

Madison Area YMCA Mariners Action Plan to Address Bullying

PURPOSE

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at the Madison Area YMCA Mariners and will not be tolerated. Bullying is counterproductive to team spirit and can be devastating to a victim. The Team is committed to providing a safe, caring, and friendly environment for all of our members. 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 is expected to tell a coach, board member, or athlete/mentor.

Objectives of the Mariners' Bullying Policy and Action Plan:

- To make it clear that the Madison Area YMCA Mariners will not tolerate bullying in any form.
- To define bullying and give all board members, coaches, parents, and swimmers a good understanding of what bullying is.
- To make it known to all parents, swimmers, and coaching staff that there is a policy and protocol should any bullying issues arise.
- To make how to report bullying clear and understandable.
- To spread the word that the Madison Area YMCA Mariners takes bullying seriously and that all swimmers and parents can be assured that they will be supported when bullying is reported.

WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying is the use of aggression, whether intentional or not, which hurts another person. Bullying results in pain and distress.

Bullying includes the severe or repeated use, regardless of when or where it may occur, of an oral, written, electronic, or physical act or gesture directed at another person that:

- Causes physical or emotional harm to the other member or damage to their property
- Places the member in reasonable fear of harm or damage
- Creates a hostile environment at any Madison Area YMCA activity
- Infringes on the rights of others at any YMCA or USA Swimming activity
- Substantially disrupts the training process or the orderly operation of any Madison Area YMCA activity, including practices, workouts, or events.

REPORTING PROCEDURE

An athlete who feels that they have been bullied is encouraged to do one or more of the following:

- Talk to your parents;
- Talk to a Coach, Board Member, or other designated individual;
- Write a letter or email to the Coach, Board Member, or other designated individual;
- Make a report to USA Swimming Safe Sport staff.

There is no time limit for reporting a bullying complaint, but efforts should be made to report incidents as soon as possible to ensure accurate recall and swift resolution.

HOW WE HANDLE BULLYING

If bullying occurs during team-related activities, we **STOP BULLYING ON THE SPOT** by taking the following steps:

- Intervene immediately.
- Separate the individuals involved.
- Ensure the safety of all parties.
- Address any immediate medical or mental health needs.
- Stay calm and reassure all involved, including

FINDING OUT WHAT HAPPENED

If bullying is occurring or it is reported to be occurring, we address the bullying by **FINDING OUT WHAT HAPPENED** and **SUPPORTING THE KIDS INVOLVED** using the following approach:

1. First, we get the facts:

- Keep all the involved children separate.
- Get the story from several sources, including adults and kids.
- Listen without blaming.
- Don't immediately label the behavior as "bullying" until you fully understand what happened.
- Collect all available information, especially if the bullying involves social or cyberbullying.

2. Then, we determine if it's bullying:

- Review the Madison Area YMCA Mariners' definition of bullying.
- Consider the following questions:
 - What is the history between the kids involved?
 - Have there been past conflicts?
 - Is there a power imbalance?
 - Has this happened before, and is the child worried it will happen again?
- Remember that it doesn't always matter who started it. Even if a child is perceived as provoking, it does not excuse bullying behavior.

SUPPORTING THE KIDS INVOLVED

1. Support the kids who are being bullied:

- Listen and focus on the child. Show that you care and want to help. Reassure them that the bullying is not their fault.
- Work together with the child, parents, and coaches to resolve the situation.
- Ask the child being bullied what can be done to make them feel safe. Avoid singling them out by unnecessarily changing routines.
- Develop a game plan. Keep open communication between the Club and parents and discuss how bullying will be addressed moving forward.
- Be persistent in ensuring that bullying stops and that the child feels supported.

2. Address bullying behavior:

- Make sure the child who bullied knows that their behavior is wrong and harmful.
- Show that bullying is taken seriously by calmly explaining that it won't be tolerated.
- Help the child understand the reasons behind their behavior and provide support where needed.
- Involve the child in making amends for their actions, whether through a written apology, a good deed, or repairing damaged property.

3. Support bystanders who witness bullying:

- Encourage bystanders to be a friend to the bullied child, tell a trusted adult, and help the bullied child get away from the situation.
- Set a good example by not bullying others and discourage giving bullies an audience.

By adopting this approach, the Madison Area YMCA Mariners ensures a team culture where athletes feel safe, supported, and empowered to report and address any incidents of bullying.