

Approved Date:
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Board President Signature:



**HOOD RIVER VALLEY SWIM TEAM
ACTION PLAN TO ADDRESS BULLYING**

PURPOSE:

The Hood River Valley Swim Team (at times referred to as the “Club”) recognizes that bullying of any kind is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Bullying is counterproductive to team spirit and can be devastating to the victim. The Club is committed to providing a safe, caring, and friendly environment for all our members. 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 communicate all occurrences to a coach, board member, or athlete mentor.

This policy meets the intent and best practices of both USA Swimming and the US Center for Safe Sport Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policy (MAAPP) with respect to anti-bullying.

DEFINITION OF APPLICABLE ADULT: All USA Swimming non-athlete members and adult athlete members, participating non-members (for example; meet marshals, meet computer operators, timers, etc.), LSC and club adult staff, board members, and any other adult authorized to have regular contact with or authority over a minor athlete.

SECTION ONE: OBJECTIVES

- I. To clearly communicate that the Hood River Valley Swim Team will not tolerate bullying in any form.
- II. To define bullying and give all athletes and Applicable Adults a good understanding of what bullying is.
- III. To make it known to all parents, swimmers, and Applicable Adults that a policy and protocol to address bullying exists should any issues arise.
- IV. To clearly and understandably outline the procedure for reporting bullying.
- V. To assure all parents and athletes that they will be supported when bullying is supported.

SECTION TWO: DEFINITION OF BULLYING

I. The USA Swimming Code of Conduct defines bullying in Section 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:

- A. Causing physical or emotional harm to the other member or damage to the other member’s property;

- B. Placing the other member in reasonable fear of harm to himself/herself or of damage to his or her property;
- C. Creating a hostile environment for the other member at any USA Swimming activity;
- D. Infringing on the rights of the other member at any USA Swimming activity; or
- E. Materially and substantially disrupting the training process or the orderly operation of any USA Swimming activity to include practices, workouts, and other events of a member club or LSC.

SECTION THREE: REPORTING PROCEDURE

- I. An athlete who feels that he or she has been bullied is asked to do one or more of the following;
 - A. Discuss the event(s) with their parent or legal guardian;
 - B. Verbally report the event(s) to a Club Coach, Board Member, or other Applicable Adult;
 - C. Compose a letter or email to the Club Coach, Board Member, or other Applicable Adult;
 - D. Make a report to the USA Swimming Safe Sport staff (safesport@usaswimming.org).
- II. 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 the memories are fresh, behavior can be accurately recalled, and the bullying behavior can be stopped as soon as possible.

SECTION FOUR: CLUB RESPONSE TO BULLYING

- I. If bullying is occurring during team-related activities, it will be stopped immediately using the following steps:
 - A. Immediately intervene, seeking the assistance of an additional adult (whether or not an Applicable Adult) if available.
 - B. Separate involved children
 - C. Ensure the safety of all involved parties
 - D. Meet any immediate medical or mental health needs
 - E. Remain calm and reassure involved athletes and bystanders.
 - F. Model respectful behavior during intervention.
- II. If bullying is reported to occur or witnessed at a Club sponsored activity it will be addressed by determining the events of the situation and supporting the children involved using the following approach:
 - A. Determine the facts of the events
 - 1. Keep all involved children separate.
 - 2. Obtain the story from several sources, including adults and children.
 - 3. Listen without blaming.
 - 4. Do not use the term “bullying” while trying to understand what occurred.
 - 5. Collect all available information.
 - B. Establish if the reported or observed event is bullying
 - 1. Review the USA Swimming definition of bullying and consider the following questions:
 - a) What is the history between the children involved?
 - b) Have there been past conflicts?
 - c) Is there a power imbalance? Power imbalance perceived by the involved children likely constitutes an actual imbalance, whether recognized as such by others.
 - d) Has the situation occurred before or is the child worried it will happen again?

2. It does not matter who initiated the bullying event.
3. If the situation is determined to be bullying support all involved children.

III. Support the bullied child

- A. Listen and focus on the child. Learn what has been going on and show you want to help. Assure the child that bullying is not their fault.
- B. Work together to resolve the situation and protect the bullied child. The child, parents, and fellow team members may all have valuable input. Consider:
 1. Ask the bullied child 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. If a change to lane assignment needs to be made the bullied child should not be forced to change.
 2. Develop a game plan. Maintain open communication between the Club and parents. Discuss the steps that will be taken and how bullying will be addressed going forward.
- C. Be persistent. Bullying may not end immediately. Commit to making it stop and provide consistent support to the bullied child.

IV. Address bullying behavior

- A. Make sure the child knows what the problem behavior is. Young people who bully must learn that their behavior is wrong and harms others.
- B. Show children that bullying is taken seriously. Calmly tell the child that bullying will not be tolerated. Model respectful behavior when addressing the problem.
- C. Work with the child to understand some of the reasons he or she bullied.
 1. Sometimes children bully to fit in or just to make fun of someone is a little different from them. There may be some insecurity involved.
 2. Children may act out because of issues at home, abuse, or stress. They also may have been bullied. These children may be in need of additional support.
- D. Involve the child who bullied in making amends or repairing the situation. The goal is to help them see how their actions affect others. The bullying child may be asked to:
 1. Write a letter apologizing to the athlete who was bullied.
 2. Do a good deed for the person who was bullied, for the Club, or for others in your community.
 3. Clean up, repair, or pay for any property they damaged.
- E. Avoid strategies that don't work or have negative consequences:
 1. Zero tolerance or "three strikes, you're out" strategies are not effective. Suspending or removing from the team swimmers who bully does not reduce bullying behavior. Swimmers may be less likely to report and address bullying if suspension or getting kicked off the team is the consequence.
 2. Conflict resolution and peer mediation are also ineffective. 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. After the bullying issue is resolved, continue finding ways to help the child who bullied to understand how what they do affects other people. Praise acts of kindness and talk about what it means to be a good teammate.

- V. Support bystanders who witness bullying. Bystanders want to help, but often lack the skills to appropriately address the situation. Children should be taught to:
- A. Be a friend to the person being bullied
 - B. Report incidents to an Applicable Adult
 - C. Help the child 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.
 - D. Set a good example by not bullying others.
 - E. Do not provide an audience. Bullies are encouraged by the attention they get from bystanders. If you do nothing else, just walk away.