



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

SANFORD-SPRINGVALE YMCA Titans Bullying Policy

PURPOSE

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at the Sanford-Springvale YMCA (SSYMCA) and will not be tolerated. Bullying is counterproductive to team spirit and can be devastating to a victim. The SSYMCA 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, teammate or SSYMCA employee.

Objectives of the SSYMCA's Bullying Policy and Action Plan:

1. To make it clear that the SSYMCA will not tolerate bullying in any form.
2. To define bullying and give all YMCA employees, coaches, parents and swimmers a good understanding of what bullying is.
3. To make it known to all parents, swimmers and coaching staff that there is a policy and protocol should any bullying issues arise.
4. To make how to report bullying clear and understandable.
5. To spread the word that the Sanford-Springvale YMCA 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 is the severe or repeated use by one or more person(s) 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 person 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 SSYMCA/USA Swimming activity.
4. Infringing on the rights of the other person at any SSYMCA/USA Swimming activity.
5. Materially and substantially disrupting the training process or the orderly operation of any SSYMCA/USA Swimming activity (which shall include but are not limited to practices, workouts, meets, or other events held by the SSYMCA).

REPORTING PROCEDURE

An athlete who feels that he or she has been bullied is asked to do one or more of the following things:

1. Talk to your parents.
2. Talk to a Coach, the Aquatics Director, a SSYMCA employee, or another designated individual.
3. Write a letter, email or text to the Coach, Aquatics Director, SSYMCA Executive Director or another designated individual.

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 leadership personnel 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. We will intervene immediately and get help from another adult if necessary.
2. We will separate the kids involved.
3. We will make sure everyone is safe.
4. We will meet any immediate medical or mental health needs.
5. We will stay calm and reassure the kids involved, including bystanders.
6. We will model respectful behavior when we intervene.

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

INVESTIGATIVE PROCEDURES

1. **First, we get the facts.**
 - a. We keep all the involved children separate.
 - b. We get the story from several sources, both adults and kids.
 - c. We listen without blaming.
 - d. We don't call the act "bullying" while we are trying to understand what happened.

- e. In some cases, it may be difficult to get the whole story, especially if multiple athletes are involved or the bullying involves social bullying or cyber bullying. We will collect all available information.

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

There are many behaviors that look like bullying but require different approaches. It is important that we determine whether the situation is bullying or something else.

- a. We will review the SSYMCA / USA Swimming definition of bullying;
- b. To determine if the behavior is bullying or something else, we will consider the following questions:
 - i. What is the history between the kids involved?
 - ii. Have there been past conflicts?
 - iii. Is there a power imbalance? Remember that a power imbalance is not limited to physical strength. It is sometimes not easily recognized. If the targeted child feels like there is a power imbalance, there probably is.
 - iv. Has this happened before? Is the child worried it will happen again?
- c. It is important to remember that it may not matter "who started it." Some kids who are bullied may be seen as annoying or provoking, but this does not excuse the bullying behavior.
- d. Once we have determined if the situation is bullying, we will support all of the kids involved.

SUPPORTING THE KIDS INVOLVED

3. Support the kids who are being bullied

- a. We will listen and focus on the child. We will learn what's been going on and show that we want to help. We will assure the child that bullying is not their fault.
- b. We will work together to resolve the situation and protect the bullied child. The child, parents, and fellow team members and coaches may all have valuable input.

It will help to:

- i. Ask the child being bullied what can be done to make him or her feel safe.
 - 1. Changes to his/her routine will be minimized.
 - 2. He or she is not at fault and should not be singled out.
- ii. If bigger moves are necessary, such as switching practice groups, the child who is bullied will not be forced to change.

- iii. Develop a game plan. Maintain open communication between the SSYMCA and parents. Discuss the steps that will be taken and how bullying will be addressed going forward.
- c. We will be persistent. Bullying may not end overnight. We will commit to making it stop and consistently support the bullied child.

4. Address bullying behavior

- a. We will make sure the child knows what the problem behavior is. Young people who bully must learn their behavior is wrong and harms others.
- b. We will show kids that bullying is taken seriously. We will calmly tell the child that bullying will not be tolerated and we will model respectful behavior when addressing the problem.
- c. We will work with the child to understand some of the reasons he or she bullied. For example:
 - i. Sometimes children bully to fit in or just to make fun of someone is a little different from them. In other words, there may be some insecurity involved.
 - ii. Other times kids act out because something else—issues at home, abuse, stress—is going on in their lives. They also may have been bullied. These kids may be in need of additional support.
- d. We will involve the kid who bullied in making amends or repairing the situation. The goal is to help them see how their actions affect others. Examples include but are not limited to, the child may:
 - i. Write a letter apologizing to the athlete who was bullied.
 - ii. Do a good deed for the person who was bullied, for the SSYMCA, or for others in our community.
 - iii. Clean up, repair, or pay for any property they damaged.
- e. Strategies we will **try** to avoid because studies have shown they do not work or have negative consequences:
 - i. Zero tolerance or “three strikes, you’re out” strategies don’t work.
 - 1. Suspending or removing swimmers from the team who bully does not reduce bullying behavior.
 - 2. Swimmers may be less likely to report and address bullying if suspension or getting kicked off the team is the consequence.
 - ii. Conflict resolution and peer mediation don’t work for bullying.

1. Bullying is not a conflict between people of equal power who share equal blame. Facing those who have bullied may further upset kids who have been bullied.
- f. We will follow-up. After the bullying issue is resolved, we will continue to find ways to help the child who bullied understand how what they do affects other people.
 - i. For example, praise acts of kindness or talk about what it means to be a good teammate.

5. Support bystanders who witness bullying

Every day, kids witness bullying. They want to help, but don't know how. Fortunately, 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 SSYMA employee;
- 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."
- 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.

Sources: www.stopbullying.gov – a federal government website managed by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services and www.usaswimming.org/protect