



ACTION PLAN OF THE MISSION VIEJO NADADORES TO ADDRESS BULLYING

PURPOSE

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at MVN and will not be tolerated. Bullying is counterproductive to team spirit and can be devastating to a victim. This club is committed to providing a safe, caring and friendly environment for our members. If bullying does occur, all athletes and parents should understand that incidents will be dealt with promptly and efficiently. Anyone who knows that bullying is occurring is expected to tell a coach, board member or member of the staff.

OBJECTIVES OF MVN'S BULLYING POLICY AND ACTION PLAN:

1. To make it clear that the club will not tolerate bullying in any form.
2. To define bullying and give all coaches, board members, parents and athletes an understanding of what constitutes bullying.
3. To make it known to all parents, athletes and coaching staff that there is a policy and protocol to follow should any incidents occur.
4. To clearly explain how to report an incident.
5. To spread the word that MVN takes bullying seriously and that all athletes and parents can be assured that they will have support when bullying is reported.

WHAT IS BULLYING?

Generally, bullying is the use of aggression, whether intentional or not, which hurts another person. It results in pain and distress. Bullying is aggression and aggression is a learned behavior. Successful anti-bullying programs provide positive social learning and positive reinforcement, and it has been found that teaching/reinforcing positive social skills is one of the most effective primary prevention strategies to reduce aggressive behaviors.

Bullying is the severe or repeated use by one or more individuals 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 another member that to a reasonably objective person has the effect of:

i. causing physical or emotional harm to the other member or damage to the other member's property;

ii. placing the other member in reasonable fear of harm to himself/herself or of damage to his/her property;

iii. creating a hostile environment for the other member at any USA Swimming/Diving activity;

iv. infringing upon the rights of the other member at any USA Swimming/Diving activity; or

v. materially and substantially disrupting the training process or the orderly operation of any USA Swimming/Diving activity (which for the purposes of this section shall include, without limitation, practices, workouts and other events of the MVN Swimming and Diving Club).

*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.
2. Separate the kids immediately.
3. Make sure everyone is safe.
4. Meet any immediate medical or mental health needs.
5. Stay calm and reassure the kids and any bystanders.
6. Model respectful behavior when you intervene.

If bullying is occurring at MVN 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.

- a. Keep all involved athletes separate.
- b. Get the story from several sources, athletes and adults.
- c. Listen without blaming.
- d. Don't label the act "bullying" while trying to understand what occurred.
- e. It may be difficult to get the whole story, especially if multiple athletes are involved and if social or cyber bullying is occurring. Collect all available information.

2. Then, we determine if bullying is occurring.

There are many behaviors that may look like bullying but require different approaches. Swimming Consider the following questions:

- a. What is the history between the athletes involved?
- b. Have conflicts occurred between these athletes in the past?
- c. Is there a power imbalance? Remember, a power imbalance is not limited to physical strength. It is not easily recognized at times. If the targeted individual feels that there is a power imbalance, there probably is.
- d. Has this happened before? Is the athlete concerned it will happen again?

SUPPORTING THE KIDS INVOLVED

3. Support the kids who are being bullied

- a. Listen and focus on the child. Learn what's going on and show you want to help. Reassure the athlete that the bullying is not their fault.
- b. Work to resolve the situation and protect the bullied athlete. The athlete, parents, team members and coaches may all have valuable input. It may help to:
 - i. ask the athlete being bullied what can be done to make them feel safe. Try not to change their routine, as he or she is not at fault and should not be singled out. One example would be to rearrange lane assignments during practices for the whole group. If more drastic measures are called for, such as switching practice groups, the athlete who is bullied should not be the one to change their routine.
 - ii. Develop a game plan. Maintain open communication with the parents. Discuss steps that will be taken and how bullying will be addressed moving forward. Parents are the single most important influence in a child's life and their support is critical.
 - iii. Be persistent and patient. Bullying may not end immediately. These are often learned behaviors. Commit to making it stop and support the bullied child consistently.

4. Address bullying behavior

a. Make sure the athlete who is bullying knows what the problem behavior is. Young people who bully must learn their behavior is wrong and harms others.

b. Show kids that bullying is taken seriously. Calmly tell the child that bullying will not be tolerated. Model respectful behavior at all times when addressing the problem.

c. Work with the athlete to understand some of the reasons that he or she is bullying others. For example:

i. sometimes children bully to fit in or just make fun of someone who is different. This may involve a bit of insecurity.

ii. sometimes children will act out as a response to – emotional issues at home, abuse, stress – or other issues going on in their lives. They may also be victims of bullying. These children may be in need of emotional support.

d. Involve the athlete who bullied to make amends and work towards repairing the situation. The goal is to help them see how their actions affect others. For example, the child can:

i. write a letter of apology to the athlete who was bullied.

ii. perform a good deed for the person who was bullied, for MVN and or for the community.

iii. clean up, repair or replace any property that may have been damaged.

e. Avoid strategies that have been proven to not work, or those with negative consequences.

i. zero tolerance and “three strikes, you’re out” strategies don’t work. Suspending or removing swimmers who bully does not reduce bullying behavior. Swimmers may be less likely to report bullying if suspension or removal from the team is the consequence.

ii. conflict resolution and peer mediation don’t appear to work for bullying. Bullying is not a conflict between people of equal power who share equal blame. Facing those who have bullied them may cause further upset to those who have been bullied.

f. Follow-up. After the bullying issue is resolved, continue finding ways to help the child who bullied understand how what they do affects others. For example, praise acts of kindness or talk about what it means to be a good teammate. Positive reinforcement goes a long way in this scenario.

5. Support bystanders who witness bullying. Kids witness bullying every day. They may want to help, but don’t know how. There are a few simple, safe ways that athletes can help stop bullying when they see it happening.

a. Be a friend to the person being bullied.

- b. Tell a trusted adult – your parent, coach or club board member.
- c. 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” is an example of this distraction.
- d. Set a good example by not bullying others.
- e. 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 (make sure the situation gets reported).

A good source for more information is available at:

www.stopbullying.gov