



OPEN LETTER: USA SWIMMING BOARD IMPLEMENTS MEASURES THAT SUPPORT 7-POINT PLAN

5/1/2010

Dear Members, Coaches & Parents of USA Swimming:

Following our most recent letter to the membership regarding USA Swimming's 7- Point Plan for a Safe & Positive Environment, we are pleased to share with you that the USA Swimming Board of Directors acted this weekend to immediately implement a series of landmark measures that support the plan.

It is through full implementation of the 7-Point Plan that USA Swimming, working in partnership with respected outside experts and our local member swim clubs, will strengthen the safeguards that are in place to ensure a safe and secure environment for our 300,000 members. We thank our Board of Directors for their unwavering support on this issue, and we look forward to continued progress. During its regularly-scheduled meeting in Colorado Springs, the Board:

- Approved publication of USA Swimming's list of individuals who have been permanently banned from membership in the organization.
- Engaged the services of nationally-respected background screening expert Barry Nadell to review the current background screening process and produce hiring best practices to be made available to clubs.
- Approved the creation of a Special Committee on Athlete Protection. The Committee will be charged with continually monitoring industry and societal best practices regarding child protection, as well as overseeing the administration of USA Swimming's athlete protection and education programs. The
- Committee will be comprised of both outside experts and representatives from the swimming community.
- Approved the creation of full-time staff at the National Headquarters, focusing on Athlete Protection.
- Granted authority to the Executive Committee to approve creation of a reporting hotline and counseling service.
- Received an update on USA Swimming's efforts to engage outside experts, child protection organizations and representatives of the swimming community on the execution of the 7-Point Plan.
- Received an update on the review of USA Swimming's Code of Conduct and engagement of outside experts to assist in the refinement.

We assure you that the actions taken were done so in the spirit of improving our sport, and "doing what's right," a guiding principle to which we've been committed throughout this process. While today we feel we have taken positive steps, it's important to recognize and understand that our work is not done, and full implementation of this plan will continue to be a priority for USA Swimming.

We are working quickly but also deliberately to ensure that the actions we take are both effective and prudent. We know this is an issue that has been discussed at length at both the national and grassroots levels, and we will continue to work to provide the best safeguards and possible guidance to our LSCs and Clubs.

It is the commitment of USA Swimming to continuously review and revamp our policies and safeguards, and we will apply that philosophy to our child protection policies just as we do in other areas.

For background on today's actions, please see below.



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In an effort to ensure safety in our organization, as well as to provide a resource for other youth organizations, USA Swimming will publish the list of individuals who have been banned from our organization for life. The list will include coaches banned for any infraction, including, but not limited to sexual misconduct. This list will be publicly available on our website next week.

In support of its 7-Point plan, USA Swimming has formally engaged Nadell, a founding member and former co-Chair of the National Association of Professional Background Screeners, to evaluate and make recommendations on our background screening program, implemented in 2006. Nadell is an established industry expert and a published author on background screening who speaks nationally on the subject. Additionally, Nadell, who served on the committee that penned ASIS International's Pre-employment Screening Guidelines, will also produce hiring best practices, to be shared with member clubs who are responsible for hiring coaches and other personnel at the local level.

Additionally, we have dedicated both internal and external personnel to the issue of Child Protection through the creation of a full-time position and the commissioning of a Special Committee. USA Swimming will hire a Athlete Protection staff to work in the Executive Division of the National Headquarters. Recognizing the need for and value of qualified outside expertise on this topic, the Board also commissioned the creation of the Special Committee on Athlete Protection, which will include both outside experts and representatives from the swimming community.

Because we cannot overstate it, we remain so very grateful to you, our membership, in standing with us on this important issue. We will remain in communication with you, our most important audience, as we strive to make USA Swimming the best it can be.

Respectfully,

Jim Wood, President

Chuck Wielgus, Executive Director

USA Swimming's 7-Point Plan for a Safe & Positive Environment

1. Develop and disseminate comprehensive guidelines addressing acceptable coach behavior.
2. Enhance the system for reporting sexual abuse to USA Swimming and law enforcement.
3. Review USA Swimming's Code of Conduct, as well as that of other top youth organizations.
4. Review USA Swimming's current background screening program and determine if enhancements can be made.
5. Produce stronger communications to member clubs, as the employers of coaches, regarding pre-employment screening, and the responsibility associated with hiring club employees.
6. Evaluate the process for sharing coaching history records with member clubs and other youth organizations.
7. Educate athletes, parents, coaches and club leaders on this important issue.