

RSA Action Plan to Address Bullying

Purpose

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at RSA and will not be tolerated. Bullying is counterproductive to a positive team culture and can be devastating to a victim. RSA is committed to providing a safe, caring and welcoming environment for all of our members. If bullying does occur, incidents will be dealt with promptly. Anyone who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell a staff member or a board member.

Objectives of RSA's Bullying Policy and Action Plan

1. To make it clear that RSA does not tolerate bullying in any form.
2. To define bullying and provide a clear understanding of what bullying is.
3. To educate all staff and members regarding RSA's bullying policy and protocol should any issues arise.
4. To clearly explain how to report bullying.
5. To spread the word that RSA takes bullying seriously and that all athletes and their parents/guardians 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 by one or more USA Swimming members of oral, written, electronic or other technological expression (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:

- Causing physical or emotional harm to the other member or damage to the other member's property;
- Placing the other member in reasonable fear of harm to himself/herself or of damage to his/her property;
- Creating a hostile environment for the other member at any USA Swimming activity;
- Infringing on the rights of the other member at any USA Swimming activity; or
- Materially and substantially disrupting the training process or the orderly operation of any other USA Swimming activity (which includes 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 his/her parents/guardians;
- Talk to a staff member or board member;
- Write a letter to a staff member or board member; and/or
- 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 staff and/or Board 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 observed, we stop bullying on the spot using the following steps:

1. Intervene immediately
2. Separate the athletes involved.
3. Assure the safety of everyone.
4. Assist with any immediate medical or mental health needs.
5. Reassure the athletes involved as well as bystanders.

If bullying is occurring at our organization or it is reported to be occurring at our organization, we address the bullying by **finding out what happened and supporting the athletes involved** using the following approach:

Find out what happened by obtaining the facts:

1. Separate all involved athletes.
2. Interview all parties involved.
3. Listen without blaming.
4. Collect all available information.

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 using the following steps:

1. Review the USA Swimming definition of bullying.
2. To determine if the behavior is bullying or something else, we consider the following questions:
 - a. What is the history between the athletes involved?
 - b. Have there been past conflicts?
 - c. Is there a power imbalance?
 - d. Has this happened before? Is the athlete worried it will happen again?
3. Once we have determined if the situation is bullying, we support all of the athletes involved.

Support the athletes who are being bullied:

1. Listen and focus on the athlete. Learn what's been going and offer help. Assure the athlete that bullying is not his/her fault.
2. Work together to resolve the situation and protect the bullied athlete.
3. Ask the athlete being bullied what can be done to make the athlete feel safe.
4. Develop a game plan. Maintain open communication between the organization and the parents. Discuss the steps that will be taken and how bullying will be addressed going forward.

Address bullying behavior:

1. Schedule a conference with the athlete who bullied, the parents/guardians and the coaching staff.
 - a. Make sure the athlete who bullied knows what the problem behavior is.
 - b. Calmly tell the athlete that bullying will not be tolerated.
 - c. Discuss the RSA policy regarding bullying.
 - d. Discuss the findings regarding the incident.
 - e. Implement any consequences for the bullying.
2. Work with the athlete who bullied and the athlete's parents/guardians to understand the reasons for bullying.
3. Involve the athlete who bullied in making amends or repairing the situation.

Support bystanders who witness bullying and help them stop bullying when they see it:

- Encourage bystanders to be a friend to the person being bullied.
- Encourage bystanders to tell a trusted adult if they see bullying.
- Encourage bystanders to help the athlete being bullied get away from the situation.
- Encourage bystanders to set a good example by not bullying others.
- Encourage bystanders to refuse to give a bully an audience.

Refer to www.stopbullying.gov, a federal government website managed by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, the source for this model and a source for additional information.