



Action Plan to Address Bullying

Purpose:

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at the JCC Bridgewater TIDE (BWTD) and will not be tolerated. Bullying is counterproductive to team spirit and can be devastating to a victim. The JCC Bridgewater TIDE is committed to providing a safe, caring, and friendly environment for all of our members. If bullying does occur, all athletes and parents/legal guardians 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, and/or athlete/mentor.

USA Swimming Rulebook 305.7 – “Club shall establish their own action plans for implementing USA Swimming’s anti-bullying policy.” “Club anti-bullying plans must be reviewed and agreed to annually by all athletes, parents, coaches, and other non-athlete members of the club.”

Objectives of the JCC Bridgewater TIDE’s Bullying Policy and Action Plan:

1. To make it clear that the JCC Bridgewater TIDE will not tolerate bullying in any form.
2. To define bullying and give all board members, coaches, parents and/or legal guardians, and swimmers a good understanding of what bullying is.
3. To make it known to all parents and/or legal guardians, swimmers, and coaching staff that there is a policy and protocol should any bullying issues arise.
4. To make how to report bullying clear and understandable.
5. To spread the word that the JCC Bridgewater TIDE takes bullying seriously and that all swimmers and parents/legal guardians can be assured that they will be supported when bullying is reported.

What is Bullying?

The USA Swimming defines bullying as: the severe or repeated use, regardless of when or where it may occur, by one or more USA Swimming members of an oral, written, electronic or other technological expression, image, sound, date, 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 or participating non-member that is reasonably objective person has the effect of:

- I. Causing physical or emotional harm to the other person or damage to the other person’s property
- II. Placing the other person in reasonable fear of harm to himself/herself or of damage to his/her property
- III. Creating a hostile environment for the other person at any USA Swimming activity
- IV. Infringing on the rights of the other person at any USA Swimming activity
- V. Materially and substantially disrupting the training process or the orderly operation of any USA Swimming activity (which shall include, without limitation, practices, workouts, and other events of a member club, LSC, Zone).

www.StopBullying.gov defines bullying as: unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time.

For more information about types of bullying go to www.StopBullying.gov (USA Swimming’s source for information on bullying)

Reporting Procedure:

An athlete who feels he or she has been bullied is asked to do one or more of the following:

- Talk to your parents
- Talk to your coach, board member, or other designated individual
- Write a letter or email to your coach, board member, or other designated individual
- 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 (i.e. Head Coach, Assistant Head Coach) as soon as possible to make sure the that memories are fresh and 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 okay to get another adult to help.
2. Separate the kids involved.
3. Make sure everyone is safe.
4. Meet any immediate medical and/or mental health needs.
5. Stay calm. Reassure the kids involved, including bystanders.
6. Model respectful behavior when you intervene.

If bullying is occurring at the JCC Bridgewater TIDE or it is reported to be occurring at the JCC Bridgewater TIDE, we address the bullying by FINDING OUT WHAT HAPPENED and SUPPORTING THE KIDS INVOLVED using the following approach:

Finding out what happened:

1. First, we get the facts.
 - a. Keep all the involved children separate.
 - b. Get the story from several sources, both adults and kids.
 - c. Listen without blaming.
 - d. Don't call the act "bullying" while you are trying to understand what happened.
 - e. It may be difficult to get the whole story, especially if the multiple athletes are involved or the bullying involves social bullying or cyber bullying. 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 USA Swimming and www.StopBullying.gov definitions of bullying.
 - b. To determine if the behavior is bullying or something else, consider the following questions:
 - i. What is the history of the kids involved?
 - ii. Have there been past conflicts?
 - iii. Is there a power imbalance? (Which is not limited to physical strength and it not easily recognized). If the targeted athlete feels like there is, then there probably is.
 - iv. Has this happened before? Is the athlete worried it will happen again?

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

Supporting the kids involved

- 3. Support the kids who are being bullied
 - a. Listen and focus on the athlete. Learn what’s been going on and show you want to help. Assure the athlete that bullying is not their fault.
 - b. Work together to resolve the situation and protect the bullied athlete. The athlete, parent/legal guardian, and fellow team members and coaches may have valuable input. It may help to:
 - i. Ask the athlete being bullied what can be done to make him or her feel safe. Remember the 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 athlete who is bullied should not be forced to change.
 - ii. Develop a game plan. Maintain open communication between the BWTD and parents/legal guardians. 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 athlete.
- 4. Address the bullying behavior
 - a. Make sure the athlete knows what the problem behavior is. Young people who bully must learn their behavior is wrong and harms others.
 - b. Show athletes that bullying is taken seriously. Calmly tell the athlete that bullying will not be tolerated. Model respectful behavior when addressing the problem.
 - c. Work with the athlete to understand some of the reasons he or she was bullied. For example:
 - i. Sometimes one may bully to fit in or just make fun of someone who is a little different from them. In other words, there may be some insecurity involved.
 - ii. Other times one may act out because of something else – issues at home, abuse, stress – is going on in their lives. They also may have been bullied. These athletes may be in need of additional support.
 - d. Involve the athlete who is bullied in making amends or repairing the situation. The goal is to help them see how their actions affect others. For example, the athlete can:
 - i. Write a letter apologizing to the athlete who was bullied.
 - ii. Do a good deed for the athlete who was bullied, for the BWTD, or for others in the community.
 - iii. Clean up, repair, or pay for any property that was 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 a 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 kids who have been bullied.
 - f. Follow-up. After the bullying issue is resolved, continue finding ways to help the athlete who bullied to understand how what they do affects other people. For example, praise acts of kindness or talk about what it means to be a good teammate.
- 5. Support bystanders who witness bullying. Every day, kids witness bullying. They want to help, but don't know how. Fortunately, there are a few simple, safe ways that athletes can help stop bullying when they see it happening.
 - a. Be a friend to the person being bullied.
 - b. Tell a trusted adult – your parent or coach.
 - c. Help the kid 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.