

Greater Pensacola Aquatic Club

Electronic Communication Policy

USA Swimming clubs are required to implement an electronic communication policy. The policy must be reviewed with and agreed to by all athletes, parents, coaches and other adults affiliated with the club. Each member club and each LSC has the responsibility for approval and implementation of its own electronic communication policy.

This policy includes parts of the Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policy (MAAPP) from USA Swimming that apply to Communication. GPAC has adopted MAAPP in full. This policy also includes parts of previous policies from USA Swimming or from USA Swimming's Best Practice Guidelines for Athlete Protection where GPAC has found them to be salient and/or useful for clarification. If any part of this policy is in conflict with another the MAAPP portion supersedes.

Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policy

THIS POLICY APPLIES TO:

- All USA Swimming non-athlete members and adult athlete members;
 - Participating non-members (e.g., meet marshals, meet computer operators, timers, etc.);
 - LSC and club adult staff and board members; and
 - Any other adult authorized to have regular contact with or authority over minor athletes.
- Collectively "Applicable Adult(s)"

GENERAL REQUIREMENT

USA Swimming member clubs and LSCs are required to implement this Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policy in full. The Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policy must be reviewed and agreed to in writing by all athletes, parents, coaches and other non-athlete members of member clubs on an annual basis with such written agreement to be retained by the club.

ONE-ON-ONE INTERACTIONS

I. Observable and Interruptible

One-on-one interactions between a minor athlete and an Applicable Adult (who is not the minor's legal guardian) must occur at an observable and interruptible distance from another adult unless meeting with a Mental Health Care Professional and/or Health Care Provider (see below) or under emergency circumstances.

II. Meetings

- a. Meetings between a minor athlete and an Applicable Adult may only occur if another adult is present and where interactions can be easily observed and at an interruptible distance from another adult, except under emergency circumstances.
- b. If a one-on-one meeting takes place, the door to the room must remain unlocked and open. If available, it must occur in a room that has windows, with the windows, blinds, and/or curtains remaining open during the meeting.
- c. Meetings must not be conducted in an Applicable Adult or athlete's hotel room or other overnight lodging location during team travel.

III. Meetings with Mental Health Care Professionals and/or Health Care Providers

If a Mental Health Care Professional and/or Health Care Provider meets with a minor athlete in conjunction with participation, including at practice or competition sites, a closed-door meeting may be permitted to protect patient privacy provided that:

- a. The door remains unlocked;
- b. Another adult is present at the facility;
- c. The other adult is advised that a closed-door meeting is occurring; and

d. Written legal guardian consent is obtained in advance by the Mental Health Care Professional and/or Health Care Provider, with a copy provided to the club.

IV. Individual Training Sessions

Individual training sessions outside of the regular course of training and practice between Applicable Adults and minor athletes are permitted if the training session is observable and interruptible by another adult. Legal guardians must be allowed to observe the training session.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

I. Content

All electronic communication from Applicable Adults to minor athletes must be professional in nature.

II. Open and Transparent

- Absent emergency circumstances, if an Applicable Adult with authority over minor athletes needs to communicate directly with a minor athlete via electronic communications (including social media), the minor athlete's legal guardian must be copied. If a minor athlete communicates to the Applicable Adult (with authority over the minor athlete) privately first, said Applicable Adult must copy the minor athlete's legal guardian on any electronic communication response to the minor athlete.
- When an Applicable Adult with authority over minor athletes communicates electronically to the entire team, said Applicable Adult must copy another adult.

III. Requests to Discontinue

Legal guardians may request in writing that their minor athlete not be contacted through any form of electronic communication by the club, LSC or by an Applicable Adult subject to this Policy. The organization must abide by any such request that the minor athlete not be contacted via electronic communication, or included in any social media post, absent emergency circumstances.

IV. Hours

Electronic communications must only be sent between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m., unless emergency circumstances exist, or during competition travel.

V. Prohibited Electronic Communication

- Applicable Adults with authority over minor athletes are not permitted to maintain private social media connections with unrelated minor athletes and such Applicable Adults are not permitted to accept new personal page requests on social media platforms from minor athletes, unless the Applicable Adult has a fan page, or the contact is deemed as celebrity contact as opposed to regular contact. Existing social media connections with minor athletes must be discontinued. Minor athletes may "friend" the club and/or LSC's official page.
- Applicable Adults with authority over minor athletes must not send private, instant or direct messages to a minor athlete through social media platforms.

Electronic Communication Policy of the Greater Pensacola Aquatic Club. GPAC has additional policy items which are a part of this overall policy.

PURPOSE

The **Greater Pensacola Aquatic Club** (the "Club") recognizes the prevalence of electronic communication and social media in today's world. Many of our swimmers use these means as their primary method of communication. While the Club acknowledges the value of these methods of communication, the Club also realizes that there are associated risks that must be considered when adults use these methods to communicate with minors.

GENERAL CONTENT

All communications between a coach or other adult and an athlete must be professional in nature and for the purpose of communicating information about team activities. The content and intent of all electronic communications must adhere to the USA Swimming Code of Conduct regarding Athlete Protection as well as MAAPP.

For example, as with any communication with an athlete, electronic communication should not contain or relate to any of the following:

- drugs or alcohol use;
- sexually oriented conversation; sexually explicit language; sexual activity
- the adult's personal life, social activities, relationship or family issues, or personal problems; and
- inappropriate or sexually explicit pictures
- Note: Any communication concerning an athlete's personal life, social activities, relationship or family issues or personal problems must be transparent, accessible and professional.

Whether one is an athlete, coach, board member or parent, the guiding principle to always use in communication is to ask: “Is this communication something that someone else would find appropriate or acceptable in a face-to-face meeting?” or “Is this something you would be comfortable saying out loud to the intended recipient of your communication in front of the intended recipient’s parents, the coaching staff, the board, or other athletes?”

With respect to electronic communications, a simple test that can be used in most cases is whether the electronic communication with swimmers is Transparent, Accessible and Professional. If your communication meets all three of the T.A.P. criteria, then it is likely your method of communication with athletes will be appropriate.

Transparent: All electronic communication between coaches and athletes should be transparent. Your communication should not only be clear and direct, but also free of hidden meanings, innuendo and expectations.

Accessible: All electronic communication between coaches and athletes should be considered a matter of record and part of the Club’s records. Whenever possible, include another coach or parent in the communication so that there is no question regarding accessibility.

Professional: All electronic communication between a coach and an athlete should be conducted professionally as a representative of the Club. This includes word choices, tone, grammar, and subject matter that model the standards and integrity of a staff member.

FACEBOOK, MYSPACE, BLOGS, AND SIMILAR SITES

Coaches may have personal Facebook (or other social media site) pages, but they are not permitted to have any athlete member of the Club join their personal page as a “friend.” A coach should not accept any “friend” request from an athlete. In addition, the coach should remind the athlete that this is not permitted. Coaches and athletes are not permitted to “private message” each other through Facebook, etc. Coaches and athletes are not permitted to “instant message” each other through Facebook chat or other IM method.

The Club has an official Facebook page that athletes and their parents can “friend” or follow for information and updates on team-related matters. Coaches are encouraged to set their pages to “private” to prevent athletes from accessing the coach’s personal information.

TWITTER

The Club has an official Twitter page that coaches, athletes and parents can follow for information and updates on team-related matters. Coaches are not permitted to follow athlete’s personal accounts on Twitter. Likewise, athletes are not permitted to follow coach’s personal accounts on Twitter. Coaches and athletes are not permitted to “direct message” each other through Twitter.

TEXTING & EMAIL

Subject to the general guidelines mentioned above, text and email communication are allowed between coaches and athletes during the hours from 8am until 8pm as long as their parent/guardian is included in the communication. The time limitations may be exceeded in the case of important communications such as issues dealing with practice, swim meets or emergencies. Text and Email shall only be used for the purpose of communicating information directly related to team activities. The exception to this would be in the case where a swimmer is hired by a coach for such things as baby sitting, lawn care, etc and there is a need to communicate important issue related to that work such as times, dates, etc., however the parent/guardian must be included in the communication. Group messaging apps are allowed for team and or group communications however more than one applicable adult must be included.

REQUEST TO DISCONTINUE ALL ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

The parents or guardians of an athlete may request in writing that their child not be contacted by coaches through any form of electronic communication.

I have read and understand the electronic communications policy. Further I agree to abide by the policy. I understand that this applies to each child that I enroll in any GPAC program.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date