right example for our children by demonstrating sportsmanship and showing respect and common courtesy at all times to the team members, coaches, competitors, officials, parents, and all facilities.
- I will get involved by volunteering and supporting the team as needed.
- I will refrain from coaching my child from the stands during practices or meets. I will address any performance-related questions to my swimmer's assigned coach.
- I will first direct any concerns to my swimmer's assigned coach and then, if not satisfied, to the Head Coach or Hill Country Aquatics leadership, as appropriate.
- I will respect the integrity of the officials.
- I will have positive and productive dialogue with my child as it relates to the team philosophy and long-term development.
- I will familiarize myself with the Hill Country Aquatics Handbook, as it relates to parent policies and procedures.

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## **Disciplinary Action & Grievance Procedures**

The Hill Country Aquatics Grievance Procedure provides swimmers, parents, coaches, club leaders and employees a system to address and report grievances in a productive, systematic way. Following these Procedures provides the appropriate parties a means to properly investigate, intervene, and take disciplinary action when needed.

### **WHERE TO REPORT:**

For issues dealing with sexual misconduct, sexual harassment and/or sexually explicit or inappropriate communication through social media:

- U.S. Center for SafeSport: 720-524-5640 or <https://safesport.i-sight.com/portal>

For issues dealing with physical abuse, emotional abuse, criminal charges and the use, sale or distribution of illegal drugs:

- USA Swimming Safe Sport: [safesport@usaswimming.org](mailto:safesport@usaswimming.org) or <https://fs22.formsite.com/usaswimming/form10/index.html>

For issues dealing with known or suspected child abuse:

- **Austin Police Department at 512-974-2000**

For issues dealing with peer-to-peer bullying, coach-athlete bullying, parent issues, violations of the Hill Country Aquatics Code of Conduct and violations of the Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policy.

- **Following the procedures outlined below with Hill Country Aquatic.**

### **WHOM TO NOTIFY OF A GRIEVANCE (Chain of Command)**

#### ***Regarding the Conduct of a Swimmer - Contact the swimmer's Group Coach***

- Should a parent or swimmer feel another swimmer's conduct is inappropriate or violates the Hill Country Aquatics Code of Conduct, the parent/swimmer should discuss these concerns with the coach of the swimmer responsible for the violation (Responsible Coach). This complaint should be made in person or in writing. Coaches will ensure the Hill Country Aquatics head coach is notified of the complaint and will participate in assessing behavior.

#### ***Regarding the Conduct of an Assistant or Age Group Coach - Contact the Head Coach***

- Should a parent or swimmer feel an Assistant or Age Group Coach's conduct is inappropriate or in violation of any Club policies or procedures, the parent/swimmer should notify the Head Coach of this violation. This complaint should be made in person or in writing. The Head Coach will ensure that the Hill Country Aquatics club owner is notified of the complaint and will participate in assessing behavior.

#### ***Regarding Conduct of Head Coach – Notify the the Head Age Group Coach***

- Should a parent or swimmer feel the Head Coach's conduct is inappropriate or violates any Club policies or procedures, the parent/swimmer should notify the Head Age Group Coach of this violation. This complaint should be made in person or in writing.

#### ***Regarding Parent or Official Conduct - Notify the Head Coach***

- Should a parent or swimmer feel another Hill Country Aquatics parent's or an official's conduct is inappropriate or violates any Club policies or procedures, the parent/swimmer should notify the Head Coach of this violation in person or in writing.

**Note:** With the exception of issues which immediately affect the health and safety of swimmers, all matters should be discussed before or after a coaching session, as coaches should not be expected to deal with issues during water time.

### **HOW GRIEVANCES WILL BE HANDLED**

*The Head Coach has the authority to impose penalties for infractions of Hill Country Aquatics Athlete, Parent and Coach Codes of Conduct or any behavior(s) they deem not conducive to the best interests of the Club or other swimmers. Consequences are at the sole discretion of the coaches and may include, but aren't limited to, verbal warnings, dismissal from practice, contacting parents, temporary suspension from club activities and expulsion. Involved parties will be informed of the processes and range of potential consequences. The U.S. Center for SafeSport, USA Swimming and local law enforcement (if applicable) will be contacted within 24 hours if a coach, parent, or swimmer violates the SafeSport Code for the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Movements, the USA Swimming Code of Conduct, Athlete Protection Policy, or local laws.*

1. Gathering Information: The appropriate individuals will contact the person who filed the grievance, and the person against whom the grievance is being filed, to ask questions about what happened. In addition, other witnesses may be contacted for more information. All information will be recorded on the [insert team name] grievance procedure form.
2. Assessing Behavior: The behavior of the person(s) against which the grievance was brought, will be assessed using club policies and facility rules, USA Swimming Code of Conduct, USA Swimming Safe Sport policies, as well as applicable local and state laws.
3. Consequences will be given and disciplinary action will be taken, if appropriate. These consequences and disciplinary actions will be decided using the following general guidelines:
  - a. Nature of the misconduct
  - b. Severity of the misconduct
  - c. Prior disciplinary actions
  - d. Adverse effect of the misconduct
  - e. Application of the Code of Conduct

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### **Photography & Video Policy**

There has been much talk about whether it is safe to have images taken of children participating in sports. While the great majority of images are appropriate and are taken in good faith, it is a fact that images can be misused and children can be put at risk if common- sense procedures are not observed.

The publishing of a photograph of swimmers under 18 either on a notice board or in a published article or video recording (including video streaming) of swimming competitions ("publication") should only be done with parents' consent per the attached form.

A parent or guardian has a right to refuse to have children photographed. The exercise of this right of refusal cannot be used as grounds for refusing entry into a swimming

competition. Therefore, any photo that may go to press or on a notice board, be it through a member of the club or official photographer, should receive parental consent before publishing/displaying the photo, preferably in writing. A suggested form allowing parents to indicate refusal of consent is to follow.

In the case of open meets and other competitions where the host club has an official photographer present, all parents attending should be made aware of this in your meet information. If photos are to be published anywhere, the individual parent should be given the opportunity to withhold their consent. Their right to do so should be specifically drawn to their attention.

All photographs must observe generally accepted standards of decency in particular:

- Action shots should be a celebration of the sporting activity and not a sexualized image in a sporting context.
- Action shots should not be taken or retained where the photograph reveals a torn or displaced swimsuit.
- Photographs should not be taken from behind swimming blocks at the start of a race or exhibit a child climbing out of the swimming pool.
- Photographs should not be taken in locker-rooms or bathrooms.

Swimmers and parents will sign a form during registration to document how you want your swimmer's information handled

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### **Media Release**

As part of the Hill Country Aquatics communication process, the team maintains a web site and periodically prints newsletters and statistics or provides information to news organizations. Swimmers and parents will sign a form during registration to document how you want your swimmer's information handled.

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## Appendix



### Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policy

Hill Country Aquatics

**Effective: January 1, 2025**

Table of Contents

**This Policy Applies To:**

**In-Program Contact:** Any contact (including communications, interactions or activities) between an Adult Participant and any Minor Athlete(s) related to participation in sport. Examples include, but are not limited to: competition, practices, camps/clinics, training/instructional sessions, pre/post event meals or outings, team travel, video review, team- or sport-related team building activities, celebrations, award ceremonies, banquets, team- or sport-related fundraising or community services, sport education, competition site visits, conventions and/or summits.

**Adult Participants:** Any adult 18 years of age or older who is a:

- USA Swimming member, either athlete or non-athlete;
- Participating non-member (e.g., meet marshals, meet computer operators, timers, etc.);
- Authorized, approved or appointed by USA Swimming, Zones, Local Swimming Committees ("LSCs") or member clubs to have Regular Contact with (e.g., ongoing interactions during a 12- month period wherein the individual is in a role of active engagement) or authority over minor athletes; and/or
- Within the governance or disciplinary jurisdiction of USA Swimming, Zones, LSCs or member clubs.

**General Requirement**

USA Swimming, Zones, LSCs and member clubs are required to implement this Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policy in full. The Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policy must be reviewed and agreed to in writing by all athletes, parents/legal guardians, coaches and other non-athlete members of member clubs on an annual basis with such written agreement to be retained by the club or LSC, as applicable.

**Definitions**

**Athlete:** A USA Swimming athlete member.

**Authority:** When one person's position over another person is such that, based on the totality of the circumstances, they have the power or right to direct, control, give orders to, or make decisions for that person (e.g., when a power imbalance exists).

**Billeting:** A residential environment facilitated by an Adult Participant or Organization, or sanctioned event staff in which a Minor Athlete is temporarily housed in a private home with an adult or family who is not related to or known by the Minor Athlete. This lodging arrangement is in conjunction with an activity related to sport.

**Dual Relationship:** When an Adult Participant has a relationship with a Minor Athlete that is outside of the sport program. Examples of Dual Relationships include, but are not limited to, family members, mental health professionals, teachers, medical professionals and family friends.

**Emergency Circumstances:** A serious, unexpected and possibly dangerous situation that requires quick action and cannot be avoided. Emergency circumstances include, but are not limited to: a physical, mental or emotional medical emergency involving the Minor Athlete, relative of the Minor Athlete or relative of an Adult Participant; a Minor Athlete's suicidal ideations/behavior; a report of abuse; a severe weather event; and last-minute practice changes.

**Electronic Communication:** Includes, but not limited to, phone calls, emails, videoconferencing, video coaching, text-messaging, social media or any other electronic medium.

**Event or Facility Under Partial or Full Jurisdiction:** Includes any USA Swimming sanctioned event (including all travel and lodging in connection with participation in the event) or any facility that USA Swimming, Zones, LSCs or member clubs owns, leases or rents for practice, training or competition.

**In-Program:** Any contact (including communications, interactions or activities) between an Adult Participant and any Minor Athlete(s) related to participation in sport. Examples include, but are not limited to: competition, practices, meetings, camps/clinics, training/instructional sessions, pre/post event meals or outings, team travel, video review, team- or sport-related team building activities, celebrations, award ceremonies, banquets, team- or sport-related fundraising or community services, sport education, competition site visits, conventions, conferences, summits and/or workshops.

**In-Program Contact:** Any contact (including communications, interactions or activities) between an Adult Participant and any Minor Athlete(s) related to participation in sport. Examples include, but are not limited to contact occurring at or related to: competition, practices, meetings, camps/clinics, training/instructional sessions, pre/post event meals or outings, team travel, video review, team- or sport-related

team building activities, celebrations, award ceremonies, banquets, team- or sport-related fundraising or community services, sport education, competition site visits, conventions, conferences, summits and/or workshops.

**In-Program Massage:** Any Massage, Manual Therapy, Therapeutic and Recovery modalities, involving an Adult Participant and any Minor Athlete(s) related to participation in sport. Examples include, but are not limited to: Massage, Manual Therapy, Therapeutic and Recovery modalities occurring at or related to: competition, practices, meetings, camps/clinics, training/instructional sessions, pre/post event meals or outings, team travel, video review, team- or sport-related team building activities, celebrations, award ceremonies, banquets, team- or sport-related fundraising or community services, sport education, competition site visits, conventions, conferences, summits and/or workshops.

**In-Program Travel:** Any transportation or travel involving an Adult Participant and any Minor Athlete(s) related to participation in sport authorized or funded by USA Swimming. Examples include, but are not limited to: transportation or travel to or related to: competition, practices, meetings, camps/clinics, training/instructional sessions, pre/post event meals or outings, team travel, video review, team- or sport-related team building activities, celebrations, award ceremonies, banquets, team- or sport-related fundraising or community services, sport education, competition site visits, conventions, conferences, summits and/or workshops.

**Lodging and Residential Environment:** Lodging arrangements include, but are not limited to: hotel stays, rentals (i.e. Airbnb, VRBO, HomeToGo, etc.), and long-term residential environments, including lodging at training sites and Bилleting.

**Massage:** Any massage, rubdown, athletic training modality including physical modalities (e.g., stretching, physical manipulation, injury rehabilitation, etc.) and electronic or instrument assisted modalities (e.g., stim treatment, dry needling, cupping, etc.).

**Minor Athlete:** An athlete under 18 years of age who is a USA Swimming member or was a USA Swimming member within the previous 12 months.

**Organization:** USA Swimming, LSC or Club

**Regular Contact:** Ongoing interactions during a 12-month period wherein an Adult Participant is in a role of direct and active engagement with any minor athlete.

#### Exceptions

**[Note: Exceptions apply only where specified]**

**Close-In-Age Exception:** In-Program Contact between an Adult Participant and a Minor Athlete is permitted if:

- a. The Adult Participant has no authority over the Minor Athlete; and
- b. The Adult Participant is not more than four years older, determined by birthday, than the Minor Athlete.

**Dual Relationship Exception:** An Adult Participant has a role or relationship with a Minor Athlete that is outside of the sport program. This exception requires written consent of the Minor Athlete's parent/legal guardian at least annually, which must also identify which portion of MAAPP the parent/guardian is providing consent.

**Emergency Exception:** Applies to all situations in MAAPP where an Adult Participant must violate requirement(s) of the MAAPP due to an emergency. Adult Participants must carefully consider whether specific circumstances meet the threshold of an emergency circumstance.

- a. It is strongly encouraged that the Organization or Adult Participant document the emergency circumstance. **One-On-One Interactions**
- I. **Observable and Interruptible**

All one-on-one In-Program Contact interactions between a Minor Athlete and an Adult Participant must occur at an observable and interruptible distance from another adult, except:

- a. In emergency circumstances;
- b. When a Dual Relationship exists; and/or
- c. When the Close-In-Age Exception applies.

#### **Meetings and Individual Training Sessions**

- I. **Meetings**
  - a. Meetings between a Minor Athlete and an Adult Participant may only occur if another adult is present and where interactions can be easily observed and at an interruptible distance from another adult.
  - b. If a one-on-one meeting takes place, the door to the room must remain unlocked and open. If available, it must occur in a room that has windows, with the windows, blinds, and/or curtains remaining open during the meeting.
  - c. Meetings must not be conducted in an Adult Participant or Athlete's hotel room or other overnight lodging location during In-Program Travel.
- I. **Meetings with Licensed Mental Health Care Professionals, Health Care Providers,**

If a licensed mental health care professional, health care provider, and/or a student under the supervision of a licensed mental health care professional or licensed health care provider, meets one-on-one with a Minor Athlete at an Event or Facility Under Partial or Full Jurisdiction of Organization in conjunction with participation, the meeting must be observable and interruptible by another adult, except if:

- a. The door remains unlocked;

- b. Another adult is present at the facility;
- c. The other adult is advised that a closed-door meeting is occurring although the Minor Athlete's identity does not need to be disclosed;
- d. When appropriate and not violating a providers professional licensure, Hill Country Aquatics is notified that the licensed mental health care professional, health care provider, and/or a student under the supervision of a licensed mental health care professional or licensed health care provider, will be meeting with a Minor Athlete, whose name does not need to be disclosed; and
- e. The licensed mental health care professional, health care provider, and/or student under the supervision of a licensed mental health care professional or licensed health care provider, obtains consent consistent with applicable laws and ethical standards, which can be withdrawn at any time.

I. Individual Training Sessions

- a. In-Program one-on-one individual training sessions outside of the regular course of training and practice between Adult Participants and Minor Athletes must be observable and interruptible by another adult, except:
  - i. When a Dual Relationship exists; and/or
  - ii. When the Close-In-Age Exception applies.
- b. The Adult Participant providing the individual training session must receive advance, written consent from the Minor Athlete's parent/legal guardian at least annually, with a copy provided to Hill Country Aquatics, which can be withdrawn at any time.
- c. Parents/legal guardians must be allowed to observe the individual training session.

## **Electronic Communications**

I. Content

All Electronic Communication from Adult Participants to Minor Athletes must be professional in nature.

I. Open and Transparent

- a. If an Adult Participant communicates one-on-one with a Minor Athlete via Electronic Communications, the Minor Athlete's parent/legal guardian, or another adult family member, must be copied or included. If a Minor Athlete communicates to the Adult Participant privately first, said Adult Participant must copy or include the Minor Athlete's parent/legal guardian, or another adult family member, on any Electronic Communication response to the Minor Athlete. Adult Participants must only use Electronic Communication platforms that allow for Open and Transparent communication.
- b. The following exceptions apply to Section II(a):
  - i. In emergency circumstances;
  - ii. When a Dual Relationship exists; and/or
  - iii. When the Close-In-Age Exception applies.
- c. When an Adult Participant communicates electronically to the entire team or any number of Minor Athletes on the team, said Adult Participant must copy another Adult Participant.

I. Requests to Discontinue

Parents/legal guardians may request in writing that their Minor Athlete not be contacted through any form of electronic communication by Hill Country Aquatics or by an Adult Participant subject to this Policy. Hill Country Aquatics and/or Adult Participant must abide by any such request that the Minor Athlete not be contacted via electronic communication, or included in any social media post, absent emergency circumstances.

I. Hours

Electronic communications must only be sent between the hours of 5:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. local time for the location of the Minor Athlete, unless emergency circumstances exist, or during competition travel.

I. Prohibited Electronic Communication

- a. Adult Participants are not permitted to maintain private social media connections with Minor Athletes and such Adult Participants are not permitted to accept new personal page requests on social media platforms from Minor Athletes, unless the Adult Participant has a fan page, or the contact is deemed as celebrity contact as opposed to Regular Contact. Existing social media connections with Minor Athletes must be discontinued. Minor Athletes may "friend", "like" or "follow" USA Swimming's official page.
- b. Adult Participants must not send private, instant or direct messages to a Minor Athlete through social media platforms.
- c. The following exceptions apply to Section V:
  - i. When a Dual Relationship exists; and/or
  - ii. When the Close-In-Age Exception applies.

### **In-Program Travel and Lodging And RESIDENTIAL ENVIRONMENTS**

#### **I. Transportation**

- a. During In-Program Travel, observable and interruptible environments must be maintained.
- b. An Adult Participant must not transport a Minor Athlete one-on-one during In-Program Travel and must always transport at least two Minor Athletes, who are at least 8 years of age, or another Adult Participant except:
  - i. In emergency circumstances;
  - ii. When a Dual Relationship exists;
  - iii. When the Close-In-Age Exception applies; and/or
  - iv. The Minor Athlete's parent/legal guardian has provided, at least annually, written consent for the Adult Participant to transport the Minor Athlete one-on-one, which can be withdrawn at any time.
- c. Adult Participants, including team managers and chaperones, who travel with USA Swimming athletes must be USA Swimming non-athlete members of USA Swimming.

#### **I. Lodging and Residential Environments**

- a. An Adult Participant must not share a lodging arrangement including, but not limited to hotel stays, rentals (i.e. Airbnb, VRBO, HomeToGo, etc.), and long-term residential environments, including lodging at training sites and Billeting, with an Athlete.
- b. During In-Program Travel, all In-Program Contact in a lodging arrangement including, but not limited to hotel stays, rentals (i.e. Airbnb, VRBO, HomeToGo, etc.), and long-term residential environments, including lodging at training sites and Billeting, between an Adult Participant and a Minor Athlete must be observable and interruptible.
- c. During In-Program Travel, when doing room checks, two-deep leadership (two Adult Participants should be present) and observable and interruptible environments must be maintained.
- d. The following exceptions apply to II(a), (b) and (c):
  - i. When a Dual Relationship exists, the Adult Participant is not a coach, and the Minor Athlete's parent/legal guardian has provided advance, written consent for the lodging arrangement; and/or
  - ii. When the Close-In-Age Exception applies and the Minor Athlete's parent/legal guardian has provided advance, written consent for the lodging arrangement.
- e. Minor Athletes should be paired to share a lodging arrangement including, but not limited to hotel stays, rentals (i.e. Airbnb, VRBO, HomeToGo, etc.), and long-term residential environments, including lodging at training sites and Billeting, with other Minor Athletes of the same competition category and of similar age.
- f. Adult Participants, including team managers and chaperones, who lodge with USA Swimming athletes must be USA Swimming non-athlete members of USA Swimming.

#### **I. Written Consent**

A Minor Athlete's parent/legal guardian must provide written consent, at least annually, for all In- Program Travel and lodging during In-Program Travel, which can be withdrawn at any time.

#### **I. Meetings**

- a. Meetings during In-Program Travel must be conducted consistent with the One-on-One Interactions section of this Policy (e.g., any such meeting must be observable and interruptible).
- b. Meetings must not be conducted in an Adult Participant or athlete's hotel room or other overnight lodging location during In-Program Travel.

### **Locker Rooms and Changing Areas**

#### **I. Requirement to Use Locker Room or Changing Area**

The designated locker room or changing area must be used when an athlete or Adult Participant changes, in whole or in part, into or out of a swimsuit when wearing just one suit (e.g., deck changing is prohibited).

#### **I. Observable and Interruptible**

All In-Program Contact between Adult Participants and Minor Athletes in a locker room, changing area or similar space must be observable and interruptible, except:

- a. In emergency circumstances;
- b. A Dual Relationship exists; and/or
- c. The Close-In-Age exception applies.

#### **I. Private or Semi-Private Space for Minor Athletes**

Hill Country Aquatics must provide a private or semi-private place for Minor Athletes that need to change clothes or undress at Events or Facilities Under Partial or Full Jurisdiction of Organization.

I. Use of Recording Devices

Use of any device's (including a cell phone's) recording capabilities, including voice recording, still cameras and video cameras in locker rooms, changing areas, or similar spaces by a Minor Athlete or an Adult Participant is prohibited.

I. Undress

Adult Participants must not remove their clothes or behave in a manner that intentionally or recklessly exposes his or her breasts, buttocks, groin or genitals to a Minor Athlete under any circumstance. An Adult Participant must not request a Minor Athlete to expose the Minor Athlete's breasts, buttocks, groin or genitals to the Adult Participant under any circumstance. Nothing in this section shall be construed to apply to areas of the body exposed while wearing swimwear which conforms to the current concept of the appropriate for the individual's competition category.

I. Showers

- a. Adult Participants must not shower with Minor Athletes unless:
  - i. The Adult Participant meets the Close-in-Age Exception; and/or
  - ii. The shower is part of a pre- or post-activity rinse while wearing swimwear.
- b. Parents/legal guardians may request in writing that their Minor Athlete(s) not change or shower with Adult Participants during In-Program Contact. Organization must abide by such a request.

I. Monitoring

Hill Country Aquatics must regularly and randomly monitor the use of locker rooms and changing areas to ensure compliance with this Policy. Locker rooms and changing areas may be monitored by use of the following methods:

- a. Conducting a sweep of the locker room or changing area before athletes arrive;
- b. Posting staff directly outside the locker room or changing area during periods of use;
- c. Leaving the doors open when adequate privacy is still possible; and/or
- d. Making occasional sweeps of the locker rooms or changing areas with women checking on female locker rooms and men checking on male locker rooms.

Every effort must be made to recognize when a Minor Athlete goes to the locker room or changing area during practice and competition, and, if the Minor Athlete does not return in a timely fashion, to check on the Minor Athlete's whereabouts.

I. Media and Championship Celebrations in Locker Rooms

Hill Country Aquatics may permit recording or photography in locker rooms to highlight a sport or athletic accomplishment if:

- a. Parent/legal guardian consent has been obtained, when possible; and
- b. Organization approves the specific instance of recording or photography; and
- c. Two or more Adult Participants are present; and
- d. Everyone is fully clothed. Manual Therapy, Therapeutic, and Recovery Modalities

I. General Requirement

Any In-Program Massage performed on an athlete must be conducted in an observable and interruptible location and must be performed by a licensed massage therapist or other certified professional. However, even if a coach is a licensed massage therapist, the coach must not perform a rubdown or massage of an athlete under any circumstance.

I. Additional Minor Athlete Requirements

- a. Written consent by a parent/legal guardian must be obtained in advance at least annually by the licensed massage therapist or other certified professional which can be withdrawn at any time.
- b. Parent/legal guardians must be allowed to observe the Massage, except for competition or training venues that limit credentialing.
- c. Any Massage of a Minor Athlete must be done with at least one other Adult Participant physically present and must never be done with only the Minor Athlete and the person performing the Massage in the room.
- d. Any Massage of a Minor Athlete must be performed with the Minor Athlete fully or partially clothed, ensuring that the breasts, buttocks, groin or genitals are always covered. Nothing in this section shall be construed to apply to areas of the body exposed while wearing swimwear which conforms to the current concept of the appropriate for the individual's competition category.
- e. The provider must narrate the steps in the modality before taking them, seeking consent of the Minor Athlete throughout the process.

## APPENDIX A

### [REQUIRED BY U.S. CENTER FOR SAFESPORT FOR INCLUSION AS APPENDIX TO THE USA SWIMMING MINOR ATHLETE ABUSE PREVENTION POLICY]

#### ORGANIZATIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR EDUCATION & TRAINING AND PREVENTION POLICIES

All NGBs, LAOs, and the USOPC (the “Organization”) must implement proactive policies designed to prevent abuse. These organizational requirements are described below.

##### A. Organizational Requirements for Education & Training

1. USA Swimming must track whether Adult Participants under its jurisdiction complete the required training listed in Part I.
1. USA Swimming must, every 12 months, offer and, subject to parental consent, give training to minor athletes on the prevention and reporting of child abuse.
  - a. For training to Minor Athletes, USA Swimming must track a description of the training and how the training was offered and provided to Minor Athletes.
  - b. USA Swimming is not required to track individual course completions of Minor Athletes.
1. USA Swimming must, every 12 months, offer training to parents on the prevention and reporting of child abuse.
  - a. For training to parents, USA Swimming must track a description of the training and how the training was offered and provided to parents.
  - b. USA Swimming is not required to track individual course completions of parents.

##### A. Required Prevention Policies and Implementation

1. USA Swimming must develop minor athlete abuse prevention policies to limit one-on-one interactions between Minor Athletes and Adult Participants. These policies must contain the mandatory components of the Center’s model policies in Part III. These model policies cover:
  - a. Meetings
  - b. Individual Training Sessions
  - c. Manual Therapy, Therapeutic, and Recovery Modalities
  - d. Locker rooms and changing areas
  - e. Electronic communications
  - f. Transportation
  - g. Lodging and Residential Environments
1. The policies must be approved by the Center as described in subsection (C) below. The policies may include the recommended components in Part III and the recommended policies in Part IV. Given the uniqueness of each sport, however, some recommended components or policies may not be feasible or appropriate. An Organization may choose to implement stricter standards than the model policies.
1. USA Swimming must also require that its LAOs implement these policies within each LAO.
1. USA Swimming, Zones, LSCs and member clubs must implement these policies for all In-Program Contact.
  - a. At sanctioned events and facilities partially or fully under its jurisdiction, the organization
  - b. must take steps to ensure the policies are implemented and followed.
  - c. For In-Program Contact that occurs outside an Organization’s sanctioned event or facilities, implementing these policies means:
    - i. Communicating the policies to individuals under its jurisdiction;
    - ii. Establishing a reporting mechanism for violations of the policies;
    - iii. Investigating and enforcing violations of the policies.

USA Swimming must have a reporting mechanism to accept reports that an Adult Participant is violating the Organization’s minor athlete abuse prevention policies. USA Swimming must appropriately investigate and resolve any reports received, unless the violation is reported to the Center and it exercises jurisdiction over the report. This requirement is in addition to requirements to report abuse under the SafeSport Code.

##### A. Policy Approval and Submission Process

1. USA Swimming may adopt the mandatory minimum requirements of the MAAPP as-is or adapt it to fit their needs. Regardless, each Organization must submit their policies to the Center at [compliance@safesport.org](mailto:compliance@safesport.org) for review and approval by April 1, 2024. The Center will approve, approve with modifications, or deny the policies. If the Center denies the proposed policy, the mandatory components of Part III become the default policy until the Center approves the policy.
1. USA Swimming must require their LAOs to incorporate the mandatory components of Part III. USA Swimming may require that their LAOs implement the USA Swimming’s policies, which may be more stringent than the policies in Part III.
1. The mandatory components of Part III will serve as the default policy for any organization that fails to develop its own policy as required by this section. Any changes made to USA Swimming’s MAAPP after the policy is approved must be submitted to the Center for approval. The previously approved MAAPP will remain in effect until written approval is provided to USA Swimming from the Center.

