

SUSA Stingrays Bullying Action Plan

PURPOSE

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable. For SUSA swimmers, bullying of any kind will not be tolerated. Bullying is counterproductive to team spirit and can be devastating to a victim. SUSA 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.

WHAT IS BULLYING?

The SUSA Stingrays Code of Conduct -- which each family electronically signs upon registering with our team -- addresses bullying as "fighting, bullying, demeaning, belittling, cussing, threatening or physically injuring another teammate. Other unacceptable behaviors include graphic gestures/texts/language, flashing or mooning. SUSA members will not engage in such behaviors at team events, activities or over social media."

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:

- i. causing physical or emotional harm to the other member or damage to the other member's property;
- ii. placing the other member in reasonable fear of harm to himself/herself or of damage to his/her property;
- iii. creating a hostile environment for the other member at any USA Swimming activity;
- iv. infringing on the rights of the other member at any USA Swimming activity; or
- v. 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, 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, and make sure everyone is safe.
3. Meet any immediate medical or mental health needs.
4. Stay calm. Reassure the kids involved, including bystanders.
5. Model respectful behavior when you intervene.

If bullying is occurring at any SUA facility or it is reported to be occurring at any facility, we address the bullying by FINDING OUT WHAT HAPPENED and SUPPORTING THE KIDS INVOLVED using the following approach:

FINDING OUT WHAT HAPPENED – GUIDELINES for coaches and other adults:

- Get the facts. 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
- Keep all the involved children separate.
- Get the story from several sources, both adults and kids.
- Listen without blaming.
- Don't call the act "bullying" while you are trying to understand what happened.
- 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.
- Ask the child being bullied what can be done to make him or her feel safe.
- Be persistent. Bullying may not end overnight. Commit to making it stop and consistently support the bullied child.

To determine if the behavior is bullying or something else, consider the following questions:

- What is the history between the kids involved?
- Have there been past conflicts?
- 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.
- Has this happened before? Is the child worried it will happen again?

ADDRESSING BULLYING WITH THE BULLY

- Make sure the child knows what the problem behavior is. Young people who bully must learn their behavior is wrong and harms others.
- Show kids that bullying is taken seriously. Calmly tell the child that bullying will not be tolerated. Model respectful behavior when addressing the problem.
- Work with the child to understand some of the reasons he or she bullied. For example: 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.

- 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: Write a letter apologizing to the athlete who was bullied; Do a good deed for the person who was bullied, for the team, or for others in our community; Clean up, repair, or pay for any property they damaged.

HELPING TEAM MEMBERS UNDERSTAND WHAT THEY CAN DO:

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.

1. Be a friend to the person being bullied;
2. Tell a trusted adult – your parent, coach, or club board member;
3. 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."
4. Set a good example by not bullying others.
5. 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.