

# **ELMBROOK SWIM CLUB**

## **Bullying Policy and Action Plan**

### I. Need for Policy

The mission of the Elmbrook Swim Club (EBSC) is to provide a quality aquatics experience for community members of all ages, interests, and skill levels. To accomplish this, (we) provide programming in three areas: competitive, educational, and recreational.

Inherent in our mission is a commitment to the physical, emotional, and psychological safety and well-being of our members. The EBSC Bullying Policy and Action Plan is written and implemented with the interest of maintaining a safe environment for all.

#### A. Objectives of the EBSC Bullying Policy and Action Plan

1. Provide a commitment that EBSC will not tolerate bullying behavior in any form
2. Promote a common understanding and definition of bullying behavior for all board members, coaches, parents and swimmers.
3. Clarify the process for reporting suspected bullying behavior.
4. Inform board members, coaches, parents, and swimmers of the policy and procedures that will be implemented when bullying behavior is reported.
5. Assure parents and swimmers:
  - a. EBSC takes all reports of bullying behavior seriously
  - b. All reports shall be investigated, and
  - c. Action will be taken to restore safety when bullying behavior is substantiated

#### B. 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 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:

1. Causing physical or emotional harm to the other member or damage to the other member's property.
2. Placing the other member in reasonable fear of harm to himself/herself or of damage to his/her property.
3. Creating a hostile environment for the other member at any USA Swimming activity.
4. Infringing on the rights of the other member at any USA Swimming activity.
5. 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).

EBSC affirms the USAS Code of Conduct definition, and also asserts:

Bullying is intentional, harmful, humiliating, and victimizing behavior that causes emotional, social, and /or physical pain for another person. Bullying can be physical, verbal, or social, and can involve directly observable behaviors such as teasing, hitting, threatening, and destruction of property or more insidious behaviors such as spreading rumors, social exclusion, intimidation, or manipulation.

#### *Sources:*

1. United States. Health and Human Services. CDC. Home | StopBullying.gov. N.p., n.d. Web. Fall 2012.
2. Student Services/Prevention & Wellness Team. "Bullying Prevention Policy Guidelines." DPI.gov. N.p., 2007. Web. 9 Dec. 2012. <<http://ssp.wi.gov/files/ssp/pdf/bullyingguide.pdf>>.

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Bullying behavior is distinguished from normal conflict by the following criteria:

1. Repetitive (not an isolated event).
2. Real or perceived imbalance of power between the individual(s) engaging in the bullying behavior and their target(s). The power imbalance can come from a number of sources—popularity, physical size or strength, cognitive ability, etc.
3. Intent to harm. The individual(s) engaging in the bullying behavior derives power or pleasure from seeing the target(s) afraid, upset, or in physical pain as a direct or indirect result of their actions.

#### C. Prohibition

The USA Swimming Code of Conduct prohibits bullying. As such, and in accordance with EBSC policy, bullying by swimmers, staff, board members, or parents is prohibited at all EBSC scheduled or sanctioned activities, all USAS sanctioned events and activities, on the premises of all such activities, and through the use of electronic, computer, and telecommunications messaging devices (cyber bullying).

When bullying occurs outside a USA Swimming or EBSC event or activity and is brought to the attention of EBSC staff or board members, disciplinary action shall be determined and based upon whether the conduct is determined to disrupt or prevent a safe and positive environment for any member of the club.

Bullying in any form is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Bullying behavior is detrimental to team spirit and can create both short and long-term negative consequences for the target, witnesses / bystanders, and the individual engaging in the bullying behavior.

EBSC is committed to providing a safe, caring and friendly environment for all of our members. Anyone who knows or suspects that bullying behavior is happening, or who witnesses such activity, is expected to report this behavior so that it can be investigated and addressed.

## II. Statement of Policy

### A. Reporting Procedure

All swimmers, parents, coaches, and board members are expected to watch for and report incidents of potential bullying involving EBSC members.

1. Swimmers are encouraged to report all bullying behavior to a parent and a coach, verbally or in writing.
2. Bullying complaints or reports may be made anonymously, although it is acknowledged that investigation of incidents reported in this way are more difficult to investigate.
3. Reports may be made directly to the USA Swimming Safe Sport Staff (719-866-3589)
4. Coaches, staff, and board members are required to report all known or suspected incidents of bullying to an EBSC Board member and document this report in writing. All reports shall be investigated, and a determination will be made regarding:
  - (1) can the reported conduct be substantiated?
  - (2) does the conduct rise to the level of bullying? and
  - (3) what type of disciplinary action, if any, is warranted?

EBSC staff, parents, or board members found to have participated in bullying behavior, or having become aware that bullying was taking place and failing to immediately report the behavior, are

#### *Sources:*

1. *United States. Health and Human Services. CDC. Home | StopBullying.gov. N.p., n.d. Web. Fall 2012.*
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considered to be in violation of the prohibition expressed by the policy. They may be subject to disciplinary action as deemed appropriate by the board.

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 club leadership as soon as possible to maximize the accuracy of investigation, efficiency of intervention, and to minimize the potential harm to all involved.

#### **A. How we handle bullying**

When bullying or suspected bullying behavior is observed or reported during a team-related activity, the following steps shall be followed to maintain a safe environment for all:

1. Coach or designee shall intervene immediately
2. Separate the individuals involved
3. Make sure everyone is safe
4. Meet any immediate medical or mental health needs
5. Provide calm reassurance to all involved, including witnesses
6. Respectful behavior and language will be modeled as the adult(s) intervene.

When bullying behavior is reported to be occurring within the club, but has not been directly witnessed by an EBSC coach or staff member, the following process and procedures shall be followed to gather information and support all involved:

1. Separate all involved individuals until investigation is complete
2. Collect information from a variety of sources, both adults and kids if possible
3. Listen and document information without blaming or labeling the behavior as "bullying."
4. Recognize that it may be difficult to get the whole story, especially if multiple athletes are involved or the behavior in question includes the use of technology or social media. Every reasonable effort will be made to collect the available information.
5. Determination made regarding whether the behavior constitutes 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
6. Review the USA Swimming and EBSC criteria for bullying behavior. Consider:
  - a. What is the history between the individuals involved?
  - b. Have there been past conflicts?
  - c. Is there a (real or perceived) power imbalance? *A power imbalance is not limited to physical strength, and is often not easily recognized. If the targeted individual feels there is a power imbalance, there probably is.*
  - d. Has this happened before? Is the child worried it will happen again?

#### **B. Addressing the Behavior / Supporting the individuals involved**

Support for identified target(s) of bullying behavior may include, but are not limited to:

1. Assurance provided that the club is supportive of them and that the behavior directed at them was not their fault.
2. Club and family collaboration commit to provide protection from further bullying, as well as discussion of how subsequent incidents will be addressed, should they arise.
3. Asking targeted individual(s) what can be done to make them feel safe.
4. Changes to routine shall be minimized for the targeted individual(s).
5. Rearranging lane assignments for everyone. If bigger moves are necessary, such as changing practice groups, the targeted individual shall not be forced to change.
6. Reaffirm commitment to the individual(s) safety and the safety of all members.

#### **Sources:**

1. United States. Health and Human Services. CDC. Home | StopBullying.gov. N.p., n.d. Web. Fall 2012.
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Support for individual(s) engaging in the bullying behavior may include, but are not limited to:

1. Respectful discussion with the individual(s) and their family about the behavior that has been deemed unacceptable, and why (harm / potential harm caused to others).
2. Suggest resources outside the club to facilitate understanding about potential causes and functions of their behavior, as well as support for more adaptive, pro-social behaviors
3. Support and encouragement for restitution: (writing a letter apologizing to the individual(s) affected, cleaning, repairing, or paying for any property they damaged, etc).
4. Model and reinforce the replacement behaviors they are attempting to implement.

\*Peer mediation and supervised conflict resolution between the parties is not advised and is not considered sound practice. Due to the imbalance of power between the parties, this scenario may result in further pain and trauma to the targeted individual.

Support for the bystanders may include things such as, but not limited to:

1. Reinforce that telling an adult about bullying behavior is a good idea.
2. Review options for reporting suspected bullying behavior.
3. Emphasize the important role played as bystanders during incidents of bullying behavior:
  - Walking away, ignoring, or watching the behavior empowers the bully
  - Telling the bully to stop, supporting the victim, or getting help from an adult on the spot significantly reduces the perceived and real power of the bully
4. Teach the difference between reporting disturbing or dangerous behavior and the concept of tattling:
  - Tattling is telling an adult about a behavior with the intention of getting the other person in trouble.
  - Reporting a crime or a behavior that is causing harm to another is not tattling; it is being a responsible friend and teammate.
5. Assure that reports of bullying behavior will be taken seriously and action will be taken to investigate all reports. Provide assurance that their safety is not jeopardized by reporting.

#### C. False Complaints

EBSC shall treat all bullying claims as valid until and unless investigation reveals that the complaint was filed falsely or fraudulently, including but not limited to claims filed intentionally and with the purpose of causing dissention within the club or discipline for another member.

The Club reserves the right to discipline any person for filing a false or fraudulent claim of bullying, with the disciplinary consequence to be determined at the discretion of the board after a review of the facts. Claims that cannot be substantiated after investigation will not be considered false or fraudulent claims unless there is direct evidence to support such a conclusion.

#### *Sources:*

1. United States. Health and Human Services. CDC. Home | StopBullying.gov. N.p., n.d. Web. Fall 2012.
2. Student Services/Prevention & Wellness Team. "Bullying Prevention Policy Guidelines." DPI.gov. N.p., 2007. Web. 9 Dec. 2012. <<http://ssp.wi.gov/files/ssp/pdf/bullyingguide.pdf>>.