

Action Plan to Address Bullying:

Purpose:

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at Valley Aquatics and will not be tolerated. Bullying is counterproductive to team spirit and can be devastating to a victim. VAST is committed to providing a safe, caring, and friendly environment for all of our members.

What is 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:

- Causing physical or emotional harm to the other member or damage to the other member's property.
- Placing the other member in reasonable fear of harm to himself/herself or of damage to his/her property.
- Creating a hostile environment for the other member at any USA Swimming activity.
- 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:

- Talk to your parents
- Talk to a Club Coach
- Write a letter or email to a Club Coach
- 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 it on the spot using the following steps:

- Intervene immediately
- Separate the kids involved
- Make sure everyone is safe

- Meet any immediate medical or mental health needs.
- Stay calm. Reassure those involved.
- Model respectful behavior when intervening.

If bullying is occurring at the club or it is reported to be occurring at the club, we address the bullying by finding out what happened and supporting the kids involved using the following approach:

1. Get the facts
 - Keep all the involved separate
 - Get the story from several sources, both adults and kids
 - Listen without blaming
2. Determine if it's bullying. There are many behaviors that look like bullying but require different approaches.
 - We review the USA Swimming definition of bullying
 - We consider the following questions:
 - What is the history between the kids involved?
 - Have there been past conflicts?
 - Is there a power imbalance?
 - Is the child worried it will happen again?
3. Support the kids who are being bullied.
 - Listen and focus on the child.
 - Work together to resolve the situation. The child, parent, and other coaches may all have valuable input.
 - Be persistent. Bullying may not end overnight.
4. Address bullying behavior.
 - Make sure the child knows what the problem is.
 - Model respectful behavior when addressing the problem.
 - Involve the kid who bullied in making amends or repairing the situation.
 - Follow up. After the bullying issue is resolved, continue finding ways to help the child who bullied to understand how what they do affects other people.
5. Support bystanders who witness bullying. Kids want to help, but often don't know how.