

RAMS SWIM CLUB COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

PURPOSE

The Rams Swim Club (RSC) 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 RSC acknowledges the value of these methods of communication, RSC also realizes that there are associated risks that must be considered when adults use these methods to communicate with minors.

ELIGIBILITY

The RSC Communications Policy shall apply to all athletes, parents, coaches, board members, and other adults affiliated with the club.

COMMUNICATIONS WITH ATHLETES

All communications between a coach, board member or any 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 and must comply with Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policy (MAAPP) issued by USA Swimming.

For example, as with any communication with an athlete, electronic communication should not contain or relate to any of the following:

- Use of drugs or alcohol
- Sexually oriented conversations; 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, innuendos and expectations.

Accessible: All electronic communication between coaches and athletes should be considered a matter of record and part of the RSC's records. Another coach or parent must be included 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 RSC. 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.

FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM, BLOGS, AND SIMILAR SITES

Coaches may have personal Facebook (or other social media site) pages, but they are not permitted to have any athlete member of RSC join their personal page as a "friend." A coach should not accept any "friend" request from an athlete. In addition, the coach should remind the athlete that this is not permitted. Coaches and athletes are not permitted to "private message" or "instant message" each other through Facebook or any other method.

RSC has an official Facebook page that athletes and their parents can "friend" for information and updates on team-related matters

Coaches are encouraged to set their pages to "private" to prevent athletes from accessing the coach's personal information.

TWITTER

RSC has an official Twitter page that coaches, athletes and parents can follow for information and updates on team-related matters. Coaches are not permitted to follow athletes on Twitter. Likewise, athletes are not permitted to follow coaches on Twitter. Coaches and athletes are not permitted to "direct message" each other through Twitter.

TEXTING

RSC recommends using this form of communication only if the athlete is over the age of 15. Communication should be directed to parent(s)/guardian if athlete is under the age of 15.

Subject to the general guidelines mentioned above, texting is allowed between coaches and athletes during the hours from 8 a.m. until 9 p.m. Exceptions include the Gold and White group, they can be contacted 30 minutes prior to scheduled morning practices. During swim meets the coaches can text athletes 30 minutes prior to warm-ups regardless of time. Example: Warm-ups are at 6:30am, coaches are allowed to text at 6 a.m. Texting shall only be used for the purpose of communicating information directly related to team activities.

EMAIL

Athletes and coaches may use email to communicate. When communicating in regards to an athlete or a member's account through email, all emails associated with the member's account will be used.

It is recommended to copy a board member on email communications regarding financial and disciplinary actions.

REQUEST TO DISCONTINUE ALL ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

The parents or guardians of an athlete may request in writing that their child not be contacted by coaches through any form of electronic communication. See Attachment A for authorization of discontinuation of electronic communications.

COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN COACHES, PARENTS, AND BOARD MEMBERS

Communication between coaches, board members and parents must follow the same guidelines as communications with athletes except as follows:

- Texting is allowed at all times. However, please be respectful of the time and know that all text messages may not be returned immediately.
- Coaches, parents, and board members may be "friends" on social media sites but must keep any and all communication strictly professional.
- Coaches and board members shall use the emails provided to them by RSC. This ensures that the history of RSC is maintained, and communications are accessible if the need arises.

ATTACHMENT A

**RAMS SWIM CLUB DISCONTINUATION OF
ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS FORM**

I hereby ask that my child, _____, not be contacted via electronic communications as selected below:

- (1) _____ Facebook
- (2) _____ Text
- (3) _____ Email
- (4) _____ Other electronic applications

Please list: _____

I understand that by discontinuing the electronic communications marked above, it is the responsibility of the child/parent to obtain the information necessary.

This permission slip is only valid during the swim season noted below.

Swim Season: ___ Short Course ___ Long Course Year: _____

Date: _____ Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____