



## LESD ACTION PLAN TO ADDRESS BULLYING

**Purpose:** USA Swimming and LESD are committed to safeguarding the well-being of all of its members, with the welfare of its athlete members as the top priority. 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. Bullying is unacceptable at the Lake Erie Silver Dolphins Swim Club (“LESD” or “Club”) and will not be tolerated. Bullying is harmful to team spirit and can be devastating to a victim. LESD is committed to providing a safe, caring and friendly environment for all of its members. If bullying does occur, all members of LESD should know that it will be dealt with promptly and effectively. Anyone who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell a coach or staff member.

**Anti-Bullying Policy and Action Plan:** The objectives of LESD’s anti-bullying policy and action plan are:

- To make it clear that LESD will not tolerate bullying in any form;
- To give coaches, staff, parents and swimmers an understanding of what bullying is.
- To make it known to all parents, swimmers and coaching staff that there is a policy and protocol should any bullying issues arise.
- To make the process for reporting bullying clear and understandable.
- To make it known that LESD takes bullying seriously and that swimmers and parents can be comfortable knowing they will be supported when bullying is reported.

**What is Bullying?** The [USA Swimming Code of Conduct](#) (Article 304) defines bullying as 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 LESD coach;
- Write a letter or email to the LESD Head Coach, or another designated individual;
- Make a safe sport claim to the [LESD Safe Sport Coordinator](#);
- Make a report to the [USA Swimming Safe Sport staff](#).

There is no set time limit for initiating a complaint under this procedure, but every reasonable effort should be made to bring the complaint to the attention of the appropriate person at LESD as soon as possible so that memories are fresh, behavior can be accurately recalled, and bullying behavior can be stopped as soon as possible.

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

- Intervene immediately. It is acceptable to find another adult to help.
- Separate the children involved.
- Make sure everyone is safe.
- Identify and, if reasonable to do so, address any immediate medical or mental health needs.
- Stay calm. Reassure the children, including bystanders.
- Be a model of respectful behavior when you intervene.

If bullying is occurring or is reported to be occurring, LESD will address the bullying by **FINDING OUT WHAT HAPPENED** and **SUPPORTING THE CHILDREN INVOLVED** as follows:

1. First, we get the facts.
  - a. Keep the involved children separated.
  - b. Get the story from several sources - children and adults.
  - c. Listen; do not blame.
  - d. Don't label the behavior "bullying" while you are trying to learn what happened.
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 children who are bullied may be seen as annoying or provoking, but this does not excuse any bullying behavior.
  - d. Once you determine the situation may be bullying, support all of the children involved.
  - e. Collect all available information. It may be difficult to get the full story, especially if multiple parties are involved or the bullying involves social bullying or cyber bullying.
3. Support the children 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:
      - Ask the child being bullied what can be done to make him or her feel safe. 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.
      - 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. Young people who bully must learn their behavior is wrong and harms others. Make sure the child knows what the problem behavior is.
    - b. Show that bullying is taken seriously. Calmly explain that bullying will not be tolerated. Use respectful behavior when addressing the problem.
    - c. Work with the child to understand the reasons for the bullying. For example:
      - Sometimes children bully to fit in or to make fun of someone a little different from them. In other words, insecurity.
      - Other times kids act out because of something else - issues at home, abuse, stress. They also may have been bullied. These children may need additional support.
    - d. Involve the bullying child in repairing the situation. The goal is to help them see how their actions affect others. For example, the child can:
      - Write a letter of apology.
      - Do a good deed for the person who was bullied, for the team, or for others in the community.
      - Clean up, repair, or pay for any property they damaged.
    - e. Avoid strategies that don’t work or have negative consequences:
      - Zero tolerance or “three strikes, you’re out” strategies aren’t effective.

- Suspending or removing a children that bully does not reduce bullying.
  - Swimmers may be less likely to report and address bullying if suspension or getting kicked off the team is the consequence.
  - 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. Kids that witness bullying typically 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.
  - 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.

**Registration with the Lake Erie Silver Dolphins will serve as agreement to the conditions above.**