



SPRINGFIELD AQUATICS BULLYING POLICY

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at Springfield Aquatics and will not be tolerated. Bullying is counterproductive to a team and can be devastating to a victim. Springfield Aquatics is committed to providing a safe, caring, and friendly environment for all members. If bullying does occur, all athletes and parents should know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. Anyone who is aware of a bullying incident is expected to tell a coach, head coach, safe sports coordinator, or board member.

Objectives of the Springfield Aquatics Bullying Policy and Action Plan:

- To establish a bullying policy for all parents, swimmers and coaching staff.
- To emphasize that SPA will not tolerate bullying in any form.
- To clearly define bullying for all board members, coaches, parents, and swimmers.
- To establish a process for which to easily report bullying
- To communicate that SPA takes bullying seriously and that all swimmers and parents can be assured that they will be supported when bullying is reported.

WHAT IS BULLYING?

The USA Swimming Code of Conduct prohibits bullying. Generally, bullying is the use of aggression, whether intentional or not, which hurts another person. Bullying results in pain and distress.

The USA Swimming Code of Conduct defines bullying in 304.3.7. Bullying is the severe or repeated use by one or more USA Swimming members 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 the other member or damage to the other member's property;
2. placing the other member in reasonable fear of harm to himself/herself or of damage to his/her property;
3. creating a hostile environment for the other member at any USA Swimming activity;
4. infringing on the rights of the other member at any USA Swimming activity; or
5. materially and substantially disrupting the training process or the orderly operation of any USA Swimming activity (which for the purposes of this section shall include, without limitation, practices, workouts and other events of a member club or LSC).

REPORTING PROCEDURE

An athlete who feels that he or she has been bullied is encouraged to take one or more of the following actions:

1. Talk to your parents/guardians;
2. Talk to a Coach, Board Member, or other designated individual;
3. Write a letter or email to the Coach, Board Member, or other designated individual;
4. Make a report to the USA Swimming Safe Sport staff.
5. 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 ensure memories are fresh, behavior can be accurately recalled, and the bullying behavior can be stopped as soon as possible.

HOW WE HANDLE BULLYING

When bullying occurs 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 the swimmers involved.
3. Make sure everyone is safe.
4. Meet any immediate medical or mental health needs.
5. Stay calm. Reassure the kids involved, including bystanders.
6. Model respectful behavior at all times.

If bullying occurs or is reported at a SPA event, we address the bullying by FINDING OUT WHAT HAPPENED and SUPPORTING THE SWIMMERS INVOLVED using the following approach:

Gather the facts.

- Keep all the involved swimmers separate.
- Get the story from several sources, both adults and kids.
- Listen without assigning blame.
- Don't call the act "bullying" while you are trying to understand what happened
- It may be difficult to get the whole story, especially if multiple athletes are involved or the bullying involves social bullying or cyber bullying. Collect all available information.

Determine if the behavior is 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.

- Review the USA Swimming definition of bullying.
- To determine if the behavior is bullying or something else, consider the following questions: What is the history between the swimmers involved? Have there been past conflicts? Is there a power imbalance? Remember that a power imbalance is not limited to physical strength.
- Remember that it may not matter "who started it." Some victims may be regarded as annoying or provoking, but this does not justify or excuse the bullying behavior.
- Once you have determined if the situation is bullying, support all of the swimmers involved.

Support the involved swimmers.

- Listen and focus on the victim. Learn about his or her experience and show you want to help. Assure the swimmer that bullying is not his or her fault.

- Work together to resolve the situation and protect the bullied swimmer. The swimmer, parents/guardians, coaches, and fellow team members may all have valuable input. It may help to:
 - Ask the swimmer 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.
 - Develop a plan. Maintain open communication between the Club and parents. Discuss the steps that will be taken and how bullying will be addressed going forward.
- Be persistent. Bullying may not end overnight. Commit to making it stop and consistently support the bullied swimmer.

Address the bullying behavior.

- Make sure the at-fault swimmer is aware of what the problem behavior is. Young people who bully must learn their behavior is wrong and harms others.
- Show all swimmers that bullying is taken seriously. Calmly tell the at-fault swimmer that bullying will not be tolerated. Model respectful behavior when addressing the problem.
- Work with the swimmer to understand some of the reasons he or she bullied.
- Involve the swimmer who bullied in making amends or repairing the situation. The goal is to help him or her see how their actions affect others.
- Avoid strategies that are not proven or have negative consequences.
- After the bullying issue is resolved, continue to seek ways to support the swimmer who bullied to understand how his or her actions affect other people. For example: praise acts of kindness or discuss what it means to be a good teammate.

Note: Some of the information was from www.stopbullying.gov and USA Swimming