



Anti-Bullying Policy

Effective: August 1, 2024



Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at Commonwealth Swimming and will not be tolerated. Bullying is counterproductive to team spirit and can be devastating to a victim. The Club is committed to providing a safe, caring, and friendly environment for all of our members. If bullying does occur, incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. Anyone who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell a coach.

Objectives of the Club's Anti-Bullying Policy:

1. To make it clear that the Club will not tolerate bullying in any form.
2. To define bullying and educate all coaches, swimmers, and parents of the types of behavior that constitute bullying.
3. To inform all coaches, swimmers, and parents that there is a policy and protocol, should any bullying issues arise.
4. To make clear the responsibility of all Club members to report bullying.
5. To spread the word that the Club 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 defines bullying in 304.3.7. Bullying is the severe or repeated use by one or more USA Swimming members ("Members") of oral, written, electronic, or other 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:

- 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 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 Procedures

An athlete who feels that he or she has been bullied should do one or more of the following things:

- Talk to his or her parents;
- Talk to a Club coach;
- Write a letter or email to a Club coach;
- 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 stop the bullying behavior as soon as possible and to make sure that memories are fresh and behavior can be accurately recalled.

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 and respectfully.
2. Separate the kids involved.
3. Make sure everyone is safe.
4. Meet any immediate medical or mental health needs.
5. Reassure the kids involved, including bystanders.

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:

1. Finding out what happened

- First, we get the facts.
- We will keep all the involved children separate.
- We will get the story from several sources, both adults and kids, and gather all available information regarding the circumstances under which the incident occurred.
- We will listen without blaming.
- We won't call the act "bullying" while we are still in the information-gathering process.

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. In our determination, we will consider the following:

- What is the history between the kids involved?
- Have there been past conflicts?
- Is there a power imbalance, either in physical strength or social standing?
- Has this happened before? Is the child worried it will happen again?

SUPPORTING THE KIDS INVOLVED:

1. Support the kids who are being bullied.

- First, we will listen and focus on the child.
- Next, we will 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.

We may:

- Ask the child being bullied what can be done to make him or her feel safe.
- Make necessary environmental changes without singling the child out.
- 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.
- Finally, we will commit to making the bullying stop and consistently support the bullied child.

2. Address bullying behavior.

- We will make sure the child who engaged in the bullying behavior understands why his or her behavior is unacceptable.
- We will calmly and respectfully show kids that bullying is taken seriously.
- We will work with the child to understand some of the reasons he or she bullied.
- We will involve the kid who bullied in making amends or repairing the situation.



- We will avoid strategies that don't work or have negative consequences, such as "zero tolerance" or conflict resolution and peer mediation.
- We will follow up, and support positive behavior.

3. Support bystanders who witness bullying. Every day, kids witness bullying. They want to help, but don't know how. As a coaching staff, we will teach and encourage our swimmers to adapt the following behaviors:

- Be a friend to the person being bullied.
- Tell a trusted adult.
- 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.
- Set a good example by not bullying others.
- Don't give the bully an audience.