

Delaware Swim Team: Electronic Communication Policy

Introduction: Delaware Swim Team 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.

DST prohibits cyberbullying or cyberstalking of any athlete, coach, or official by any means or method, including but not limited to the use of Facebook, Text Messaging, Instant Messaging, Twitter, E-Mail, and SnapChat. Cyberbullying and Cyberstalking are unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

CYBERBULLYING:

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place using electronic technology of any kind. Cyberbullying involves the use of electronic information and communication technologies to support deliberate or repeated harassment, intimidation and/or hostile behavior by an individual or group through personal attacks or other means that harms others, whether intentional or not. Examples of cyberbullying includes mean text messages, emails, tweets, or posts including rumors sent by email or posted on social networking sites, and embarrassing pictures, videos, websites, or fake profiles.

CYBERSTALKING:

Cyberstalking involves the use of electronic information and communication technologies to communicate words, images, or language directed at or about a specific person, causing substantial emotional distress to that person. Harassing, intimidating, and hostile mean any electronic communication that is perceived as being motivated either by any actual or perceived characteristic including race, color, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, physical attributes, socioeconomic status, physical or mental ability or disability or any other characteristic related to athletic performance that a reasonable person should know under the any of these circumstances:

1. Will have the effect of harming another athlete or has the effect of substantially interfering with another athlete's performance or opportunities.
2. Has the effect of having a negative impact on another athlete's emotional or psychological well-being.
3. Has the effect of insulting or demeaning another athlete to cause disruption in or substantial interference with practice, any swim meet, or any other DST related activity.

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, 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, 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. Always 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

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.

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. **TEXTING SHOULD BE USED SPARINGLY OR FOR EMERGENCY CONTACT ONLY. PREFERRED METHOD OF COMMUNICATION IS EMAIL.**

Email

Developmental, Age Group, Junior National Policy (14 & unders) - Athletes and coaches may use email to communicate between the hours of 7am and 9pm. When communicating with an athlete through email, a parent, or another coach, must also be copied.

Senior, Senior Nationals (15 & overs) – Athletes and coaches will communicate via email at their discretion and as needed. When communicating with an athlete through email, a parent, or another coach, 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.

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