**Greater Philadelphia Aquatics Policy on Youth Protection Outline**

***How does Greater Philadelphia Aquatics prevent child abuse in or with the Programming?***

Greater Philadelphia Aquatics has adopted a number of policies aimed at eliminating opportunities for abuse within the program. These policies focus on employee selection and on placing barriers to abuse within the program.

***Employment***

Greater Philadelphia Aquatics takes great pride in the quality of our leadership both in coaching and swim lesson instruction. Being an employee of Greater Philadelphia Aquatics is a privilege, not a right. The quality of the program and the safety of our youth members call for high-quality leaders.

The Greater Philadelphia Aquatics employment application requests background information that is thoroughly checked by the company administration including previous employment, prior legal issues, and a motor vehicle driving record. While there is no current type of background screening that can identify someone with the potential of committing any kind of act of child abuse, with due diligence we can investigate the background of potential employees and their prior experiences working with children in the same proximity and similar environment they will work in with Greater Philadelphia Aquatics.

***Barriers to Abuse Within our Programming***

Greater Philadelphia Aquatics has adopted the following policies to provide additional security for our members. These policies are primarily for the protection of our youth members; they also serve to protect our staff members from false accusations of abuse.

Note: Bold type denotes rules and policies.

* **Within the Greater Philadelphia Aquatics Swim School:
Constant Parent supervision is required. We ask that all parents remain at the pool in the designated viewing area for the duration of their child(ren)’s lesson time.**
* **No “off-deck” instructor or coordinator contact with swim lesson students. If a child needs to leave the swim lesson for any reason they are to be attended to immediately by their parent or guardian.**
* **Pick-up and drop-off policy: the instructors or designated Swim School employee will approach the swimmer with their parent/guardian before the lesson begins to “pick-up” the swimmer. When the lesson is completed the instructor will bring the child back to their parent/guardian. These exchanges will ALWAYS be done on the pool deck.**
* **All swim lesson sessions are observed by the parents of the swimmers, the Swim Lesson Coordinator and members of the GCIT lifeguarding staff (for water safety only). There are usually at least two instructors (working with different groups) in the water at any given time.**
* **All Greater Philadelphia Aquatic Staff must complete an online criminal background check which searches for convictions involving adolescents as well as any felony convictions. Only those without any history of events with children will be hired.**

As it pertains to the Greater Philadelphia Aquatic Club Swim Team (to include Fall and Spring warm-up as well as Stroke Clinics).

* **Parents are welcomed to view all practices from the balcony.**
* **All coaching staff must obtain American Red Cross Lifesaving and CPR/First Aid. Additionally coaches are required to take the online USA Swimming/American Red Cross Safety Training for Swim Coaches exam. All coaching staff must also take and pass and maintain the USA Swimming online background screening check. All coaches must take and pass the USA Swimming child safety test every two years (beginning in 2011).**
* **Thorough investigation is done (checking references provided in the application process) into the background of each applicant. Special attention is paid to the conduct of any applicant in similar situations with children.**
* **One-on-one contact between swimmers and GPAC employees, outside of the view of others, is strictly forbidden. If a situation arises that requires a personal conference the meeting must be conducted with either the Head Coach or Head Age Group Coach present.**
* **All staff must respect the privacy of youth members in situations such as changing clothes and using the restrooms. Intruding will only be used as a last resort in situations where the health and safety of one or more team members is at risk. Staff must also protect their own privacy in similar situations.**
* **Separate accommodations: during any kind of team travel trip, no youth is permitted to sleep, stay, or visit in the room of any adult acting on the behalf of Greater Philadelphia Aquatics (coach, team administrator, or team approved chaperone) except in the event of a team meeting where all members of the traveling party are present, or in the event a coach or team approved chaperone is the swimmer’s parent/legal guardian.**
* **While on a team travel trip, in the event of an emergency the swimmers should notify their direct team-approved chaperone and/or coach immediately. Entrance into a swimmer’s room will only be done when the health or safety of one or more team members is at risk. Two members of the team approved supervisory staff will be present at all room checks.**
* **No one-on-one travel trips. Any travel trips involve only one team member must include that team member’s parent. Coaches and staff members will not accompany any single team member on a travel trip without a second adult supervisor.**
* **On all team travel trips there will be at least one staff member or team approved chaperone of each gender when both genders are represented on the trip. If only one gender is represented on the trip at least one chaperone of that gender must also attend the trip.**
* **Proper attire is required for all local and travel team activities.**
* **Constructive discipline. The discipline of team members should be in line with the mission and vision statements of the organization. Corporal punishment is never permitted.**
* **Hazing is prohibited. Physical and initiations are prohibited and may not be included in any part of the Greater Philadelphia Aquatic Club programming.**

***How can parents help protect their children?***

Parents participate in the protection of their children in a variety of ways. Greater Philadelphia Aquatics recognizes the need for open lines of communication so that children are encouraged to bring any troubles to their parents for advice and counsel. In addition, parents need to be involved in their child’s aquatics activities. If any deviations from the Greater Philadelphia Aquatics programming or mission are noted, parents should call these to the attention of the Head Coach. If the problems persist, parents can contact the offices of Middle Atlantic Swimming and USA Swimming for assistance.

***Why do most child victims of sexual abuse keep the abuse secret?***

A victim of child sexual abuse is under a great deal of pressure to keep the abuse secret. In many cases of child molestation, the molester has threatened to harm the child or a member of the child's family. The molester might have told the child that they would not be believed even if the child did tell. Another common situation is that the molester will tell the child that if the child tells about the abuse, they will get into trouble. The clear message is given to the child that if another person finds out, something bad will happen to the child or someone close to them. This pressure to maintain silence can often be successfully overcome by establishing open communication between children and adults through proper education for children.

***What should I do if a child tells me that they have been sexually abused?***

How an adult responds to a child when they try to disclose abuse can influence the outcome of the child's experience of victimization and following healing. By maintaining an apparent calm, the adult can help reassure the child that everything is going to be okay. By not criticizing the child, we counteract any statements the abuser made to the victim about the child getting into trouble. Reassure the child that you are concerned about what happened to them and that you would like to get them some help. **Allegations by a swimmer concerning abuse in the program should be reported to the team owner and to DYFS of New Jersey.** Since these reports are required, the child should be told that you have to tell the proper authorities in order to keep them safe but that you will not tell anyone else.

***How do I know what my reporting responsibilities are?***

The State of New Jersey statute reads as such, “Any person having reasonable cause to believe that a child has been subjected to child abuse or neglect or acts of child abuse shall report.” (**Citation: NJ Ann. Stat. § 9:6-8.10). It is important to note that the definition of “child abuse” also includes child sexual abuse in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.** People are often concerned about being sued for reporting child abuse. You are not required to know for certain that a child has been abused. All that the law requires is that you have a reasonable suspicion and are reporting in "good faith." When these requirements are met, all states provide immunity from liability for child abuse reporters.

***What steps are taken when a report of child abuse by a Greater Philadelphia Aquatics staff member are made?***

Immediately, if it has not already been done and provided there is reasonable suspicion that the claims are reported in “good faith” the team owner will contact New Jersey DYFS and the USA Swimming Child Protection Officer to report the claims. It is the responsibility of state and local authorities to lead the investigation and Greater Philadelphia Aquatics will do everything possible to aid in the investigation. Immediately, the employee in question will be placed on administrative leave while an investigation is conducted.

***What are the "three R's" of Youth Protection?***

The "three R's" of Youth Protection convey a simple message that Greater Philadelphia Aquatics wants its youth members for all programming to learn:

* **Recognize** situations that place them at risk of being abused, how child abusers operate, and that anyone could be an abuser.
* **Resist** unwanted and inappropriate attention. Resistance will stop most attempts at molestation.
* **Report** attempted or actual molestation to a parent or other trusted adult. This prevents further abuse of them and helps to protect other children. Let the swimmer know they will not be blamed for what occurred.

*Reference: How to Protect Your Children from Child Abuse: A Parent's Guide; Boy Scouts of America, No. 46-015*

**Youth Member Behavior Guidelines**

One of the developmental tasks of childhood is to learn appropriate behavior. Children are not born with an innate sense of propriety and they need guidance and direction. The example set by positive adult role models is a powerful tool for shaping behavior and a tool that is stressed in our programming.

Misbehavior by a single youth member in a practice group, lesson group, or the team may constitute a threat to the safety of the individual who misbehaves as well as to the safety of other members. Such misbehavior constitutes an unreasonable burden on a team and cannot be ignored.

***Member Responsibilities***

**All members of Greater Philadelphia Aquatics are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the principles set forth in the team Code of Conduct. Physical violence, hazing, bullying, theft, verbal insults, and drugs and alcohol have no place in programming and may result in the revocation of a swimmer’s membership in the program.**

If confronted by threats of violence or other forms of bullying from other youth members, swimmers should seek help from their coach(es), parents, or other trusted adult.

***Team and Group Responsibilities***

**Adult leaders of practice groups are responsible for monitoring the behavior of youth members and interceding when necessary. Parents of youth members who misbehave will be informed and asked for assistance in dealing with it.**

**Greater Philadelphia Aquatics does not permit the use of corporal punishment by coaches or instructors when disciplining youth members. Corporal punishment is defined as “The intentional infliction of physical pain as a method of changing behavior. It may include methods such as hitting, slapping, punching, kicking, pinching, shaking, use of various objects (paddles, belts, sticks, or others), or painful body postures.”**

**The coaching staff should review repetitive or serious incidents of misbehavior in consultation with the parents of the child to determine a course of corrective action including possible revocation of the youth's membership on the team.**

**If problem behavior persists, swimmers may be removed from the program entirely.**

By signing this form I acknowledge receipt and review of the Greater Philadelphia Aquatics Policy on Youth Protection.

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Employee Name (Please Print) Employee Signature

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Date