

# VERNON HILLS PARK DISTRICT Turtles Swim Team

## Team Handbook

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## **VHPD Turtle Mission**

The mission of the Turtles Swim Team is to develop both strong competitive swimmers and well-rounded individuals. Coaches work diligently to teach the skills of dedication, responsibility, teamwork, positivity, honesty, and respect to each and every swimmer.

Through the competitive training regimen, coupled with these teachings, swimmers are able to develop themselves as strong, positive human beings. Our hope is that through hard work and diligence, the swimmers will become fierce competitors, compassionate teammates, and develop skills that will build upon positive growth paths in life.

The coaching staff firmly believes that the sport of swimming does more than strengthen the body and the mind; it has a lot to offer to one's spirit. Each coach shares the positive effects that swimming has had on their healthy living and social responsibilities. The teachings of self-discipline, teamwork, time management, and hard work have helped mold the coaching staff into who they are today. We hope that every swimmer in the program will walk away with the same, if not more.

## Accessing the Turtles Swim Team Website

Our website, <https://www.vhturtlesswimteam.org/> is used for most lines of communication. Enter the web address in your browser window or access it through the Vernon Hills Park District website. Within a week of registration, you will receive an email from the team website with login information. Once you log in, please verify and update your account information. Any inactive members or swimmers who no longer participate on the team will be removed after 30 days.

The website is where swimmers and parents can access all of our team's information, including:

- Important documents: Coaches' contact information, meet entries, meet results, calendars, and important updates.
- Registration for events: Swim meets, fundraising events, special events, volunteering opportunities, and community service opportunities.
- Contact Information: All swimmers currently on the roster are listed on the website, along with their parents' contact information.
- Team Records: View any Team Records for Short Course Yards (SCY), Short Course Meters (SCM), and Long Course Meters (LCM).

All swimmers are required to register for swim meets through the website. Registration for swim meets cannot be guaranteed if a swimmer does not register through the website.

## Parent Code of Conduct

The purpose of a code of conduct for parents is to establish clear and consistent expectations for parental behavior.

As a parent or guardian, I understand the important growth and developmental support that my child's participation fosters. I also understand that it is essential to provide the coaching staff with respect and the authority to coach the team. I agree with the following statements:

- I will set the right example for our children by demonstrating sportsmanship and showing respect and common courtesy to all team members, coaches, competitors, officials, parents, and all facility personnel at all times.
- I will fulfill my team's volunteer obligations, observe practices, cheer at meets, and discuss my child's progress with their coach.
- I will refrain from coaching my child from the stands during practices or meets.
- I will stay off the pool deck during practices at all times unless approved by the Head Coach.
- I will not take pictures or videos of my child's practice without the approval of the Head Coach and the parents of all other members in the pool.
- I understand that criticizing, name-calling, using abusive language, or making gestures directed toward coaches, officials, volunteers, and/or any participant in swimming will not be tolerated.
- I will respect the integrity of the officials.
- If I have concerns, I will direct them first to my child's Lead Coach, and if I am not satisfied, to the Head Coach.
- I understand the above expectations and that my failure to adhere to them may result in disciplinary action.
- Communication via phone or text message with coaches during practice, meets, and/or outside the timeframe specified in the communication policies is deemed inappropriate. The primary source of communications with any coach other than the Head Coach should be via email.
- ***Parents who exhibit sexist, racist, homophobic, or otherwise inappropriate behavior will face consequences.***

## **Athlete Code of Conduct**

The purpose of a code of conduct for athletes is to establish a consistent expectation for Athletes' behavior.

I agree to the following statements:

- I will respect and show courtesy to my teammates and coaches at all times.
- I will set a good example of behavior and work ethic for my younger teammates.
- I will be respectful of my teammates' feelings and personal space. Swimmers who exhibit sexist, racist, homophobic, or otherwise inappropriate behavior will be faced with consequences.
- I will attend all team meetings and training sessions, unless my coach excuses me from doing so.
- I will show respect for all facilities and other property (including locker rooms) used during practices, competitions, and team activities.
- I will refrain from foul language, violence, behavior deemed dishonest, offensive, or illegal.
- If I disagree with an official's call, I will talk with my coach and not approach the official directly.
- I will comply with all applicable USA and NISC rules and codes of conduct. I understand that if I violate this code of conduct, I will be subject to disciplinary action determined by my coaches and the swim club.

# **Coaching Staff Code of Conduct**

The purpose of the coaches' code of conduct is to establish consistent expectations for all members of the coaching staff of the Team. It is also intended to serve as a guide for promoting a positive team environment and fostering good sportsmanship.

As a coach, I understand the importance of my understanding of the below expectations and procedures to the growth of the program.

## **1. Attitude and Behavior**

- Set a good example of respect and sportsmanship for participants and fans to follow.
- Respect officials and their judgment and abide by the rules of the event.
- Treat opposing coaches, participants, and spectators with respect.
- Teach sportsmanship to all swimmers and require them to display good sportsmanship.
- Coach in a positive manner and refrain from using derogatory comments or abusive language.
- Treat every athlete fairly, justly, impartially, intelligently, and with sensitivity.
- Always prioritize the well-being, health, and safety of swimmers above all other considerations, including performance development.
- Always maintain a professional distance between the coach and the athlete. Any complaints of a coach violating the code of conduct should be brought to the attention of the head coach, his/her supervisor, and/or the club's president.

## **2. Professionalism**

- Act and dress with professionalism and dignity in a manner suitable to his/her profession.
- At meets, coaches are required to follow the Head Coach's apparel request.
- Arrive 15-20 minutes before a practice starts or at the scheduled time for a meet.
- Coaches are expected to be at every practice their group is training. *If unable to attend, the coach is responsible for finding a substitute and must communicate with the Head Coach with sufficient lead time.*
- Cell phone usage on deck is to be kept to a minimum. Text messages and phone calls are not necessary unless there is an emergency involving a family member or spouse. Attendance tracking will be conducted on phones or iPads via the Commit Swimming app.

### 3. Coach Professional Development

- Continue to seek and maintain their own professional development in all areas in relation to coaching and teaching children.
- The head coach will encourage and support all certifications that may help evolve you as a coach (ASCA, NISCA, NSCA, etc.).
- USA coaching membership Level 1 is the minimum requirement for all Turtles Swim Team Head Coaches.

### 4. Communication

- Coaches are required to stick around for 10 minutes to answer any questions from parents and athletes.
- The coach's email address will be posted on the website, along with their bio.
- If you've received an email from a parent, you are required to respond within 24-48 hrs. ***Please CC the Head Coach on any important email responses to ensure they are informed about any issues.***
- Communicate with each other and the Head Coach. Coaches' meetings will be held at the beginning of the new season and at the head coach's discretion (approximately 1 - 2 Months), to help the program's progress.
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### 5. Season, Weekly, & Workout Planning

- Follow the Season plan & weekly plans that the Head Coach has provided for you (The Head Coach will collaborate with the coaches of the group to finalize plans).
- All workouts will be written in the Commit workout manager. So the Head Coach can review them and ask questions or make any adjustments that he sees fit to the plan.
- The Head Coach will provide a list of drills for all coaches to follow. The purpose of this is to ensure consistency in terminology and a smooth progression from one group to the next; this is always open to feedback and collaboration.

## Practice Policies

- Swimmers should arrive at least 15 minutes before practice so they can be on deck and ready 10 minutes before the start of practice. This time is intended for stretching and socializing, so that practice can start on time and make efficient use of the allocated time.
- Swimmers should make every effort to attend all of practice, including the dryland portion, if applicable.
- For swimmers' protection, parents should ensure that a coach is present at practice and that there is a practice session before leaving their child at the pool. Check the team website for changes.
- If a swimmer is late to practice, we hope that the parent will send a note with the swimmer explaining the reason for the tardiness. If a swimmer needs to leave early, a note must also be provided.
- **Parents are not allowed on the deck during practice.** Parents may observe practice from the pool balcony. Please refrain from communicating with your swimmer during practice.
- While at practice, swimmers are under the responsibility of the coaching staff. During practice sessions, swimmers are never to leave the swim area without the coach's permission.
- Any damage done to Vernon Hills Park District or Vernon Hills High School property may result in financial liability to the swimmer's parents. Any damage may also result in the swimmer being asked to leave the team permanently.
- Swimmers should demonstrate self-control and respect to all parents, athletes, officials, lifeguards, and coaches in the program. The coaches must conduct practices without distractions. The coaches must have swimmers' undivided attention at all times.
- All swimmers are expected to follow the oral and written directions and instructions of any coach or staff.
- Use of profanity or verbal abuse will not be tolerated.
- Misconduct and interference with the rights of others will result in suspension or possible dismissal from the program.
- Practice schedules are posted on the team website.
- Vernon Hills Park District Turtles Swim Team is not responsible for changes in your schedule. Makeup practices will not be permitted.

# Turtles Swim Team

## Team Descriptions

### Bronze

#### **Age: 8 & Under**

#### **Skill Requirement**

Introductory level with prior lesson experience: 25 yards of freestyle with rotary breathing and 25 yards of backstroke.

#### **Goals**

Build interest in the sport, learn proper body position, master correct breathing techniques, understand how to streamline, establish a foundation in all four competitive strokes, and get introduced to the swim team environment, including competitive rules and training.

#### **Practice Schedule**

2 times/week, 1 hour

#### **Equipment**

Swimsuit, cap, kickboard, fins, goggles, snorkel

#### **Meet Expectation**

Spring/Summer: 3 meets per season

Fall/Winter: 3 meets per season

#### **To be considered for Silver:**

- Consistency of attendance, Swim Meet Attendance
- Must be able to perform 5 x 100 IM with legal strokes, turns & finish
- Must be able to swim 10 x 50 Free on 1:15
- coach's discretion.

## Silver (Competitive)

**Age: 9 -12 years**

### **Skill Requirement**

100 yards with rotary breathing and flip turns, 50 yards of backstroke with flip turns, 50 yards of breaststroke with legal turn, 50 yards of butterfly with legal turn, understanding of interval training, and using a pace clock.

### **Goals**

Understanding of team drills/progressions, continue to refine/train all 4 strokes, strengthen kick, introduce dry-land exercises, introduce high-intensity endurance training, and race skills. Training will focus on 50 -200s of stroke and 200 IM.

### **Practice Schedule**

4 times/week, 1.15 hour

### **Equipment**

Competitive swimsuit (jammer or Speedo), cap, goggles, water bottle, kickboard, buoy, and fins

### **Meet Expectation**

Spring/Summer: 3 meets per season

Fall/Winter: 3 meets per season

### **To be considered for Gold**

- Consistency of attendance, meet & volunteer expectations met,
- Must be able to swim 5 x 200 IM on with legal strokes, turns & finish
- Must be able to swim 5 x 100 Free @ 1:45
- Must show commitment to USA Swimming and year-round swimming.

## Gold (Competitive)

**Age: 13 -14 years**

### **Skill Requirements**

100 yards practicing rotary breathing and flip turns, 100 yards of backstroke with flip turns, 100 yards of breaststroke with legal turn, 100 yards of butterfly with legal turn, understanding of interval training, and using a pace clock.

### **Goals**

Begin mastering team drills and progressions, train all four strokes, develop consistent and strong underwaters off each wall, continue dry land activities, incorporate more breath control, and focus on sprinting and distance event training. Training will emphasize 200s of stroke and 400 IM.

### **Practice Schedule**

5 times/week, 1.5 hours

### **Equipment**

Competitive swimsuit (jammer or Speedo), cap, goggles, water bottle, fins, pull buoy, paddles, kickboard, and fins

### **Meet Expectation**

Spring/Summer: 3 meets per season

Fall/Winter: 3 meets per season

### **To be considered for Green**

- Consistency of attendance, meet & volunteer expectations met,
- Must be able to swim 10 x 200 IM on with legal strokes, turns & finish
- Must be able to swim 10 x 100 Freestyle @ 1:20
- Must show commitment to USA Swimming and year-round swimming.
- Coach's discretion,

## Green (Advanced)

**Age: 15 & over**

### **Skill Requirement**

Cut times will be posted before team try-outs.

### **Goals**

Mastery of team drills and progressions, advanced training for competitions, learning proper nutrition, developing time management skills, and setting goals for both short-term and long-term success.

### **Practice Schedule**

6 times/week, 2 hours

### **Dryland**

3 times/week, 45 - 60 Minutes

### **Equipment**

Competitive swimsuit, caps, goggles, water bottle, fins, pull buoy, paddles, snorkel

### **Meet Expectation\***

Spring/Summer: 3 meets per season

Fall/Winter: 3 meets per season

## **Meet Expectation per Level\***

To promote team camaraderie and participation throughout all levels, each team has a base expectation of meets they will need to attend. Meets are a culmination of the swimmer's effort and hard work. Swimmers are encouraged to participate in swim meets (throughout the season) to help coaches determine how they are progressing. Meets are a great way for swimmers to have fun and to demonstrate their abilities and the work they have put in through the season.

In order to remain at the same level or advance to higher levels, the swimmer must have met the meet expectations for the previous active season. Please plan accordingly to attend the required meets per level. **You would not attend practice to then miss the games. Swim meets are swimming's version of games, so make sure to attend.** Continued failure to fulfill the minimum meet requirement will result in suspension or possible removal from the Turtles Swim Team.

## **Meet Information**

Swim meets are an excellent opportunity for swimmers to improve and for parents to see how their child is developing as a swimmer. Below is information for parents and swimmers to remember regarding meets.

**NISC (REC League):** The Northern Illinois Swim Conference and the Northern Illinois Winter Swim Conference are recreational swim conferences for youth through 18 years of age. The emphasis of the Conferences is placed on learning competitive skills, enjoyment of the sport, and lifelong participation in swimming. The Conferences focus on dual meets, and these meets are strictly for experience purposes. The purpose is to efficiently and economically provide a swimming opportunity, which is designed to provide wholesome, constructive, and enjoyable leisure time experiences that benefit the individual and the participating member agencies. Rec Meets can be fast-paced with little rest in between each event. The coaching staff will ensure each swimmer swims his/her event to gain the experience of the swim, but also to learn how meets are run. Once each swimmer has participated in a few Rec Meets, it is highly encouraged to participate in USA-S Meets.

Rec meets are focused around the less experienced swimmers. Seeing that these meets are usually dual meets, they are more relaxed and focus on the general aspects of a meet. These meets will help swimmers get ready for the more competitive USA-S meets.

**USA Swimming:** As the National Governing Body for the sport of swimming in the United States, USA Swimming is a 400,000-member service organization that promotes the culture of swimming by creating opportunities for swimmers and coaches of all backgrounds to participate and advance in the sport through clubs, events, and education.

Membership is comprised of swimmers from the age group level to the Olympic Team, as well as coaches and volunteers. USA Swimming is responsible for selecting and training teams for international competition, including the Olympic Games, and strives to serve the sport through its core objectives: Build the Base, Promote the Sport, and Achieve Competitive Success.

These meets are for USA-Swim registered swimmers only. You may apply for a membership through the Team Administrator. USA-Swim meets are similar to REC meets, except that multiple teams compete. There are associated fees, including but not limited to: USA-S registration and meet entry fees. You can pay these fees online through your Commit Swimming account.

USA swim meets can provide kids with a broader perspective on the sport of swimming, helping to foster further growth and passion for the sport while also allowing for individualized coaching.

## **Team Uniform Policy**

The Park District will be enforcing a Team Uniform policy for meets. This is to promote team unity, enhance the team's image, and foster self-confidence and a sense of unity in each swimmer. Team suits are Speedo Endurance suits comprised of a poly-blend material designed to last over 300+ hours of use. Only performance or tech suits, or another solid black suit, will be acceptable alternatives. A Team cap or a solid black cap will be worn if a cap is to be worn.

## **A Note for Parents about Meets**

Swim meets can vary. Some meets can be indoors or outdoors. Some meets have fees, while others do not. It is essential to verify the information about the meet in the events section of the website. This will list the time, cost, location, and duration for all meets. **The Turtles will be enforcing a strict cancellation policy. \*All swimmers registered with USA Swimming will be required to sign up for auto bill pay using a credit card or checking account; this will be used to pay meet fees.\***

For both indoor meets and outdoor meets, it is appropriate to anticipate it to be very hot. Often, at indoor meets, swimmers spend time in a gym or hall off the pool deck. These places tend to be cold, so please pack accordingly. Summer meets often take place outdoors; swimmers should pack extra sunscreen and protective wear for these events. Keep in mind that some invitational meets can last more than six hours; please pack snacks and entertainment accordingly.

### **Pre-Meet**

1. Arrive at least 15 minutes before the scheduled warm-up or the designated time by the coaches.
2. Check in with your coach, or at the check-in (if the meet has a positive check-in), and change into a suit and warm-ups.
3. Find the team and put your belongings at the team's designated spot. This will help ensure we don't lose anyone's belongings.
4. Swimmers may choose to write events on their hands to keep track during the meet.
5. Begin stretching with the team before the in-pool warm-up.
6. Coaches will inform swimmers of warm-up locations. It is very important to take the warm-up seriously. Without a proper warm-up, poor times or even injury may result.
7. Following the in-pool warm-up, swimmers should return to the team's location and prepare for their events.
8. Parents, you are welcome to wait with your swimmers before their events if you wish. Heat sheets containing race information, including estimated times, are generally available at the concessions table for a fee. It's always good to encourage your swimmer, but please be careful not to overexcite them before their event.

### **During Meet**

1. All swimmers should have their events memorized or written down so that they know when to report to the bullpen or pool deck.
2. If there is a bullpen, the event number will be called over a loudspeaker, and the swimmer will move to the bullpen. Here, they will wait until instructed to move to the pool deck for their race. Be sure to bring your water bottle, cap, and goggles.
3. During your swim, focus. It can be intense with everyone watching, so focus on your own swim and remember the techniques and tips coaches emphasize at practice.
4. After your swim, you should report to your coach. Coaches will have valuable input regarding the race. Do not forget to meet with them immediately afterwards.
5. Swimmers then return to the team area. This is the time to stretch, relax, and have a light snack before your next event. Some events can be relatively close to each other, so judge what you do accordingly.
6. If a swimmer finishes and has no more events, individual or relay, they may leave early after their parents inform the coaching staff.

## **Packing for Meets**

Below is a list of recommended items to bring to each swim meet to ensure that the swimmer will be prepared for the day.

- Team apparel and appropriate warm-ups (sweat pants, athletic shorts, anything to wear over one's suit).
- Two pairs of goggles and two caps.
- Flip-flops or deck shoes.
- Towels – We suggest at least two towels and a shammy cloth.
- Playing cards, a book, or homework to keep oneself occupied between events.
- Healthy snacks include dried fruit, granola bars, or veggies.
- Please remember to bring a water bottle with Gatorade or water.
- A chair or blanket to sit on.

**The Vernon Hills Park District Turtles Swim Team is not responsible for lost or stolen items, including electronics.**

## **Swim Meet Cancellation Policy**

After a swimmer commits to a meet, they are placed in both individual and relay events. Cancellations after confirmation jeopardize the team's ability to swim relays and leave other swimmers unable to race their planned events. Swimmers should always keep in mind that swimming is a team sport, and each swimmer contributes to the team. Late cancellations affect the entire team.

### **USA Meets:**

Due to fees associated with USA swimming meets, once the host team has accepted entries, parents/swimmers are responsible for the meet fees, regardless of whether the swimmer participates in the meet.

### **REC Meets:**

Any cancellations made after the events have been posted or submitted to the REC hosting team, or no-shows, will result in a \$50 fee.

All swimmers will jeopardize their ability to advance to the next level or remain on the team roster for the following season with any last-minute cancellations. We do understand that last-minute emergencies do arise. If your child is sick, please get a doctor's note to share with the team and notify the Head Coach as soon as possible.

## **Parent Support Board**

The Turtles' Parent Support Board was created to aid the coaching staff. Currently, the support board consists of three volunteer parents.

**Parent-Coach Liaison** - Responsible for distributing pertinent information between the coaching staff and the swimming parents. This helps channel important information, anonymous concerns, and questions between the parents and coaches without delay or bias. Please feel free to address any concerns to the parent-coach liaison, and they will pass them along to the coaching staff.

**Officials Coordinator** - Responsible for distributing information regarding changes to rules or regulations to parents or coaches, and for coordinating officials to work home and away meets.

**Volunteer Coordinator** - Responsible for organizing and managing the parent volunteers for home and away meets. This includes helping to ensure that there will be enough volunteers to aid at both home/away meets and to manage concessions at meets that we host.

**Event Coordinator** – Coordinates events for team members and parents to participate in. Also responsible for coordinating team banquet and lock-in with the Head Coach.

## **Volunteer Expectation**

Parent involvement is vital to running an effective swim team. Oftentimes at home and away swim meets, parents are responsible for a multitude of jobs so the coaching staff can focus on the swimmers in the pool. Swim meets hosted by the Turtles require our parents to fill at least 20 positions, while swim meets hosted by other organizations may require parent help to aid in timing races. Different volunteering jobs may include: race timing, donations to the concession stand, working the concession stand, working in the bull pen, labeling and organizing awards, and chaperoning social and fundraising events.

Parents are expected to volunteer throughout the season. During the season, parents are expected to fulfill their volunteer hours. Parents can register to volunteer for events through the job section on the website and select their preferred job. At the beginning of each swim meet, parents check in with the volunteer coordinator and attend a training (no previous experience is necessary).

## **Volunteer Opt Out**

Parents will have the opportunity to “opt out” of their volunteer expectation for \$300.00 per season, per swimmer. This will **only** be charged through Commit Swimming. We prefer to have parents volunteer, rather than pay the money!

## ACTION PLAN OF THE VERNON HILLS SWIM TEAM TO ADDRESS BULLYING



### **PURPOSE**

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at Vernon Hills Swim Team (VHST) 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, the Head Coach.

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 inform all parents, swimmers, and coaching staff that there is a policy and protocol in case any bullying issues arise.
4. To make the process of reporting bullying clear and understandable.
5. To spread the word that Vernon Hills Swim Team takes bullying seriously and that all swimmers and parents can be assured that they will be supported when bullying is reported.

### **WHAT IS BULLYING?**

Generally, bullying is the use of aggression, whether intentional or not, that hurts another person. Bullying results in pain and distress.

Bullying is the severe or repeated use, regardless of when or where it may occur, by one or more USA Swimming members of an oral, written, electronic or 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 or Participating Non-Member that to a reasonably objective person has the effect of causing physical or emotional harm to the other member or damage to the other member's property;

- i. Placing the other member in reasonable fear of harm to himself/herself or of damage to his/her property;
- ii. Creating a hostile environment for the other member at any USA Swimming activity;
- iii. Infringing on the rights of the other member at any USA Swimming activity; or
- iv. Materially and substantially disrupting the training process or the orderly operation of any USA Swimming activity (*which for 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. Still, 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. The bullying behavior can be stopped as quickly 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 okay to get another adult to help.
2. Separate the kids involved.
3. Make sure everyone is safe.
4. Meet any immediate medical or mental health needs.
5. Stay calm. Reassure the kids involved, including bystanders.
6. Model respectful behavior when you intervene.

If bullying is occurring at our club or is reported to be occurring at our club, we address the bullying by **FINDING OUT WHAT HAPPENED** and **SUPPORTING THE KIDS INVOLVED** using the following approach:

### ***FINDING OUT WHAT HAPPENED***

1. **First, we get the facts.**
  - a. Keep all the involved children separate.
  - b. Get the story from several sources, both adults and kids.
  - c. Listen without blaming.
  - d. Don't call the act "bullying" while you are trying to understand what happened.
  - e. It may be challenging to get the whole story, especially if multiple athletes are involved or the bullying involves ***social bullying*** or ***cyberbullying***. Collect all available information.
2. **Then, we determine if it's bullying.** Many behaviors appear to be 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, 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?
- c. 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.
- d. Once you have determined if the situation is bullying, support all of the kids involved.

### ***SUPPORTING THE KIDS INVOLVED***

#### **3. Support the kids who are being bullied.**

- a. Listen and focus on the child. Learn what’s been going on and show 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, 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 or her feel safe. Remember that changes to routine should be minimized. He or she is not at fault and should not be singled out. For example, consider rearranging lane assignments for everyone. If bigger moves are necessary, such as switching practice groups, the child who is bullied should not be forced to change.
  - ii. Develop a game plan. Maintain open communication between the Club and 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 that their behavior is wrong and harms others.
- b. Show kids 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 or she was bullied. For example:
  - i. Sometimes, children bully to fit in or just to make fun of someone who is a little different from them. In other words, there may be some insecurity involved.

- ii. 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 need additional support.
    - d. Involve the kid who was 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 Club, or others in your community.
      - iii. Clean up, repair, or pay for any property they damaged.
    - e. Avoid strategies that don't work or have negative consequences:
      - i. Zero tolerance or “three strikes, you're out” strategies don't work. Suspending or removing from the team swimmers who bully does not reduce bullying behavior. Swimmers may be less likely to report and address bullying if suspension or removal from the team is the consequence.
      - ii. Conflict resolution and peer mediation don't work for bullying. Bullying is not a conflict between people of equal power who share equal blame. Facing those who have bullied may further upset kids who have been bullied.
    - f. Follow-up. After the bullying issue is resolved, continue finding ways to help the child who was bullied to understand how what they do affects other people. For example, praise acts of kindness or talk about what it means to be a good teammate.
5. **Support bystanders who witness bullying.** 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.
- a. Be a friend to the person being bullied;
  - b. Tell a trusted adult – your parent, coach, or club board member;
  - c. Help the kid being bullied get away from the situation. Create a distraction, shift the focus to 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.

\*Depending on the severity of the offence, specific steps may be skipped upon the discretion of the Vernon Hills Park District Administration.\*

## Respect & Behavior Policy

The Turtles' Swim Team is recognized in the USA/Illinois Swimming, NIWSC, and NISC conferences for our respect of both facilities and other teams. There are several expectations our coaching staff has established that both swimmers and parents should be aware of prior to attending an away function.

- Swimmers are expected always to be respectful of our facilities and other facilities, including but not limited to: locker rooms, pool decks, holding spaces, and parking lots.
- Swimmers are expected to keep all areas at our facilities and other facilities clean from garbage by picking up after themselves.
- Rough play, foul language, or commenting negatively toward teammates or other swimmers are not tolerated by the coaching staff and can disqualify a swimmer from competition. This includes hearsay from other members or adults.
- Occasionally, swimmers may get excited and become loud. Always listen for instructions by coaches and do not make them repeat themselves.
- The use of drugs and alcohol will not be tolerated.
- Treat others with respect and compassion, even when faced with disagreement.
- Agreeing to disagree can be an effective solution, as well as walking away from a situation.

Minor infractions can lead to discipline in the pool, meaning harder workouts. If anything serious arises, parents will be contacted and the problem will be resolved.

# 10 COMMANDMENTS FOR SWIMMING PARENTS

By Rose Snyder

1. **Thou shalt not impose your ambitions on thy child.** Remember that swimming is your child's activity. Improvements and progress occur at different rates for each individual. Don't judge your child's progress based on the performance of other athletes and don't push them based on what you think they should be doing. The nice thing about swimming is people can strive to do their personal best and benefit from the process of competitive swimming.

2. **Thou shalt be supportive no matter what.** There is only one question to ask your child after a practice or a competition - "Did you have fun?" If meets and practices are not fun, your child should not be forced to participate.

3. **Thou shalt not coach thy child.** You are involved in one of the few youth sports programs that offer professional coaching; do not undermine the professional coach by trying to coach your child on the side. Your job is to provide unconditional love and support and a safe place to return at the end of the day. Love and hug your child no matter what. Tell them how proud you are of them. The coach is responsible for the technical part of the job. You should not offer advice on technique, race strategy, or any other area that is not yours. And above all, never pay your child for a performance. This will only serve to confuse your child concerning the reasons to strive for excellence and weaken the swimmer/coach bond.

4. **Thou shalt only have positive things to say at a swimming meet.** If you are going to show up at a swimming meet, you should be encouraging, but never criticize your child or the coach. Both of them know when mistakes have been made. And remember, "yelling at" is not the same as "cheering for". You also may want to consider being positive anytime you are around the pool.

5. **Thou shalt acknowledge thy child's fears.** A first swimming meet, 500 free or 200 IM, can be a stressful situation. It is totally appropriate for your child to be scared. Don't yell or belittle, just assure your child that the coach would not have suggested the event if your child was not ready to compete in it. Remember, your job is to love and support your child through all of the swimming experience. Most of their fears are ones you have given them.

6. **Thou shalt not criticize the officials.** If you do not care to devote the time or do not have the desire to volunteer as an official, don't criticize those who are doing the best they can. You, too, can be trained to be an official in an afternoon.

7. **Honor thy child's coach.** The bond between coach and swimmer is a special one, and one that contributes to your child's success as well as fun. Do not criticize the coach in the presence of your child; it will only serve to hurt your child's swimming.

**8. Thou shalt be loyal and supportive of thy team.** It is not wise for parents to take their swimmers and to jump from team to team. The water isn't necessarily bluer in another team's pool. Every team has its own internal problems, even teams that build champions. Children who switch from team to team are often ostracized for a long, long time by the teammates they leave behind and are slowly received by new teammates. Oftentimes swimmers who do switch teams never do better than they did before they sought the bluer water.

**9. Thy child shalt have goals besides winning.** Most successful swimmers are those who have learned to focus on the process and not the outcome. Giving an honest effort regardless of what the outcome is is much more important than winning. One Olympian said, "My goal was to set a world record. Well, I did that, but someone else did it too, just a little faster than I did. I achieved my goal, and I lost. Does this make me a failure? No, in fact, I am very proud of that swim." What a tremendous outlook to carry on through life.

**10. Thou shalt not expect thy child to become an Olympian.** There are 280,000 athletes in USA Swimming. Only 2% of the swimmers listed in the 10 & Under age group make it to the Top 100 in the 17-18 age group, and of those, only a small percentage will become elite-level, world-class athletes. There are only 52 spots available for the Olympic Team every four years. Your child's odds of becoming an Olympian are about .0002%. Swimming is much more than just the Olympics. Ask your coaches why they coach. Chances are, they were not an Olympian, but still got so much out of swimming that they wanted to pass the love for the sport on to others. Swimming teaches self-discipline and sportsmanship; it builds self-esteem and fitness; it provides lifelong friendships and much more. Most Olympians will tell you that these intangibles far outweigh any medal they may have won. Swimming builds good people, like you want your child to be, and you should be happy your child wants to participate.