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Peer-to-Peer Incidents: A Resource Guide

This guide is designed to assist USA Swimming clubs when peer-to-peer bullying incidents occur. This guide will provide information to assist coaches, boards of directors and other club personnel in promoting and maintaining a safe and respectful environment for all participants. This guide may not cover every situation but it is designed to provide direction. For specific questions, contact USA Swimming Safe Sport staff at (719) 866-4578.

Such incidents must be addressed quickly, compassionately, and responsibly. In order to assist clubs with this challenging task, USA Swimming has created a Safety Plan Worksheet. The goal of a safety plan is to address a child's inappropriate behavior without labeling or removing the child from the activity. For a safety plan to be effective, the club's leadership and the parents/guardians of the child in question must agree to actively supervise the child according to the agreements made in the plan.

Be Prepared - Know What You'll Do if an Incident Occurs

The team should proactively determine how complaints will be handled when an issue such as peer to peer incidents comes up. Here is a **sample** process:

1. The inappropriate situation is reported, and all necessary members of the leadership team (i.e., Head Coach and/or Board President) are notified.
2. Depending upon the nature, severity, and ages of children involved, you may be required to report the incident to local law enforcement. USA Swimming can assist you with this.
3. The parents or guardians of the children involved are all notified of the situation.
4. The leadership team meets with the targeted child and his/her parent/guardian to understand their wishes and explain the next steps.
5. The leadership team meets with the aggressor child and his/her parent/guardian to discuss the situation and develop a safety plan.
6. Copies of the safety plan are distributed to all parties for their reference.

Respond Responsibly - How to Develop a Safety Plan

There are a number of steps that should be covered when developing a safety plan

1. Ask the child to describe the problematic behavior and the impact such behavior has on the other child and teammates.
2. Identify the child's motivation and find out what made him/her act out in this manner.
3. Explain the behavioral expectations for the child to remain on the team.
4. Identify specific risk areas and help the child control his/her behavior.
5. Demonstrate respect for both parties, and express belief in the aggressor child's ability to control his/her behavior.

It is very important throughout the development of the safety plan that the thoughts and feelings of both the aggressor child and the targeted child are considered. Responsibility and accountability are key components to supervision. Using statements of thoughts, feelings and lessons that have been learned when completing a



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safety plan are more effective and helps increase accountability. Expectations and consequences should be clear and realistic.

The safety plan is an accountability tool and should include consequences for behavior that violates the plan. Consequences should be discussed in conjunction with behavioral expectations and clearly articulated to the child and his/her parent/guardian during the safety planning meeting. Consider using a progressive discipline approach up to and including termination from the team.

A safety plan is made official by a statement of agreement. The statement of agreement includes all those parties involved in the development and implementation of the safety plan – club leadership, coach(es), parent/guardian, and athlete. It should also specify the duration of the safety plan and a short description of the progress review when the safety plan reaches its end date.

Safe supervision is the focus of how to work with children who have behaved inappropriately around their peers. Through a structured safety plan, the goal is to prevent future abusive situations from happening while emphasizing an educational approach that in most instances can allow the child who demonstrated inappropriate behavior to remain on the team and learn to make better choices in the future.



Safety Plan Worksheet

This worksheet should be completed together with the aggressor child and his/her parents. Explain to the child that he/she has exhibited concerning behavior but you believe they know the right behavior. A safety plan is a tool to help the child demonstrate appropriate behavior. Explain to the child and his/her parents that the safety plan is private but not confidential – the coaches/administration who work closely with the child will be made aware of the safety plan. The target and his/her parents will also be made aware of the safety plan.

At the conclusion of the meeting, everyone will agree to and sign the safety plan. If all parties are unable to agree on the safety plan, the outcome will be:

- ☐ Suspension from the team
- ☐ Removal from the team
- ☐ New Practice Group Assignment
- ☐ Other disciplinary measure: _____

Date of Meeting and Attendees:

Step 1: Identify Problematic Behavior

Describe the incident(s). Ask the aggressor to describe the incident in his/her own words:

Does the child understand why his/her behavior is problematic? Does the child understand the impact his/her behavior had on the other child/children involved? Record his/her understanding (in child's own words) here:

What are the wishes/concerns of the targeted child? How did the child's behavior impact the targeted child? (Ask the targeted child or the parent/guardian of the child before the safety planning meeting. The targeted child and his/her parent do not need to attend the safety planning meeting)



Step 2: Identify Wishes of the Child/Children's Parents:

Check all that apply or fill in stated wishes of the aggressor child and his/her parents.

- ☐ That I can continue to practice and compete with [CLUB]
- ☐ For all athletes of [CLUB], including me, to be safe at practices and meets
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Step 3: Identify Appropriate and Expected Behavior from CHILD:

Include here your club's Code of Conduct. Include any additional specific behavioral expectations you have for this child relative to the incident(s). Discuss this with the child and his/her parents during your meeting.

Step 4: Safety Planning

Identify risk areas and how the child/club will handle each risk area.

Locker Rooms

CHILD uses the locker rooms: ____ Yes ____ No

How will the child use the locker room going forward?

- ☐ *No locker room privileges – the child will come and go from practice in his/her swim suit. Parent is responsible for weather appropriate clothing.*
- ☐ *No locker room privileges – the child may use the [identify appropriate and available private bathroom at facility] only. Child [does] or [does not] need supervision to use this locker room.*
- ☐ *Child can use the locker room under the supervision of his/her parent.*
- ☐ *Child will use the [designated bathroom] if he/she has to go to the bathroom during practice. Child [does] or [does not] need supervision to use this bathroom.*
- ☐ _____



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Travel Meets

CHILD participates in travel meets: ___ Yes ___ No

How will child travel to away meets going forward?

- ☐ *Parent/guardian is responsible for supervision during travel and lodging. Child cannot travel or stay overnight without the supervision of a parent/guardian.*
- ☐ *Child can travel with the team (car/plane) but parent is responsible for own lodging. Child cannot stay overnight unsupervised.*
- ☐ *Child can travel and stay with the team if parent is serving as a chaperone on the travel trip.*
- ☐ *Child can travel with the team and share a room with like aged children*
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Teammates

How will child interact with his/her teammates?

During practice:

After practice:

How will the child interact with younger teammates/children?

During practice:

After practice:



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Supervision: Identify one or more adults who know about the child's risky behavior and his/her restrictions and can be actively involved in helping the child stay in safe situations. This adult(s) should be someone known to and trusted by the child.

Name:

Phone:

Name:

Phone:

What is the nature of the supervision? Example: Parent/babysitter attends practice every day; coach (not actively coaching) willing to keep an eye on child. Describe the supervision here.

Step 5: Agreement

We agree to this Safety Plan and supporting [child's name] as described above. This safety plan will be in effect until [DATE] at which time we will review the child's progress and evaluate if privileges can be restored.

Athlete:

Head Coach:

Child's Group Coach:

Parent/Guardian:

Parent/Guardian:

Other Supervisory Adult:

Date Effective:

Date Progress Reviewed: