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USA Swimming Announces 7-Point Action Plan for a Safe and Positive Sport Environment

Organization Will Share Key Learnings and Best Practices with Other Youth-Focused Organizations

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. – USA Swimming announced today the immediate implementation of a 7-Point Action Plan to address the issue of child protection in the sport. The plan outlines seven action steps to make certain the best possible safeguards are in place for the organization's 300,000 members.

The action plan was shared today with the USA Swimming membership in an open letter from President Jim Wood and Executive Director Chuck Wielgus.

"As leaders of our sport in this nation, we have a responsibility to help create a safe and positive environment for children and young adults who are our members," writes USA Swimming Executive Director **Chuck Wielgus**. "We fully recognize that parents expect USA Swimming to do everything possible to protect their children from individuals who would do them harm, and we take very seriously the trust they have placed in our organization. USA Swimming is determined to continue to demonstrate its commitment to the welfare of its members." (A full copy of the letter can be found [here](#).)

As set forth in the action plan, USA Swimming will do the following:

1. Develop and disseminate comprehensive guidelines addressing acceptable coach behavior.
2. Enhance the system for reporting sexual abuse to USA Swimming and law enforcement.
3. Review USA Swimming's Code of Conduct, as well as those of other top youth organizations.
4. Review USA Swimming's current background screening program and determine if enhancements can be made.
5. Produce stronger communications to member clubs, which are responsible for hiring and employing coaches, regarding pre-employment screening, and the responsibility associated with hiring club employees.
6. Evaluate the process for sharing coaching history records with member clubs and other youth organizations.
7. Educate athletes, parents, coaches and club leaders on this important issue.

The organization will consult closely with both its stakeholders and outside experts in executing this plan.

"We are taking decisive action today, but this is only the beginning," said USA Swimming President **Jim Wood**. "The USA Swimming Board of Directors, national staff and our dedicated volunteers will continue to work together and seek the necessary expertise – both from within the swimming community and from outside sources – to evaluate and improve our protocols and safeguards."

USA Swimming will share its key learnings with other youth organizations both inside and outside of the Olympic movement.

"While we must properly focus our efforts on the micro world of swimming, we must simultaneously recognize the much broader societal implications," said Wielgus. "Our efforts should seek to both learn from others and then in turn share what we learn so that not only will the membership of USA Swimming benefit, but other youth organizations may also find ways to enhance their own safeguards and educational efforts."

The 7-point plan will enhance USA Swimming's existing child protection safeguards, which are:

- 1) **Background Screening:** In 2006, USA Swimming implemented a Background Screening requirement for all member coaches. The process, required before membership is granted and then every two years, screens for both criminal convictions and for criminal charges involving felonies, illegal drugs and sexual misconduct.
- 2) **Code of Conduct:** USA Swimming vigorously enforces its Code of Conduct, which specifically prohibits any form of abusive behavior.
- 3) **Club & Coach Education:** When considering coach hires, USA Swimming encourages clubs to conduct pre-employment screening beyond the criminal background screen. Coaches are required to have current certification in CPR, First Aid, and Safety Training for Swim Coaches. Additionally, all coaches must take and pass the "Foundations of Coaching," test, before registering for the second year of coaching.
- 4) **Reporting/Investigation/Board of Review:** Sexual abuse is a criminal activity, and one that should be immediately reported to the local police. As a secondary level of reporting, anyone can file a complaint with the Executive Director of USA Swimming. These complaints are immediately turned over to legal counsel who may engage the services of a third-party private investigator. Complaints with merit go forward to the National Board of Review which has the authority to suspend or revoke membership when appropriate.

About USA Swimming: As the National Governing Body for the sport of swimming in the United States, USA Swimming is a 300,000-member service organization that promotes the culture of swimming by creating opportunities for swimmers and coaches of all backgrounds to participate and advance in the sport through clubs, events and education. Our membership is comprised of swimmers from the age group level to the Olympic Team, as well as coaches and volunteers. USA Swimming is responsible for selecting and training teams for international competition including the Olympic Games, and strives to serve the sport through its core objectives: Build the base, Promote the sport, Achieve competitive success. For more information, visit www.usaswimming.org.