

Safe Sport Chair Report

5-11-15

Reminder that with a new season beginning and new parents and athletes joining your programs to advertise the Parent and athlete online education tools that are offered at usaswimming.org on their Safe Sport page. ([Click Here](#) to be directed)

Additionally, clubs need to be sure to **follow pre-employment guidelines before hiring**. These are the “first line of defense” for clubs to secure quality coaches. These checks include but are not limited to: **USA Swimming background checks, motor vehicle checks, reference checks, maintaining updates on Athlete Protection Trainings (APT) annually, social media checks (not required, but suggested), and continued support for coaches to maintain proper coach/athlete boundaries.**

Continuing to support coaches to maintain proper boundaries is essential. USA Swimming recommends that your team creates a culture that makes all athletes, parents, and coaches feel safe at all times. If the culture is created, any violations of Safe Sport will stick out and be noticed and able to be handled quickly. **Consider posting the “No Camera’s” sign at your meet or in your team locker rooms as a reminder.** The pdf of the poster can be found on the LSC website under USA Swimming Forms at the bottom of the page or ([Click Here](#))

Violations happen! Please don’t assume that because we are in Montana or a small LSC made up of relatively small teams, that safe sport is unnecessary. PLEASE support the policies of Safe Sport to make every swimmer safe at all events. ([Click Here](#)) for more tools from the USA Swimming Safe Sport page.

Safe Sport also addresses Bullying within our sport. Address reports of bullying within guidelines from USA Swimming or in your own club policies to ensure all swimmers feel safe at the pool physically and emotionally.

The USA Swimming model policies for bullying, travel, and electronic communication are available online from the safe sport page. ([Click Here](#))

I was also able to attend the Safe Sport Conference on February 8th and 9th. The Conference focused mostly on risk management through hiring practices, creating a crisis management plan, how to engage bystanders in bullying to reduce it, and trying to continue to educate as many people as possible about safe sport concepts.

Some of the main take-aways from the conference were:

1. We need to find ways to educate our members. Some ideas are to do the online trainings in a group setting at the beginning of the season, or at meets.
2. Consider how to protect athletes when professional photographers are hired to take photos at meets. Some LSC make them get background checked, others don’t. But requesting them to take the online training from USA Swimming is free and easy. Possibly get a photo consent signed per team for meets?
3. Facilities Management:
 - a. Focus on Access Points: where could a predator enter or exit or how would they gain access to things like locker rooms or the deck. Place people at these points to reduce risk.
 - b. Try to designate “public” and separate “Swimmer Only” bathrooms if possible.
 - c. Beware that predators use things like programs, names on bags, Team affiliations, or any other possible identifying information to gain trust or initiate conversation with kids—this concept is termed “social engineering”. They are looking to take photos, communicate with

kids, and steal “trophies” such as underwear or other things of embarrassment to return to kids.

- d. Depersonalize security-hired professional people or be sure to mark with badges or other way people who are in charge of securing areas. Make it known that they are not trying to be “mean” but provide protection for swimmers. USA Swimming has a “script for Meet Marshalls” if you want more training for your Meet Marshalls.
4. Social Media—Be sure that your athletes understand some of the risks with posing photos and personal information on social media. Inform them to be wise with what they choose to put out into cyber space.
5. How to reduce risk during meets/practice:
 - a. Control personal items-keep them on deck or locked in a locker.
 - b. Use the buddy system when “swimmer only” locker rooms do not exist.
 - c. Limit or restrict photography. Have photographers use password-protected files or create team folders.
 - d. Create a “shared use facility” that restricts public access for observation with your facility. Be sure it includes a personal first point of contact to come into the facility.
 - e. Keep all practices observable
 - f. Manage parent interaction on deck or in restricted areas.
6. Bullying continues to be a hot topic. It is very hard to measure if it is improving or not. One way you can measure is to have your team complete a simple Survey Monkey before and after the season.
7. USA Swimming is discussing the positives and negatives and necessary policies or restrictions for live-streaming events.
8. How do we give our 12 and under athletes that the online training is not appropriate for tools to help in a dangerous situation.
 - a. Get-away and make noise
 - b. Communicate with a trusted adult
 - c. Have parents talk to their kids about warning signs

Please contact coachsobek@gmail.com for any questions.

Submitted by Coach Shelly Sobek