



Electronic Communication Policy of Cougar Aquatics

PURPOSE

Cougar Aquatics recognizes the prevalence of electronic communication and social media in today's world. Many of our swimmers use these means as their primary method of communication. While the Club acknowledges the value of these methods of communication, the Club also realizes that there are associated risks that must be considered when adults use these methods to communicate with minors.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

- **Content:** All electronic communication from Applicable Adults to minor athletes must be professional in nature.
- **Open and Transparent:** Absent emergency circumstances, if an Applicable Adult with authority over minor athletes needs to communicate directly with a minor athlete via electronic communications (including social media), the minor athlete's legal guardian must be copied. If a minor athlete communicates to the Applicable Adult (with authority over the minor athlete) privately first, said Applicable Adult must copy the minor athlete's legal guardian on any electronic communication response to the minor athlete. When an Applicable Adult with authority over minor athletes communicates electronically to the entire team, said Applicable Adult must copy another adult.
- **Requests to Discontinue:** Legal guardians may request in writing that their minor athlete not be contacted through any form of electronic communication by the club, LSC or by an Applicable Adult subject to this Policy. The organization must abide by any such request that the minor athlete not be contacted via electronic communication, or included in any social media post, absent emergency circumstances.

Hours: Electronic communications must only be sent between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m., unless emergency circumstances exist, or during competition travel.

Prohibited Electronic Communication

- Applicable Adults with authority over minor athletes are not permitted to maintain private social media connections with unrelated minor athletes and such Applicable Adults are not permitted to accept new personal page requests on social media platforms from minor athletes, unless the Applicable Adult has a fan page, or the contact is deemed as celebrity contact as opposed to regular contact. Existing social media connections with minor athletes must be discontinued. Minor athletes may “friend” the club and/or LSC’s official page. Applicable Adults with authority over minor athletes must not send private, instant or direct messages to a minor athlete through social media platforms.

GENERAL CONTENT

- All communications between a coach or other adult and an athlete must be professional in nature and for the purpose of communicating information about team activities. The content and intent of all electronic communications must adhere to the USA Swimming Code of Conduct regarding Athlete Protection.
- For example, as with any communication with an athlete, electronic communication should not contain or relate to any of the following:
 - drugs or alcohol use;
 - sexually oriented conversation; sexually explicit language; sexual activity
 - the adult’s personal life, social activities, relationship or family issues, or personal problems; and
 - inappropriate or sexually explicit pictures
- Note: Any communication concerning an athlete's personal life, social activities, relationship or family issues or personal problems must be transparent, accessible and professional.
- Whether one is an athlete, coach, board member or parent, the guiding principle to always use in communication is to ask: “Is this communication something that someone else would find appropriate or acceptable in a face-to-face meeting?” or “Is this something you would be comfortable saying out loud to the intended recipient of your communication in front of the intended recipient’s parents, the coaching staff, the board, or other athletes?” With respect to electronic communications, a simple test that can be used in most cases is whether the electronic communication with swimmers is **Transparent, Accessible and Professional**.

Transparent: All electronic communication between coaches and athletes should be transparent. Your communication should not only be clear and direct, but also free of hidden meanings, innuendo, and expectations.

Accessible: All electronic communication between coaches and athletes should be considered a matter of record and part of the Club's records. Whenever possible, include another coach or parent in the communication so that there is no question regarding accessibility.

Professional: All electronic communication between a coach and an athlete should be conducted professionally as a representative of the Club. This includes word choices, tone, grammar, and subject matter that model the standards and integrity of a staff member. If your communication meets all three of the **T.A.P.** criteria, then it is likely your method of communication with athletes will be appropriate.

FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM, BLOGS, AND SIMILAR SITES

Coaches may have personal Facebook (or other social media site) pages, but they are not permitted to have any athlete member of the Club join their personal page as a "friend." A coach should not accept any "friend" request from an athlete. In addition, the coach should remind the athlete that this is not permitted. Coaches and athletes are not permitted to "private message" each other through Facebook. Coaches and athletes are not permitted to "instant message" each other through Facebook chat or other IM method. The Club has an official Facebook page that athletes and their parents can "friend" for information and updates on team-related matters. Coaches are encouraged to set their pages to "private" to prevent athletes from accessing the coach's personal information.

COUGAR AQUATICS SOCIAL MEDIA

The Club has an official Twitter, Facebook, & Instagram page that may be followed by the general public. At times, athletes and parents from Cougar Aquatics may appear in posts made on these social media sites.

TEXTING

Parents may text the HEAD club coach with any questions they have. Coaches will not respond to athlete text messages. Athletes are also not allowed to text any coaches associated with Cougar Aquatics unless a parent/legal guardian is included in the text message(s).

EMAIL

Athletes and coaches may use email to communicate between the hours of 8am and 8pm. When communicating with an athlete through email, a parent or legal guardian, another coach, or a board member must also be copied.

TEAM APP

Coaches and Athletes may communicate through open chats in Team App. They may not communicate through individual or private messages. Communication from coaches to athletes may occur from 8am to 8pm. All messages and chat rooms are monitored by all coaching staff members and all board members.

Athlete Electronic Communication Best Practices of Cougar Aquatics

Purpose

USA Swimming member clubs are required to have an electronic communication policy for coaches and non-athlete members to follow. Similarly, athletes should be made aware that there are certain standards for electronic communication for all individuals associated with the club. The ability of coaches and non-athlete members to adhere to the required policy relies, in part, on the ability of athletes to respect the boundaries established for healthy electronic communication with the team.

Athletes should remember that swimming for the club is a privilege, and they are expected to portray themselves, their team, and their community in a positive manner at all times.

Expectations

The club holds the following expectations of athletes:

- ☐ Athletes will not use derogatory language, including sexist, racist, homophobic, obscene, or profane material of any kind.
- ☐ Athletes will not use social media to degrade, demean, or attack any person, team, or organization.
- ☐ Athletes will not use social media to contact his/her coach(es) and will instead post appropriate material to the club's profile.
- ☐ Athletes will not call or text their coach, except in an emergency or if a parent/guardian is included in the communication.
- ☐ All communication between athletes and coaches will be related to the activities of the team and should, whenever possible, be limited to in-person communication during team practices or events.

Things to remember: Texting

- ☐ Text messages and photos can be saved or screen-shot. Once the message is transmitted, the sender does not have control.
- ☐ Texting between athletes and coaches is not okay unless it is an emergency situation or another adult (such as a parent/guardian or another coach) is copied on the text.
- ☐ It is typically more effective to discuss an issue in person.

Things to remember: Social Media

- ☐ Once you post something online, it is public and permanent--even if you delete it.
- ☐ Many employers, college admissions officers, and athletic recruiters review social networking sites as part of their evaluation of an applicant. Carefully consider how others may interpret the information and content that you share about yourself.
- ☐ Never post your email address, home address, phone number, or other personal information, as it could lead to unwanted attention, stalking, or identity theft

