

Bullying Policy

Action Plan of the Napa Valley Swim Team to Address Bullying

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at Napa Valley Swim Team (the “Club”) and will not be tolerated. Bullying is counterproductive to team spirit and can be devastating to a victim. The Club is committed to providing a safe, caring and friendly environment for all of 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 tell a coach, Board member or athlete/mentor.

Objectives of the Club’s Bullying Policy and Action Plan:

1. To make it clear that the Club 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 it known to all parents, swimmers, and coaches how to report bullying clear and understandable.
5. To spread the word that Napa Valley Swim Team takes bullying seriously and that all swimmers and parents can be assured that they will be supported when bullying is reported.

What Is Bullying?

The SafeSport Code for the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Movement defines bullying in Section II.B:

“B. Bullying Behavior

Repeated and/or severe (a) aggressive behavior (b) among Minors⁽¹⁾, (c) that is intended or likely to hurt, control or diminish another person emotionally, physically or sexually.

1. Forms

a. Physical

Hitting, pushing, punching, beating, biting, striking, kicking, choking, spitting or slapping; throwing objects such as sporting equipment at another person.

b. Verbal

Teasing, ridiculing, taunting, name-calling or intimidating or threatening to cause someone harm.

c. Social, including cyberbullying

Using rumors or false statements about someone to diminish that person's reputation; using electronic communications, social media or other technology to harass, frighten, intimidate or humiliate someone; socially excluding someone and asking others to do the same.

d. Sexual

Teasing, ridiculing or taunting based on gender or sexual orientation (real or implied), gender traits or behavior (e.g., taunting someone for being too effeminate), or teasing someone about their looks or behavior as it relates to sexual attractiveness.

2. Rude, mean and conflict—distinguished

Conduct may not rise to the level of Bullying Behavior if it is rude (inadvertently saying or doing something hurtful), mean (purposefully saying or doing something hurtful, but not as part of a pattern of behavior), or arising from conflict or struggle between persons, absent a Power Imbalance, who perceive they have incompatible goals.

3. Criminal conduct

Bullying Behavior includes any conduct described as bullying under federal or state law.

(1) Bullying-like behaviors among adults are addressed under other forms of misconduct such as Hazing and Harassment.”

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, Board Member, or other designated individual;
- Write a letter or email to the Club 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 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 at our club or it is reported to be occurring at our club, 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.
2. Keep all the involved children separate.
3. Get the story from several sources, both adults and kids.
4. Listen without blaming.
5. Don't call the act "bullying" while you are trying to understand what happened.
6. It may be difficult to get the whole story, especially if multiple athletes are involved or the bullying involves social bullying or cyber bullying. Collect all available information.
7. 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.
8. Review the SafeSport definition of bullying;
9. To determine if the behavior is bullying or something else, consider the following questions:
 - a. What is the history between the kids involved?
 - b. Have there been past conflicts?
 - c. 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.
 - d. Has this happened before? Is the child worried it will happen again?
10. 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.
11. Once you have determined if the situation is bullying, support all of the kids involved.

Supporting the Kids Involved

Support the kids who are being bullied

1. Listen and focus on the child. Learn what's been going on and show you want to help. Assure the child that bullying is not their fault.
2. 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. It may help to:
 - a. 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.
 - b. 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.
3. Be persistent. Bullying may not end overnight. Commit to making it stop and consistently support the bullied child.
4. Address bullying behavior.
 - a. Make sure the child knows what the problem behavior is. Young people who bully must learn their behavior is wrong and harms others.
 - b. Show kids 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. For example:
 - i. 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.
 - ii. 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.
 - d. Involve the kid who bullied in making amends or repairing the situation. The goal is to help them see how their actions affect others. For example, the child can:
 - iii. Write a letter apologizing to the athlete who was bullied.
 - iv. Do a good deed for the person who was bullied, for the Club, or for others in your community.
 - v. Clean up, repair, or pay for any property they damaged.
5. Avoid strategies that don't work or have negative consequences:
 - a. Zero tolerance or “three strikes, you're out” strategies don't work. 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.
 - b. 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.
6. 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. For example, praise acts of kindness or talk about what it means to be a good teammate.
7. 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, coach, or club board member;
 - 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.