

# **ACTION PLAN TO ADDRESS BULLYING**

## Action Plan of the Waverly Piranhas Swim Club to Address Bullying

### **PURPOSE**

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at the Waverly Piranhas Swim Club (WPSC) and will not be tolerated. Bullying is counterproductive to team spirit and can be devastating to a victim. WPSC 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 WPSC's Bullying Policy and Action Plan:**

1. Make it clear that WPSC will not tolerate bullying in any form.
2. Define bullying and give all board members, coaches, parents and swimmers a good understanding of the definition of bullying.
3. Offer clear and understandable methods on how to report bullying.
4. Inform all parents, swimmers and coaching staff, that should any bullying issues arise, there is a policy and protocol.

### **WHAT IS BULLYING?**

The USA Swimming Code of Conduct prohibits 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:

- 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 WPSC coach, Board Member, or other designated individual
- Write a letter or email to a WPSC 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. However, every effort should be made to bring the complaint to the attention of the appropriate club leadership as soon as possible. This is to help ensure that memories are fresh, 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 encouraged to get another adult to help.
  2. Separate the children involved.
  3. Make sure everyone is safe.
  4. Meet any immediate medical or mental health needs.
  5. Stay calm. Reassure the children involved, including bystanders.
  6. Model respectful behavior.
  
- If bullying is occurring at the WPSC or it is reported to be occurring at the WPSC, we address the bullying by FINDING OUT WHAT HAPPENED and SUPPORTING THE CHILDREN INVOLVED using the following approach:
  1. Get the facts.
    - a. Keep all of the involved children separate.
    - b. Collect information from several sources, both adults and children.
    - c. Listen without blaming.
    - d. Do not label the act as “bullying” before gathering all of the information.
  2. Determine if it is 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.
    - a. Review the USA Swimming definition of bullying;
    - b. To determine if the behavior is bullying or something else, we may consider the following questions:
      - i. What is the history between the children involved?
      - ii. Have there been past conflicts?
      - iii. Is there a power imbalance? Remembering that a power imbalance is not always limited to physical strength.
      - iv. Has this happened before? Is the child worried it will happen again?
    - c. We will keep in mind that it may not matter “who started it.” Some children who are bullied may be seen as annoying or provoking, but this does not excuse the bullying behavior.
    - d. Once the situation has been identified, we will progress accordingly.
  3. Support the child(ren) who are being bullied
    - a. Listen and focus on the child. Learn what has been going on and show that 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 and coaches may all have valuable input. It may help to:
      - i. Ask the child being bullied what can be done to make him/her feel safe. He/she is not at fault and should not be singled out. Changes to routine should be minimized and the bullied child should not be forced to make the change. For example:
        - Consider rearranging lane assignments for everyone.
        - A larger type move would be switching practice groups.
      - ii. Develop a game plan. Maintain open communication between the WPSC and the parents. Discuss the steps that will be taken and how bullying will be addressed going forward.
    - c. 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 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/she chose to bully another child(ren). For example:
    - i. Some children feel insecure with themselves and bully to fit in with other children.
    - ii. Some children act out because of issues at home.
    - iii. Some children become bullies because they have been the target of bullying. 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. For example, the child can:
    - i. Write a letter apologizing to the athlete who was bullied.
    - ii. Do a good deed for the person who was bullied, for the WPSC or for others in the community.
    - iii. Clean up, repair or pay for any property they damaged.
  - e. 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:
    - i. Praise acts of kindness.
    - ii. Talk about what it means to be a good teammate.
5. Support bystanders who witness bullying. Every day, children witness bullying. They want to help, but don't know how. The WPSC will encourage our athletes to help stop bullying by helping to educate them on how to handle a situation where they see bullying occurring:
  - a. Be a friend to the person being bullied.
  - b. Tell a trusted adult – your parent, coach, or club board member.
  - 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. "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.