

# Emmaus Aquatic Club Anti-Bullying Policy & Action Plan



## **PURPOSE**

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at the **Emmaus Aquatic Club** (“EMAC”, the “Club”) and will not be tolerated. Bullying is counterproductive to team spirit and can be devastating to a victim. EMAC is committed to providing a safe, caring, and friendly environment for all of our members and staff. If bullying does occur, all athletes, coaches, board members and/or parents should know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. Anyone who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell a coach, board member or athlete-mentor.

## Objectives of the EMAC’s Bullying Policy and Action Plan:

1. Demonstrate that EMAC will not tolerate bullying in any form.
2. Define bullying and give all athletes, coaches, board members and/or parents a thorough understanding of what bullying is.
3. Promulgate the policy and protocol should any bullying issues arise.
4. Make reporting bullying clear and understandable.
5. Demonstrate that EMAC takes bullying seriously and that all athletes, coaches, board members and/or parents can be assured that they will be supported when bullying is reported.

## **WHAT IS BULLYING?**

Generally, bullying is the use of aggression, whether intentional or not, which hurts another person. Bullying results in pain and distress. While this document largely assumes and presents bullying in the capacity of an athlete-to-athlete dynamic, it is acknowledged that such is not the only relationship exploitable in a bullying situation. If and when other circumstances arise, procedure followed will conform with the below descriptions even if the inciting relationship is not explicitly documented here below.

The USA Swimming (USAS) Code of Conduct prohibits bullying and mandates all members Clubs have an anti-bullying policy in place. EMAC’s policy derives from USAS examples and best practices.

Bullying is the severe or repeated use by one or more individuals 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:

1. causing physical or emotional harm to another or damage to another’s property;
2. placing the another in reasonable fear of harm to himself/herself or of damage to his/her property;
3. creating a hostile environment for the another at any Club activity;
4. infringing on the rights of another at Club activity; or
5. materially and substantially disrupting the training process or the orderly operation of any Club activity (which for the purposes of this section shall include, without limitation, practices, workouts and other events of a USAS 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:

1. Talk to their parents;
2. Talk to a Club Coach, Board Member, or other designated individual;
3. Write a letter or email to a Club coaches, Board Member, or other designated individual;
4. Make a report to the USA Swimming Safe Sport staff.

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, behavior can be accurately recalled and the 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:

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

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 THOSE INVOLVED** using the following approach:

### FINDING OUT WHAT HAPPENED

1. **First, we get the facts.**
  - a. Keep all involved separate.
  - b. Get the story from several sources, both adults and children.
  - c. Listen without blaming.
  - d. Don't call the act "bullying" while 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 cyberbullying. Collect all available information.
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 above definition of bullying;
  - b. To determine if the behavior is bullying or something else, consider the following questions:
    - i. What is the history between those involved?
    - ii. Have there been past conflicts?
    - iii. Is there a power imbalance? Remember that a power imbalance is not limited to physical strength. It is sometimes not easily recognized. If the target feels like there is a power imbalance, there probably is.
    - iv. Has this happened before? Is the target worried it will happen again?

- c. Remember that it may not matter “who started it.” Some 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 those involved.

### **SUPPORTING THOSE INVOLVED**

#### **3. Support those who are being bullied**

- a. Listen and focus on the target.
  - i. Learn what’s been going on and show you want to help.
  - ii. Assure the child that bullying is not their fault.
- b. Work together to resolve the situation and protect the bullied individual. Athletes, coaches, board members and/or parents may all have valuable input. With children it may help to:
  - i. Ask the individual 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 individual.

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

- a. Make sure the individual knows what the problem behavior is. Young people who bully must learn their behavior is wrong and harms others.
- b. Show everyone that bullying is taken seriously. Calmly tell the individual that bullying will not be tolerated. Model respectful behavior when addressing the problem.
- c. Work with the individual 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 who is a little different from them. In other words, there may be some insecurity involved.
  - ii. Other times children 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 individual who bullied in making amends or repairing the situation. The goal is to help them see how their actions affect others. For example, the individual can:
  - i. Write a letter apologizing to the person 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 athletes who bully does not reduce bullying behavior. Athletes may be less likely to report and address bullying if suspension or getting kicked off the team is the consequence.
  - 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 those who have been bullied.

- f. Follow-up. After the bullying issue is resolved, continue finding ways to help the individual who bullied to understand how what they do affects other people. For example, with children praise acts of kindness or talk about what it means to be a good teammate.
5. **Support bystanders who witness bullying.** Every day, individuals witness bullying. As individuals we want to help, but we may not know how. Fortunately, there are a few simple, safe ways that everyone can help stop bullying when they see it happening.
  - a. Be a friend to the person being bullied;
  - b. Tell a trusted authority figure – a parent, coach, or Club board member;
  - c. Help the individual 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.