

## Electronic Communication Policy of the Greater Philadelphia Aquatic Club

### PURPOSE

The Greater Philadelphia Aquatic Club (the “Club”) 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 applicable 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 Transparent, Accessible and Professional.

**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. When one-on-one electronic communication occurs between an applicable adult and a minor athlete, that minor athlete’s parent(s) or guardian **MUST** be directly copied on the communication.

**Accessible:** All electronic communication between coaches and athletes should be considered a matter of record and part of the Club’s records. GPAC coaches must always include another coach or the athlete’s parent (when the communication is with one or a handful of athletes) in the communication so that there is no question regarding accessibility. Again, any one-on-one communication between an applicable adult and minor athlete **MUST** include the athlete’s parent or guardian.

**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. As per USA Swimming MAAPP policy, all electronic communication between minor athletes and applicable adults must take place between

the hours of 8:00 am and 8:00 pm except in the event of an emergency. In these emergency instances, the coach must copy the athlete's parent/guardian (when communicating with one athlete) or add another coach (when communicating with a group of swimmers) to the communication.

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 social media. 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

Coaches are not permitted to "follow" minor athletes on Twitter. Coaches cannot retweet an athlete message post. Coaches and athletes are not permitted to "direct message" each other through Twitter. Coaches must recognize that anything they post on Twitter is being seen by all who follow them and, thus, posts must fall within the guidelines for electronic communication outlined above.

#### TEXTING

Subject to the general guidelines mentioned above, texting is allowed between coaches and athletes. Texting only shall be used for the purpose of communicating information directly related to team activities. Unless in an extreme emergency, texting should not take place before 8 am or after 8 pm.

#### EMAIL

When communicating with an athlete through email, a parent, another coach, or a board member must also be copied. When communicating to an individual minor athlete, that athlete's parent or guardian **MUST** be copied on the communication.

#### 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. A meeting will need to take place to determine the best manner to relay important team information to the family, especially in the event of emergencies such as late notice practice changes or cancellations.