



Rocky Mountain Rapids Safe Sport Handbook

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT FROM THE US OLYMPIC COMMITTEE

“There are a lot of reasons to play sport – at any level. A life-long activity, people often play sport to have fun and spend time with friends. Sport also encourages a healthy lifestyle, builds self-confidence; athletes also do better off the field. They learn goal-setting, teamwork and time management skills. Athletes are less likely to use cigarettes, drugs and alcohol; they have higher graduation rates and are more likely to attend college.

Unfortunately, sport can also be a high-risk environment for misconduct, including child physical and sexual abuse... Misconduct may damage an athlete’s psychological well-being; athletes who have been mistreated experience social embarrassment, emotional turmoil, psychological scars, loss of self-esteem and negative impacts on family, friends and the sport. Misconduct often hurts an athlete’s competitive performance and may cause him or her to drop out of sport entirely.”

ROCKY MOUNTAIN RAPIDS SAFE SPORT GUIDELINES

The Rocky Mountain Rapids is dedicated to providing a safe, positive, supportive, and drug free environment for our athletes as they prepare for, and participate in high-level competitive swimming activities.

The Rocky Mountain Rapids swim team maintains a zero-tolerance policy for any of the following counterproductive behaviors whether exhibited by athletes, parents, coaches, team supporters or other individuals affiliated with the swim team.

- Bullying
- Harassment
- Hazing
- Emotional Misconduct
- Physical Misconduct
- Sexual Misconduct, including Child Sexual Abuse

Conduct involving any of the above behaviors constitutes grounds for immediate disciplinary action, potential legal actions, and may cause permanent disassociation from the Rocky Mountain Rapids Swim Team.

The subsequent sections of this handbook articulate the specific programs that the Rocky Mountain Rapids Swim Team will employ to strengthen compliance with appropriate behavior standards and to reduce the risk of incidents in the above counterproductive behaviors.

BULLYING

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at Rocky Mountain Rapids Swim Team and will not be tolerated. Bullying is counterproductive to team spirit and can be devastating to a victim. The Club 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, board member or athlete/mentor.

Objectives of the Club’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 board members, 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 Rocky Mountain Rapids takes bullying seriously and that all swimmers and parents can be assured that they will be supported when bullying is reported.

What is Bullying? The USA Swimming Code of Conduct prohibits bullying. Generally, bullying is the use of aggression, whether intentional or not, which hurts another person. Bullying results in pain and distress.

The USA Swimming Bullying training (geared to adults) can be accessed here:

<https://armatus2.praesidiuminc.com/Armatus/security/anonymous/selfService?apikey=2fcdc066-45c0-11e5-85f2-6036ddcbf6e6&form=3>

TRAINING

Rocky Mountain Rapids coaches and parents will complete USA Swimming-sponsored Safe Sport Athlete Protection Training Courses.

Coaches: As the primary individuals who (1) have routine contact with or supervision over athletes and participants, (2) are responsible for enforcing child abuse and misconduct policies, (3) are in managerial or supervisory roles, and (4) are new and current staff members and/or volunteers, all Rocky Mountain Rapids coaches will complete online training provided by USA Swimming for coaches and non-athlete members about child sexual abuse and other types of misconduct prior to supervising athletes. Coaches are required to re-accomplish the athlete protection course annually. The USA Swimming course for coaches is available here:

<https://www.usaswimming.org/resources-home/resource-topic/resource-subtopic>

Parents: Parents of Rocky Mountain Rapids swimmers are strongly encouraged to complete parent-tailored version of the athlete protection course available here: <https://www.usaswimming.org/resources-home/resource-topic/resource-subtopic>

Athletes: Athletes age 12-18 are strongly encouraged to view the USA Swimming Safe Sport Athlete specific training with their parents. The course is available here: <https://www.usaswimming.org/resources-home/resource-topic/resource-subtopic>

This training will identify risk opportunities for child physical and sexual abuse, address common myths about offenders, outline patterns, behaviors and methods of operation of sexual predators, provide definitions for, and effects of, all forms of misconduct (emotional, physical sexual; bullying, harassment and hazing), identify risk opportunities for misconduct in swimming, and identify policies, practices and procedures to recognize, reduce and report misconduct.

COACH AND VOLUNTEER SCREENING

Under Article 502.6.8 of the USA Swimming rulebook, all clubs are required to comply with the USA Swimming Pre-Employment Screening Procedures for New Employees for all new employees who are required to be USA Swimming members under Article 305.4 and 502.6.3.

To comply with the requirements and recommendations of USA Swimming, the Rocky Mountain Rapids Swim Team will conduct the following pre-employment screens on new employees 1) Past Employment Reference Checks or Verifications (a minimum of the 3 most recent employers), 2) Education Verification (the highest held), and 3) State Motor Vehicle Report Examinations. All new coaches are also required to be USA Swimming members.

Additionally, one board member and at least one coach will conduct social media searches on the prospective coach(es).

A committee consisting of the Rocky Mountain Rapids head coach, two other existing coaches, and at least two board members will carefully review and evaluate the information gathered as part of making a final decision to offer employment to a candidate. The screening process should be completed before the employee is officially hired and begins employment.

The Head Coach and President of the Board will select from the USA Swimming-recommended providers for background checks. A list of recommended providers can be found here: <http://www.swimstaffselect.org/>

PHOTOGRAPHY

There has been much talk about whether it is safe to have images taken of children participating in sports. While the great majority of images are appropriate and are taken in good faith, it is a fact that images can be misused and children can be put at risk if common-sense procedures are not observed.

1. The publishing of a photograph of swimmer under 18 either on a notice board or in a published article or video recording (including video streaming) of swimming competitions (“publication”) should only be done with parents’ consent.
2. A parent or guardian has a right of refuse to have children photographed. The exercise of this right of refusal cannot be used as grounds for refusing entry into a swimming competition.

Therefore, any photo that may go to press or on a notice board, be it through a member of the club or official photographer, should receive parental consent before publishing/displaying the photo, preferably in writing. In the case of open meets and other competitions where the host club has an official photographer present, all parents attending should be made aware of this in the meet information. If photos are to be published anywhere, the individual parent should be given the opportunity to withhold their consent. Their right to do so should be specifically drawn to their attention. All photographs must observe generally accepted standards of decency in particular:

- Action shots should be a celebration of the sporting activity and not a sexualized image in a sporting context.
- Action shots should not be taken or retained where the photograph reveals a torn or displaced swim suit.
- Photographs should not be taken from behind swimming blocks at the start of a race or exhibit a child climbing out of the swimming pool.
- Photographs should not be taken in locker-rooms or bathrooms.

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Rocky Mountain Rapids 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.

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, 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 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.

Twitter: The Club has an official Twitter page that coaches, athletes and parents can follow for information and updates on team-related matters. Coaches are not permitted to follow athletes on Twitter. Likewise, athletes are not permitted to follow coaches on Twitter. Coaches and athletes are not permitted to "direct message" each other through Twitter. 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 7am until 9pm. Texting only shall 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 7am and 9pm. When communicating with an athlete through email, a parent, another coach, or a board member 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.

LOCKER ROOM MONITORING

PURPOSE The following guidelines are designed to maintain personal privacy as well as to reduce the risk of misconduct in locker rooms and changing areas.

Facilities: The following is a description of our practice and competition facilities to allow athletes and their families to plan their use: We practice at: Liberty High School, The US Olympic Training Center, United States Air Force Academy and Wagon Trails Recreation Center. These locations have changing areas that

are shared with other facility users. As such, there are likely to be people who are not associated with Rocky Mountain Rapids in the changing area around the time of practice.

Monitoring: General Policy Considerations Coaches and staff make every effort to recognize when an athlete goes to the locker room or changing area during practice and competition and, if they do not return in a timely fashion, we will check on the athlete's whereabouts. We discourage parents from entering locker rooms and changing areas unless it is truly necessary. In those instances, it should only be a same-sex parent. If this is necessary, parents should let the coach or administrator know about this in advance. If an athlete needs assistance with his or her uniform or gear (for example, a child under the age of eight), or an athlete's disability warrants assistance, then we ask that parents let the coach or an administrator know beforehand that he or she will be helping the athlete.

Rocky Mountain Rapids has staggered practices, with different groups arriving and departing throughout the practice time. It is therefore not practical to constantly monitor locker rooms and changing area. While we do not post staff, coach, or board members inside or at the doors of the locker rooms and changing areas, we do make occasional sweeps of these areas. The coaches and board members conduct these sweeps, with women checking on female locker rooms, and men checking on male locker rooms.

Use of Cell Phones and Other Mobile Recording Devices: Cell phones and other mobile devices with recording capabilities, including voice recording, still cameras and video cameras increase the risk for different forms of misconduct in locker rooms and changing areas. The USA Swimming Athlete Protection Policies prohibit the use of such devices in the locker room or other changing area: 305.3 Use of audio or visual recording devices, including a cell phone camera, is not allowed in changing areas, rest rooms or locker rooms. Cell phones are expected to remain enclosed in bags or pockets while in the locker room.

REPORTING VIOLATIONS OF THE ABOVE POLICIES

Any coach, athlete, or parent will report any violation of the above policies to the Head Coach and the President of the Board immediately. The President of the Board will convene a review panel consisting of three coaches and two board members to review details of the violation and determine the most appropriate course of action. Implicated coaches and/or board members will not participate in the review panel.

Penalties for violation of the above policies may include reprimand, suspension, loss of affiliation with the Rocky Mountain Rapids Swim Team, remedial training, termination, and/or initiation of police investigation and criminal proceedings.

INPUT TO THIS DOCUMENT

The Rocky Mountain Rapids Swim Team is committed to protecting our athletes, coaches, and families, and to providing the safest and most professional environment possible for all individuals. Compliance with the policies in this handbook are mandatory and essential for the long-term success and prosperity of the team.

This document will be reviewed and re-certified annually by a quorum of coaches and board members. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns with any information contained within this handbook, please contact The Rocky Mountain Rapids Head Coach, and/or the Board President.