



## ELMHURST SWIM TEAM POLICY CONCERNING BULLYING

*The Board of Directors has adopted this policy concerning bullying after review and consideration of USA Swimming's model procedure to implement its rule prohibiting bullying. USA Swimming clubs are required to have an action plan to address bullying and the plan must be reviewed with and agreed to by all athletes, parents, coaches, and other adults at the club.*

*EST has operated under the default policy in place as a result of USA Swimming's safe sport protocols. From the date of approval of this policy forward, June 16, 2015, all registrants to Elmhurst Swim Team, new and renewing, as well as their parents, coaches, officials and other adults within the program will be bound by the following policy. The Board of Directors and coaches have the responsibility to implement the default policy until the opening of registration for the 2015-16 season and, thereafter, they have the duty to implement the policy below.*

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### **Action Plan of the Elmhurst Swim Team to Address Bullying**

#### **PURPOSE**

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at Elmhurst Swim Team (the "Club") and it will not be tolerated. Bullying is counterproductive to team spirit and can be devastating to a victim and a negative contributing factor to the development of the bully. 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 (through a report or by observation) 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 Elmhurst Swim Team takes bullying seriously and that all swimmers and parents can be assured that they will be supported when bullying is reported.

#### **WHAT IS BULLYING?**

Source: [www.stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov) – a federal government website managed by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services



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 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:

- i. causing physical or emotional harm to the other member or damage to the other member's property;
- ii. placing the other member in reasonable fear of harm to himself/herself or of damage to his/her property;
- iii. creating a hostile environment for the other member at any USA Swimming activity;
- iv. infringing on the rights of the other member at any USA Swimming activity; or
- v. 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).

## **REPORTING PROCEDURE**

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

- Talk to your parents;
- Talk to a Club Coach, Board Member, or other designated individual;
- Write a letter or email to the Club Coach, Board Member, or other designated individual;
- Make a report to the USA Swimming Safe Sport staff if you believe the Club has not handled the situation adequately or responded. A copy of the report should be provided to the President.

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 Club leadership 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.

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We have provided a sample written form of a report for your convenience. Reports of bullying require a sensitivity to those involved. Kids are taught in school to respond to bullying, and parents are encouraged not to stand by and allow the conduct to continue. However, the Club has many coaches and there are officials on the deck at meets. We also have volunteers who understand this policy and know to bring bullying to the attention of the right people. Adult intervention by someone other than a coach or an official or a member of the Board of Directors needs to be handled as conservatively and carefully as possible and it should occur only for the purpose of separating the children and allowing tensions to subside while contacting a coach or an official or a member of the Board of Directors, if possible. If the contact is not convenient or accomplished due to circumstances, the report should occur as soon as practicable after the incident. At that point, and in all instances where non-physical bullying is a concern, an adult should not need to intervene between the children because there is more time to respond. Of course, one parent may raise the concern with the other parent privately and in a constructive fashion.

### **HOW WE HANDLE BULLYING**

If bullying is occurring during team-related activities, we **STOP BULLYING ON THE SPOT** using the following steps:

1. Intervene immediately. It is ok to get another adult to help.
2. Separate the kids involved.
3. Make sure everyone is safe.
4. Meet any immediate medical or mental health needs.
5. Stay calm. Reassure the kids involved, including bystanders.
6. Model respectful behavior when you intervene.

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

### ***FINDING OUT WHAT HAPPENED***

#### **1. First, we get the facts.**

- a. Keep all the involved children separate.
- b. Get the story from several sources, both adults and kids.
- c. Listen without blaming.
- d. Don't call the act "bullying" while you are trying to understand what happened.
- e. It may be difficult to get the whole story, especially if multiple athletes are involved or the bullying involves social bullying or cyber bullying. Collect all available information.

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2. **Then, we determine if it's 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.
  - a. Review the USA Swimming definition of bullying;
  - b. To determine if the behavior is bullying or something else, consider the following questions:
    - What is the history between the kids involved?
    - Have there been past conflicts?
    - 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.
    - Has this happened before? Is the child worried it will happen again?
  - c. 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 you have determined if the situation is bullying, support all of the kids involved.

### ***SUPPORTING THE KIDS INVOLVED***

#### **3. Support the kids who are being bullied**

- a. Listen and focus on the child. Learn what’s been going on and show you want to help. Assure the child that bullying is not their fault.
- b. 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 may help to:
  - i. Ask the child being bullied what can be done to make him or her feel safe. Remember that changes to routine should be minimized. He or she is not at fault and should not be singled out. For example, consider rearranging lane assignments for everyone. If bigger moves are necessary, such as switching practice groups, the child who is bullied should not be forced to change.
  - ii. Develop a game plan. Maintain open communication between the Club and parents. Discuss the steps that will be taken and how bullying will be addressed going forward.
- c. Be persistent. Bullying may not end overnight. Commit to making it stop and consistently support the bullied child.

#### **4. Address bullying behavior**

- a. Make sure the child knows what the problem behavior is. Young people who bully must learn their behavior is wrong and harms others.
- b. Show kids that bullying is taken seriously. Calmly tell the child that bullying will not be tolerated. Model respectful behavior when addressing the problem.

*Source: [www.stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov) – a federal government website managed by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services*



- c. 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. Involve the kid who bullied in making amends or repairing the situation. The goal is to help them see how their actions affect others. For example, the child can:
    - i. Write a letter apologizing to the athlete who was bullied.
    - ii. Do a good deed for the person who was bullied, for the Club, or for others in your community.
    - iii. Clean up, repair, or pay for any property they damaged.
  - e. Avoid strategies that don't work or have negative consequences:
    - i. Zero tolerance or “three strikes, you're out” strategies don't work. Suspending or removing from the team swimmers who bully does not reduce bullying behavior. Swimmers may be less likely to report and address bullying if suspension or getting kicked off the team is the consequence. While the Club will make every effort to work with team swimmers who engage in bullying behavior, the Club will consider suspension, then expulsion from the team if the cooperation fails or if the nature of the bullying behavior indicates that the bullying swimmer poses a risk to the safety and well-being of other swimmers.
    - ii. Conflict resolution and peer mediation don't work for bullying. 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. Follow-up. After the bullying issue is resolved, continue finding ways to help the child who bullied to understand how what they do affects other people. 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 club board member;
  - 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.

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- 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.

**CONTACTS TO CONSIDER:** The head coach or any coach with whom the swimmer or parent is comfortable; an official if the conduct occurs at a meet; or a member of the Club's Board of Directors. A form letter follows if you prefer to request a meeting in writing:

DATE

RE: Concerns

Dear Head Coach and/or Board of Directors,

This email is being written to share some concerns our family has. It has been a tough decision to write this as we do not want to cause tension with anyone on the team especially for our children. All the while, we know that hearing concerns is a part of your role and if we want someone to hear our concerns then we must be willing to share them.

Our concerns have to do with, what we feel to be, bullying behavior by NAME OF PERSON toward our child(ren). Specifically, that NAME OF PERSON has DETAILS OF BEHAVIOR.

We understand that others may not agree with our conclusion of how inappropriate this behavior is. However, we do feel the most important thing to address is how this has made our child(ren) feel.

At this time, we would request an in person meeting with you to further discuss our concerns and how the team handles such concerns. This opportunity would be much appreciated and would go a long way in showing us how much the team cares about it's kids.

Thank you!

Sincerely,

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