Implementing Policy at your Club:
Electronic Communication and Bullying

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Agenda

- Safe Sport Program Background
- Anti-Bullying Model Policy
- Electronic Communication Model Policy
- Tips on how to implement

Have a question? Ask at anytime!
Mission Statement: USA Swimming is committed to safeguarding the well-being of all of its members, with the welfare of its athlete members as the top priority.
Safe Sport Framework

SAFE SPORT

- Policies & Guidelines
- Screening & Selection
- Training & Education
- Monitoring & Supervision
- Recognizing, Responding, & Reporting
- Grassroots Engagement & Feedback
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Policies

Provide specific, mandatory rules that must be followed by all members at all levels of the organization
How do I find these model policies?
USA SWIMMING'S SAFE SPORT PROGRAMMING

USA Swimming is committed to fostering a fun, healthy and safe environment for all of its members. For that reason, we have in place a detailed Code of Conduct. The following rules, policies, reporting structure, education and tools are intended to serve our members as we work together to maintain this environment.

For questions or concerns, please contact our Director of Safe Sport, Susan Woessner, or our Safe Sport Program Coordinator Liz Hoendervoogt. Susan and Liz oversee USA Swimming’s efforts to foster safe and positive training environments.

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About Susan Woessner
Q&A with Susan Woessner (Swimming World Magazine)
About Liz Hoendervoogt

SAFE SPORT LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE JAN 27-29
ATTENTION GENERAL CHAIRS
Please join us for the USA Swimming Safe Sport Leadership Conference Jan. 27-29 in Colorado Springs, Colo. Hear from experts in the field of abuse prevention, leaders in the Olympic movement, and other national youth serving organizations in an open and inclusive atmosphere to learn, discuss and further your understanding of the dynamics, challenges and solutions of abuse in sport.

LEARN MORE

POLICIES & GUIDELINES
FOSTERING A SAFE & HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT
USA Swimming strives to continually improve the programs and services it offers to its members and among these some of the most important relate to the safeguards for protecting young athletes. In effort to continue to foster safe and positive environments within all our member clubs, we believe it is especially important to provide our member adult leaders with policies and best practice guidelines that help define elements of appropriate behavior and conduct.
MANDATORY REPORTING RULE

ARTICLE 306
SEXUAL MISCONDUCT REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

.1 It is every member’s responsibility to promptly report any incident regarding sexual misconduct by a member as described in Article 304.3.5 to USA Swimming’s Athlete Protection Officer. Reporting must occur when an individual has firsthand knowledge of misconduct or where specific and credible information has been received from a victim or knowledgeable third party. Various state laws may also require reporting to law enforcement or to a designated child protection agency.

.2 No member shall retaliate against any individual who has made a good faith report under 306.1.

.3 False reporting of sexual misconduct made in bad faith is prohibited.

.4 Neither civil nor criminal statutes of limitation apply to reports of cases of sexual abuse.

REPORT NOW

Best Practice Guidelines
Model Policy - Team Travel
Model Policy - Team Travel
Model Policy - Electronic Communication
Model Policy - Electronic Communication
Model - Action Plan to Address Bullying
Model - Action Plan to Address Bullying
304.3.7 Bullying is prohibited. For these purposes, the term “bullying” shall mean, regardless of when or where it may occur, the severe or repeated use by one or more USA Swimming members (“Members”) of an 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).
305.6 Clubs shall establish their own action plans for implementing USA Swimming’s anti-bullying policy.

USA Swimming shall provide a model plan as an example which shall serve as the default for any club that fails to establish its own plan. Club anti-bullying plans must be reviewed and agreed to annually by all athletes, parents, coaches and other non-athlete members of the club.
Bullying

MODEL POLICY: ACTION PLAN TO ADDRESS BULLYING

The following is a model procedure to implement the USA Swimming rule prohibiting bullying, which is provided to assist USA Swimming member clubs in developing their own procedure. USA Swimming clubs are required to have an action plan to address bullying and the plan must be reviewed with and agreed to by all athletes, parents, coaches, and other adults at the club. If a club chooses not to, or is unable to, create a written action plan, the following model plan will become the default plan for that club, and the club will be expected to implement these procedures when reports of bullying are made. Once a customized plan is developed and approved by your club, the default plan will no longer apply. Each member club has the responsibility to approve and implement its action plan.

Action Plan of the [insert name of the club] to Address Bullying

PURPOSE
Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at [insert the name of the club] (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 how to report bullying clear and understandable.
5. To spread the word that (Name of Club) takes bullying seriously and that all swimmers and parents can be assured that they will be supported when bullying is reported.
Policy Components

• Define bullying
• Make it clear who athletes can talk to if they feel like they’ve been bullied
• Let athletes know you will listen to them
• Include the general steps you will take to address bullying
Lessons Learned: Tips to Implement your Policy

• Make it special. All swimmers must know how important this is to coaches and parents.

• Multi-pronged approach. Just presenting a policy is not enough

• Follow up is key. Policy must be applied every day by all members of the club.

• Involve your athletes. The more they make it their own policy, the better your club will be.
Questions?
Electronic Communication: What is the Rule?

- **305.7** Clubs shall establish their own electronic communication/social media policy. USA Swimming shall provide a model policy as an example which shall serve as the default for any club that fails to establish its own policy. Club electronic communication policies should be reviewed and agreed to annually by all athletes, parents, coaches and other non-athlete members of the club.
MODEL POLICY: ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

USA Swimming clubs are now 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. The following is a model policy for appropriate electronic communication between adults and athletes, and is provided to assist USA Swimming member clubs with developing their own policies. If a club chooses not to, or is unable to, create a written electronic communication policy, the following model policy will become the default electronic communication policy for that club. Once a customized set of policies is developed and approved by your club, the default policy will no longer apply. Each member club and each LSC has the responsibility for approval and implementation of its own electronic communication policy.

Electronic Communication Policy of the [insert the name of the club]

PURPOSE
The [insert the name of the 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. This includes, but is not limited to, email, text messages, social media, and other forms of electronic communication. The Club’s policy requires all communications to be appropriate, respectful, and in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations. The Club reserves the right to review and monitor all communications to ensure compliance with this policy. Any violation of this policy may result in disciplinary action, including but not limited to, suspension or expulsion from the Club.

CONSEQUENCES
Violations of this policy will result in disciplinary action, including but not limited to, suspension or expulsion from the Club. The Club reserves the right to take any action necessary to ensure compliance with this policy.

[insert the name of the club] Date: [insert date]

Policy Components

- **Content**: what we do and don’t talk about with athletes
- **Club Communication**: tell your members how to expect the club to communicate with them
- **Adult – Athlete Communication**: tell your members how to expect adults at the club to communicate with athletes
Lessons Learned: Tips to Implement your Policy

• Have a clear communication policy for your team, as well as clear goals in this area.
• Balance communication goals with the need to establish firm boundaries with athletes.
• Educate coaches on the risks and consequences of even appropriate direct communication with an athlete.
• Deal with reality.
Thank you!

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