

Preventing False Allegations



There are six things you can do to prevent false allegations:

1. Follow the policies.

Your team's policies and USA Swimming's Code of Conduct, Athlete Protection Policies, and the Best Practice Guidelines specify ways to decrease the risk of inappropriate interactions between coaches and athletes and of false allegations. You should familiarize yourself with these and make sure that you and your colleagues follow them at all times.

2. Keep your boundaries with swimmers clear.

Your swimmers look up to you. They may hang on your every word, watch your every move, and crave your attention. As the adult in the situation and as the person holding the power, you are responsible for managing your relationship with your swimmers. This means you set the limits, you are the role model.

Tips for Establishing Healthy Boundaries:

Do:

- Use the types of physical contact authorized by USA Swimming and your club
- Use appropriate language with athletes and other adults
- Consider what your behavior would look like to others

Don't:

- Engage in inappropriate verbal or physical interactions with athletes
- Engage in unmonitored or unauthorized electronic communications (texts, emails, social networking, etc.) with athletes
- Discuss details of your personal life with athletes
- Discuss sexual or other private behaviors
- Give gifts to athletes (unless you give something to everyone)
- Go to an athlete's home unless another adult is present

3. Avoid time alone time with a lone swimmer.

Try to keep your interactions with swimmers in the presence of others, in open and observable areas. That way everyone can see your behavior.

- When situations come up where you must be with a lone swimmer, keep your office door open and your windows free from obstructions
- Avoid unnecessary physical contact
- Keep your conversations strictly about coaching issues
- Don't make a habit of being alone with the same swimmer



4. Treat all swimmers with courtesy and respect.

Regardless of the strength of a particular swimmer, or how well they are or are not swimming, all swimmers must be treated with courtesy and respect. Research has shown that ridicule and humiliation adversely affect athletic performance and are contrary to USA Swimming.

5. Don't pick favorites.

Child molesters often pick favorites. Then the molester takes advantage of the relationship to get their own needs met.

You'll want to avoid this behavior. Not all swimmers are equal and everyone on the team knows the top performers. But that doesn't mean you don't also spend time developing the talents of the other swimmers on the team. Recognizing and nurturing the talent of one athlete should not come at the expense of recognizing and nurturing the talent of the others on your team.

6. Respond directly to anything unusual and tell your supervisor and your Club Board President.

If you find yourself in an uncomfortable situation with an athlete, you should respond directly to the athlete and address the situation. Then, let your supervisor know so that he/she can document the situation and be prepared for future questions about the interaction. Letting your supervisor know keeps the situation in the open and gives a heads up if a parent expresses concern.