

## USA Swimming Safe Sport Committee Best Practices for Keeping Locker Rooms Safe at Practices

Incidents that put swimmers at risk of physical and emotional harm often take place in the locker room. Therefore, the USA Swimming Safe Sport Committee recommends that clubs put procedures in place to monitor locker rooms to ensure that swimmers display acceptable, respectful, and safe behavior toward their teammates while providing protection from potentially dangerous situations.

Club resources, LSC support, and practice facilities themselves can vary so one size definitely does not fit all. The goal is to ensure that swimmers who use the locker room facilities or changing areas understand appropriate locker room behavior and that the locker room is preserved as a safe zone for all swimmers. With instruction and cooperation, coaches, swimmers, and parents all play an important role in keeping locker rooms safe for all.

### Know the rules:

- The USA Swimming Code of Conduct governs all members. Coaches, club management, parents, and swimmers should be familiar with it.
- Safe Sport policies addressing electronic communications and bullying are required for member clubs.
- In addition to USA Swimming rules and regulations, clubs should also know all local ordinances and facility policies that pertain to their swimmers and the pools at which they practice. Any relevant information should be posted on a club's website and reviewed at least annually with staff, parents, and swimmers and with new staff and members as they join the club.
- Coaches and clubs should establish proper locker room behavior as a key aspect of their team's culture. Expectations should be defined in the club's code of conduct and all relevant policies. Aspects of the USA Swimming Code of Conduct and Safe Sport policies that pertain to locker room behavior should be incorporated.
- Locker rooms and changing areas should have signs posted at all entrances indicating that the use of recording devices **including cell phones** is prohibited per USA Swimming rules.
- Coaches, swimmers, and parents should be aware of the specific locker room facilities available for their swimmers and should instruct swimmers in the safe use of those facilities:
  - Swimmers should not be allowed to spend long periods of time in the locker rooms, before, during, or after practice. This is especially important when the age range of the swimmers using the facility is broad.
  - Coaches should monitor their swimmers and, without neglecting their responsibilities to swimmers in the pool, should investigate any unusual absences or have in place a club-approved procedure to do so.
  - Coaches concerned with any aspect of the locker room facilities or their ability to effectively monitor them should instruct their swimmers to arrive dressed to swim and depart without changing into street clothes. Parents should also be informed.



### Limiting Access:

- If at all possible, locker room access should be restricted to swimmers. Parents who wish to assist their swimmers with dressing should be directed to other bathrooms or family locker rooms, if permitted by the facility. If alternate dressing room options are not available, parents who are uncomfortable permitting their children to use the locker room or changing area without parental supervision should be requested to arrive dressed to swim. If the club has swimmers with documented medical or physical disabilities that require special assistance in the locker room, clubs should make appropriate arrangements to accommodate these swimmers in a way that protects their safety and privacy as well as that of the other swimmers in the locker room.
- If the public or facility membership has access to the locker rooms during practice times, coaches and clubs should coordinate in advance with the facility manager to determine how locker rooms will be monitored for the safety and privacy of both swimmers and public users.
- When the only bathroom facilities are located in the locker rooms, locker rooms should be monitored more frequently in this situation to ensure no adults or athletes are loitering in the locker rooms or behaving in a concerning manner around the swimmers.

### Monitoring:

- It is not recommended that adult monitors be stationed inside locker rooms while swimmers are present. Rather periodic walk throughs or sweeps should be conducted to ensure that a safe environment and acceptable behavior are maintained. The goals of monitoring are to:
  - Ensure no inappropriate or unsafe behavior is occurring
  - Confirm that only authorized people are in the locker room
  - Check for prohibited use of cameras or other recording devices
  - Discourage swimmers from “hanging out” in the locker room
- Coaches should not neglect their responsibilities to swimmers in the pool in order to monitor locker rooms during practice. Coaches and club management should work together or with facility staff to do so or, at least, to investigate any unusually long swimmer absences from deck. However, daily walk throughs before, after, and between practices if possible are advised to confirm that locker rooms are safe for use.
- Whenever swimmers are in the locker rooms, periodic sweeps should be conducted by two same gender adults monitoring the locker room of their gender. These adults should be:
  - USA Swimming members or
  - At least one should be a USA Swimming member or
  - If neither is a USA Swimming member, they both should be individuals affiliated with the team or the facility (especially if the facility performs background checks on its employees)
  - In the worst case, if only one adult of each gender is available, they should be USA Swimming members (meet directors, chaperones, coaches, officials)



- Under no circumstances should a routine sweep be conducted by adults of the opposite sex unless an emergency situation requires it

A club's coaches, board members, and other team adults are responsible for keeping swimmers safe at practice facilities. Some situations may not be covered in these best practices and coaches are encouraged to respond as needed. The following resources are available to help inform and guide coaches and other interested adults:

- Your club's Safe Sport Coordinator and Safety Coordinator
- Your LSC's Safe Sport Coordinator and Safety Coordinator
- USA Swimming's Safe Sport Committee
- USA Swimming's Operational Risk Committee
- USA Swimming Safe Sport Program: [usaswimming.org/protect](https://usaswimming.org/protect)