

Action Plan of Parkland Swimming Club to Address Bullying

PURPOSE

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at Parkland Swimming Club (PSC) and will not be tolerated. Bullying is counterproductive to team spirit and can be devastating to a victim. The Club is committed to providing all our members a safe, caring, and friendly environment. 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 must tell a coach, board member, or athlete/mentor.

Objectives of the Club's Bullying Policy and Action Plan:

1. To make it clear that the PSC 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 PSC takes bullying seriously and that all swimmers and parents can be assured they will be supported when bullying is reported.

WHAT IS BULLYING?

Generally, bullying is intentional or unintentional aggression that hurts another person—bullying results in pain and distress.

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 or Participating Non-Member that to a reasonably objective person has the effect of causing physical or emotional harm to the other member or damage to the other member's property;

1. Placing the other member in reasonable fear of harm to himself/herself or of damage to his/her property;
2. Creating a hostile environment for the other member at any USA Swimming activity;
3. Infringing on the rights of the other member at any USA Swimming activity; or
4. 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 Club Coach, Board Member, or other designated individual;
- Have your parents file a PSC Incident report.
- 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 our club 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.

1. Keep all the involved children separate.
2. Get the story from several sources, both adults and kids.
3. Listen without blaming.
4. Don't call the act "bullying" while you are trying to understand what happened.
5. 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.

1. Review the USA Swimming definition of bullying;
2. To determine if the behavior is bullying or something else, consider the following questions:
 - a. What is the history between the kids involved?
 - b. Have there been past conflicts?
 - c. 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.
 - d. Has this happened before? Is the child worried it will happen again?
3. Remember that it may not matter “who started it.” For example, some kids who are bullied may be seen as annoying or provoking, but this does not excuse the bullying behavior.
4. Once you have determined if the situation is bullying, support all the kids involved.

SUPPORTING THE KIDS INVOLVED

3. Support the kids who are being bullied. 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.

1. 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:
2. 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.
3. Develop a game plan. Maintain open communication between the Club and parents.
4. Discuss the steps that will be taken and how bullying will be addressed going forward.
5. Be persistent. Bullying may not end overnight. Commit to making it stop and consistently support the bullied child.

4. Address bullying behavior. Make sure the child knows what the problem behavior is. For example, young people who bully must learn their behavior is wrong and harms others.

1. Show kids that bullying is taken seriously. Calmly tell the child that bullying will not be tolerated. Model respectful behavior when addressing the problem.
2. Work with the child to understand why he or she was bullying. For example:
 - a. Sometimes children bully to fit in or make fun of someone who is a little different from them. In other words, there may be some insecurity involved.
 - b. 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 require additional support
3. Involve the bullied kid in making amends or repairing the situation. The goal is to help them see how their actions affect others. For example, the child can:

- a. Write a letter apologizing to the athlete who was bullied.
 - b. Do a good deed for the person who was bullied, for the Club, or for others in your community.
 - c. Clean up, repair, or pay for any property they damaged.
4. Follow-up. After the bullying issue is resolved, continue finding ways to help the child who did the bullying 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.

1. Be a friend to the person being bullied;
2. Tell a trusted adult – your parent, coach, or club board member.
3. 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.”
4. Set a good example by not bullying others.
5. 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.

Parkland Swim Club's Steps to Address Bullying:

First Offense: Meeting with the coaches and athlete(s) to discuss the situation and attempt to address the issue. Verbal apology required. File PSC Incident report.

Second Offense: Meeting with the coaches, athlete(s), and parents to discuss the situation and attempt to address the issue. Verbal and written apology required. File PSC Incident report.

Third Offense: A week suspension from practice/meet. (If a meet falls on the week of the suspension). File PSC Incident report.

Fourth Offense: Dismissal from the team. File PSC Incident report.

DO YOU THINK AN ATHLETE IS BEING BULLIED OR HARASSED?

Use this checklist for guidance:

It's important to know that bullying can happen to anyone—and it's not always so easy to recognize. If you are still trying to determine if you're experiencing bullying, look at the checklist below. Read the following questions and check any boxes you think might apply to your situation.

- ☐ Do other students make mean comments about you?
- ☐ Have you ever been called hurtful names?
- ☐ Are you teased for how you look or act?
- ☐ Do you feel alone or isolated at school?
- ☐ Has anyone ever spread mean or untrue rumors about you?
- ☐ Are you ever purposely excluded from a group?
- ☐ Have you ever felt that someone you thought of as a friend is trying to control you?
- ☐ Has someone ever touched you in a way that felt inappropriate, demeaning, or threatening?
- ☐ Has anyone ever mocked or mimicked the way you talk or act?

- ☐ Has anyone ever damaged your belongings?
- ☐ Do other students physically hurt you on purpose?
- ☐ Are you ever afraid to go to school?
- ☐ Do you get anxious about how you are treated by other kids at school?
- ☐ Have photos of you ever been posted online without your permission?
- ☐ Has anyone ever pretended to be you on social media?
- ☐ Have people posted mean things about you online or commented in a mean way on your posts?

The more boxes you check, the more likely you are being bullied.

If you think you are being bullied, or you believe you witnessed a teammate being bullied but are not sure, remember that

- No one ever deserves to be bullied
- You have the right to ask for help to stop the behavior
- Your opinion about what to do is important
- You don't have to go through the bullying experience alone

Remember the bullying is not your fault, and know that it's natural to feel emotions such as sadness, fear, loneliness, anger, or confusion. Sometimes, we tend to minimize how

bullying makes us feel, but it's so important to pay attention to and recognize your feelings and how the actions of others affect how you feel. The next step is to start thinking through what you can do.

ALWAYS REMEMBER, you are an important part of the PSC Team.

ALSO REMEMBER, If you bully or harass your teammate or teammates, you are not a part of the PSC Team. If you encourage others to harass or bully others, you are also not a part of the PSC Team.

DON'T BE AFRAID:

If you are experiencing bullying, think through some of the issues you may encounter, as well as how you can take action:

The issue: “I don’t want to tell anyone.”

How to take action: Tell someone you trust. Those who bully depend on their targets being silent, as it allows their behavior to continue without consequences. Your natural reaction to bullying might be isolating yourself from peers and family; it may be too painful, hurtful, or embarrassing to talk about. And yes, talking about what’s happening can be hard. As difficult as it might be, connecting with someone and sharing what you are going through is important. Ideally, you’ll talk about it with a parent or an adult you trust. If you don’t feel comfortable telling an adult, start by confiding in a trusted friend and asking them to help you sort through your situation with the goal of talking to an adult about it.

The issue: “I don’t want to be called a snitch”

How to take action: Recognize that the goal of using that label is to silence you. Reporting is sharing legitimate information to protect yourself or another person. Tattling is more commonly done with ulterior motives, such as to get another person into trouble intentionally. When you are being bullied, the person bullying you may try to keep you silent by trying to shame you into thinking you are doing something wrong by telling. They want you to be silent so that there are no consequences for their behavior.

The issue: “I was told this was just the way it is.”

How to take action: Know there are laws designed to address bullying. There are state and federal laws that provide protections against bullying and harassment. PSC has a bullying prevention policy, which addresses the right to be safe. If you have not read and signed the PSC policy about harassment and bullying prevention, read and sign it. Understand that harassment and bullying can be against the law. Be a good teammate and promote a safe and fun environment through leadership. Be a leader. Set a good example by discouraging bullying and encouraging others to be kind.

You may have additional protections under federal law when the harassment and bullying is about:

- Race, color, or national origin
- Sex or gender
- Religion
- Disability

State and local laws may provide additional protections on other bases, including sexual orientation.

The issue: “I already told someone and nothing changed.”

How to take action: Don’t give up; tell another person. If you told an adult about a bullying situation and it wasn’t helpful, continue to be a self-advocate. Know that you have the right to speak up for yourself and let another adult know what you need to feel safe. As a next step, think through who else you can tell, such as a parent, a school administrator, a favorite teacher, a counselor, or another adult in the community whom you trust. Then share important information with them, either in person or in writing. Make sure to include:

- A description of the bullying
- Where and when it happened
- Who is involved
- Steps that you have taken.

Sometimes it’s helpful to remind the adults you speak with about the laws or PSC’s harassment and bullying prevention policy that outline their responsibility in handling bullying situations. Then, ask for advice and their help to address the problem.

The issue: “This is only happening online or by email or texts/group chats.”

How to take action: Document, block, and report. There are three main action steps when bullied on social media, texting, or other electronic means.

1. Document: Your initial impulse might be to delete a harmful post, but once you do that it could be lost. Instead, think through if you want to keep evidence of the bullying so that

the information can be shared with an adult. Take a screenshot and save it to your files or capture the content in a manner comfortable to you.

2. Block: Remove the opportunity for the person to contact you.

3. Report: Tell someone what's happened. Just as you deserve to be safe at PSC, you deserve to feel safe online, too. Let someone know, a parent or a trusted adult, and show them the evidence of the bullying. You can also report the individual to the social media or service provider.

The issue: "I'm told that I don't fit in."

How to take action: Find others with similar interests. Learn to embrace and nurture what sets you apart from the bully. There's so much pressure to try to fit in when you're on a swim team. Yet, the irony is that no two people are the same. Think through what you like to do, and then seek opportunities to connect with those that share your interests. It might be hard to recognize right now, but the very attributes, talents, or interests that you are being teased about are often the traits that eventually become your strengths. Think about the person interested in technology who could go on to pursue that computer science degree, or the child who spends all their time reading and grows up to write best-selling novels. No matter how hard it is to believe, a bully is weaker than his or her victim. They are likely less happy, less attractive and don't have many real friends.

The issue: "I'm being bullied by my teacher, coach, or another adult."

How to take action: Immediately talk with your parent or guardian. Bullying and harassment is about power and the power dynamic between an adult and a minor usually favors the adult. It is generally not helpful, and often not safe, to confront an adult about their behavior. It's important that you share what's happening with a parent or a trusted adult, as their advice and action is critical in this type of situation.

The issue: “I’m being bullied outside of school.”

How to take action: Do your best to remove yourself from the situation and report it. Bullying can happen in the neighborhood where you live, at your favorite store, or on a city street. If you are being harassed or bullied by a member of the PSC Community or Team, it’s important to know that there are laws that prohibit harassment and bullying no matter where it happens. If you are being bullied, for example, during the summer or on weekends at your local park or grocery store, report it to the adults who are in charge. This might be the store owner, the park patrol, or even a police officer. Most bullying happens outside the view of adults, which makes it very important that you report it, so adults can keep you safe and hold those who are bullying accountable.

I, _____ (name of athlete) HEREBY ACKNOWLEDGE THAT:

1. I HAVE READ THIS ACTION PLAN AND UNDERSTAND THAT HARASSMENT AND BULLYING IS NOT PERMITTED AT PSC _____ (initials)
2. I PLEDGE THAT I WILL NOT PARTICIPATE IN ANY HARASSING OR BULLYING BEHAVIOR WHILE A MEMBER OF PSC _____ (initials)
3. IF I BELIEVE I AM BEING BULLIED BY A MEMBER OF THE PSC COMMUNITY (a teammate or a coach), I WILL DO MY BEST TO ABIDE BY THIS ACTION PLAN AND NOT IGNORE THE BULLYING OR HARASSMENT _____ (initials)
4. I OBJECT TO HARASSMENT AND BULLYING IN ANY FORM OR MANNER AND CAN BE TRUSTED TO HELP OTHERS WHO NEED HELP _____ (initials)
5. I AM COMMITTED TO BEING A LEADER AND A GOOD TEAMMATE AND WILL WORK HARD TO KEEP PSC A SAFE AND FUN CLUB FOR EVERYBODY _____ (initials).

SIGNED BY: _____ SIGNED BY: _____

(Athlete's Name): _____ (Parent or Guardian): _____

RECEIVED BY PSC on _____ (Date)

BY: _____

(name of Board Member or Coach)