



## MEMORANDUM OF RECORD

15 NOVEMBER 2017

### SUBJECT: TERRE HAUTE TORPEDOES (THT) POLICY: ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

*This policy, electronic communication, is mandated by USA Swimming and must be reviewed with and agreed to by all athletes, parents, coaches and other adults affiliated with the club.*

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#### PURPOSE

The Terre Haute Torpedoes (THT) 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 **T**ransparent, **A**ccessible and **P**rofessional.



**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.

### **Key Ideas to Remember:**

Keep these few things in mind before hitting the share or send button:

1. Use Good Judgment:
  - a. Refrain from comments that can be interpreted as slurs, demeaning, inflammatory, etc. The Internet is full of varied opinions, and it's ok to share yours, but beware of how others may interpret what you say.
  - b. Retweeting or "sharing" other's tweets makes them look like yours, and imply that you support the information that is displayed.
  
2. Understand the Concept of Community:
  - a. The essence of community is the idea that it exists so that you can support others and they, in turn, can support you. You need to learn how to balance personal and professional information, and the important role that transparency plays in building a community. Your community shouldn't be an environment where competition is encourage or emphasized, but rather a platform where your customers or users feel comfortable sharing, connecting and receiving help.
  - b. There are many levels of community: THT USA Swimming, swimming clubs, former athletes, coaches, and the list goes on. Thing about how messages can impact people within every community.
  
3. When in doubt, don't post. If you need to thing about it, the safe action (and most likely correct) is to not share. Better safe, than sorry.
  
4. What is posted now, can haunt you later:
  - a. As colleges and universities begin the recruiting process, many now do a social medial check. Will the schools find information they are pleased with and a person who they want to represent their team or will they be discouraged in what they see?



b. Are you easy to find? Make sure you use appropriate levels of privacy and protection.

5. Keep private information private. Be smart and safe about what you share. Do you really need to tell everyone your cell phone number, what time you leave for school everyday, or where you live?

6. Never use social media to vent your frustrations or anger towards something or someone. When in doubt, talk it out. Speak with a parent, teacher, coach, or anyone that you trust before expressing your feelings in a social media network.

7. NEVER post anything on a social media network when you are mad.

### **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 in addition to the main website page.

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

### **TWITTER**

*Best Practice:* 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.

*Alternative Option:* Coaches and athletes may follow each other on Twitter. Coaches cannot retweet an athlete message post. Coaches and athletes are not permitted to “direct message” each other through Twitter.

### **USE OF CAMERAS:**

Under no circumstances will cameras be allowed in locker rooms. If your cell phone has a camera device, it may never be used in the locker room. Taking photos in a locker room is strictly prohibited. Photos will be confiscated or deleted. No photos containing nudity or inappropriate expressions or hand signals of any Torpedoes member will be sent, forwarded, or posted.



### **USE OF CELL PHONES:**

At practice: No cell phones will be allowed out of swim bags during practice without the coach's permission to make or accept a call.

At Meets: Out of courtesy to fellow swimmers and teammate, all cell phones should either have the volume on "low" or "vibrate". All devices containing music should be used only with headphones or ear buds/head phones before or after practice. They are not allowed to be worn during practice/dryland at any time.

### **TEXTING**

Subject to the general guidelines mentioned above, texting is allowed between coaches and athletes during the hours from 6am until 8pm. Texting only shall be used for the purpose of communicating information directly related to team activities.

The texting of inappropriate language, use of swear words and foul language, divulging of personal or private information of another member without their consent is inappropriate behavior.

### **EMAIL**

Athletes and coaches may use email to communicate between the hours of 6am and 8pm. When communicating with an athlete through email, a parent, another coach, or a board member must also be copied.

### **CONSEQUENCES:**

Any violation of these rules, depending on the severity, will result in at a minimum of a verbal warning to a disciplinary meeting between the violator, parents, and the coach. Consequences can range from a one-week suspension from practice and meets, to the member being excluded from swim meets and/or travel trips, or depending on the severity of the act, could result in suspension or termination from the Team. The Head Coach with input from the Torpedoes Executive Board of Directors will ultimately decide the consequence. When a potential violation is discovered, and/or reported, it will be investigated quickly and dealt with swiftly. Each case will be dealt with on a situational basis and consequences may not be equal to all, but they will be fair to all.

### **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.

### **FINAL THOUGHTS:**

Once a message goes out, it doesn't come back. In an age where the Internet lasts forever, please remember once something is sent, it can very rarely be completely removed or



retracted. Even if a comment, post, or tweet can be deleted, users can still remember what was said.