



## **New Milford Barracudas Swim Team Anti – Bullying Policy**

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable on the New Milford Barracudas Swim Team (NMBST) and will not be tolerated. Bullying is counterproductive to team spirit and can be devastating to a victim. The team is committed to providing a safe, caring and friendly environment for all of our swimmers. If bullying does occur, all athletes and parents should know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. Anyone who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell a coach or board member.

Objectives of the Bullying Policy and Action Plan:

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

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 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 asked to do one or more of the following things:

1. Talk to your parents
2. Talk to a Club Coach, Board Member, or other designated individual
3. Write a letter or email to the Club Coach, Board Member, or other designated individual
4. 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 as soon as possible to make sure 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 ok to get another adult to help
2. Separate the kids 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 when you intervene.

If bullying is occurring on our team or it is reported to be occurring, we address the bullying by finding out what has happened and supporting the children involved using the following approach:

## **FINDING OUT WHAT HAPPENED**

1. First, we get the facts
  - a. We keep all the involved children separate and get the story from several sources, both adults and kids
  - b. We will listen without blaming
  - c. We will not call the act “bullying” while trying to understand what happened
  - d. It may be difficult to get the whole story, especially if multiple athletes are involved or the bullying involves social bullying or cyber bullying
  - e. 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. We will review the USA Swimming definition of bullying
  - b. To determine if the behavior is bullying or something else, the following questions will be assessed:
    - I. What is the history between the kids involved?
    - II. Have there been past conflicts?
    - III. Is there a power imbalance? Remember that a power imbalance is not limited to physical strength. It is sometimes not easily recognized. If the targeted child feels like there is a power imbalance, there probably is.
    - IV. Has this happened before? Is the child worried it will happen again?

It may not matter “who started it.” Some children who are bullied may be seen as provoking, but this does not excuse the bullying behavior. Once we have determined if the situation is bullying, we will provide support for all of the kids involved.

### **SUPPORTING THE KIDS INVOLVED**

1. Support the kids who are being bullied
2. We will listen and focus on the child. Learn what’s been going on and show we want to help. Assure the child that bullying is not their fault
3. We will work together to resolve the situation and protect the bullied child. The child, parents, and fellow team members and coaches may all have valuable input
4. We will ask the child 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
5. We will develop a game plan. Maintain open communication between the team and parents. Discuss the steps that will be taken and how bullying will be addressed going forward
6. We will be persistent. Bullying may not end overnight. Commit to making it stop and consistently support the bullied child
7. We will address bullying behavior and make sure the child knows what the problem behavior is
8. We will work with the child to understand some of the reasons he or she bullied. Sometimes children bully to fit in or just to make fun of someone is a little different from them. In other words, there may be some insecurity involved. Other times kids act out because something else—issues at home, abuse, stress—is going on in their lives. They also may have been bullied. These kids may be in need of additional support
9. We will involve the child who bullied in making amends or repairing the situation. The goal is to help them see how their actions affect others

After the bullying issue is resolved, continue finding ways to help the child who bullied to understand how what they do affects other people. Decisions on how to proceed / disciplinary actions (if necessary) will be decided by the coaches. The incident will be documented and parents of individuals involved will be notified of all decisions.

Source: [www.stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov) – a federal government website managed by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services