

USA Swimming/TCA Swim Team Electronic Communication Policy

PURPOSE

The *Thunder Coast Aquatics* (the “Team”) 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 Team acknowledges the value of these methods of communication, the Team also realizes that there are associated risks that must be considered when adults use these methods to communicate with minors.

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 personal problems
- inappropriate or sexually explicit pictures
- 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 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. The 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 Team’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 Team. 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, MYSPACE, 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 Team 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.

Coaches are encouraged to set their pages to “private” to prevent athletes from accessing the coach’s personal information.

TWITTER

Coaches and athletes may follow each other on Twitter. Coaches cannot re-tweet an athlete message post. Coaches and athletes are not permitted to “direct message” each other through Twitter.

TEXTING

Subject to the general guidelines mentioned above, texting is allowed between coaches and athletes during the hours from 6 am until 10 pm. Texting shall only be used for the purpose of communicating information directly related to team activities.

EMAIL

Athletes and coaches may use email to communicate between the hours of 7 am and 10 pm. When communicating with an athlete through email, a parent or another coach must also be copied.

REQUEST TO DISCONTINUE ALL ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

The parents or guardians of an athlete may request in writing that their child not be contacted by coaches through any form of electronic communication.