



## Anti-Bullying Policy and Action Plan

Approved: January 9, 2013

Revised: June 13, 2019

Swim GSA firmly supports USA Swimming's athlete protection programs and strives to provide an exceptional swim team experience that is safe and positive for our swimmers, our coaches, our volunteers, and our membership. Bullying is generally defined as the use of aggression which causes pain and distress to another person. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at SGSA and will not be tolerated. This policy applies to all employees, swimmers, parents, coaches, and other adults affiliated with SGSA.

While focused on protecting swimmers, Swim GSA's anti-bullying position applies to interactions between all SGSA coaches, swimmers, parents, and volunteers as well as to SGSA member interactions with others in the USA Swimming community.

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, images, sounds, 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:

1. causing physical or emotional harm to the other member or damage to the other member's property
2. placing the other member in reasonable fear of harm to himself/herself or of damage to his/her property
3. creating a hostile environment for the other member at any USA Swimming activity
4. infringing on the rights of the other member at any USA Swimming activity
5. materially and substantially disrupting the training process or the orderly operation of any USA Swimming/NC Swimming/SGSA activity, even if the suspected bullying takes place outside of those events.

Any bullying incidents will be dealt with promptly according to the SGSA Anti-Bullying Action Plan. Every adult and swimmer affiliated with SGSA is expected to report suspected bullying

immediately to a SGSA coach, a board member, or the team's Business Manager.

### **Swim GSA Anti-Bullying Action Plan** (adapted from [www.stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov))

**Our Reporting Procedure:** A swimmer who feels that he or she has been bullied is asked to do one or more of the following things:

- Talk to parents
- Talk to a SGSA coach or board member
- Write a letter or email to their SGSA coach or the SGSA board President
- Make a report to the USA Swimming Safe Sport staff

There is no time limit for initiating a complaint under this procedure but every effort should be made to bring the complaint to the attention of a SGSA coach or board member as soon as possible to make sure that memories are fresh and behavior can be accurately recalled and bullying behavior can be stopped as soon as possible.

**How We Will Handle Bullying:** If bullying is occurring during GSA-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 swimmers involved.
3. Make sure everyone is safe.
4. Meet any immediate medical or mental health needs.
5. Stay calm. Reassure the swimmers involved, including bystanders.
6. Model respectful behavior when you intervene.

If bullying is occurring at our club or it is reported to be occurring at our club, we address the bullying by **FINDING OUT WHAT HAPPENED** and **SUPPORTING THE SWIMMERS 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 swimmers.
- c. Listen without blaming.
- d. Don't call the act "bullying" while you are trying to understand what happened.
- e. It may be difficult to get the whole story, especially if multiple athletes are involved or the bullying involves [social bullying](#) or [cyber bullying](#). Collect all available information.

**2. Then, we determine if it's 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, consider the following questions:
  - What is the history between the swimmers 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 swimmers involved.

### **Supporting the Swimmers Involved 1. Support the swimmers 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, and fellow team members and coaches may all have valuable input. It may help to:
  - 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.
  - 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.

### **2. 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 swimmers 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 bullied. For example: Sometimes children bully to fit in or just to make fun of someone is a little different from them.

In other words, there may be some insecurity involved. 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 be in need of additional support.

d. Involve the swimmer 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:

- Write a letter apologizing to the athlete who was bullied.
- Do a good deed for the person who was bullied, for the Club, or for others in your community. Clean up, repair, or pay for any property they damaged.

e. Avoid strategies that don't work or have negative consequences:

- 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 getting kicked off the team is the consequence.
- 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 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.

**3. 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.

- Be a friend to the person being bullied
- Tell a trusted adult – parent, coach, or club board member
- Help the swimmer 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.”
- Set a good example by not bullying others.
- 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.

All bullying incidents and action plans will be reviewed and monitored by the SGSA coaches and board of directors until a successful conclusion is achieved. Situations that are unable to be resolved by the Anti-Bullying Action Plan may be resolved by other means as determined by the coaches and the board of directors.

**WRITTEN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF ANTI-BULLYING POLICY**



I acknowledge that I have received, read and understood the Anti-Bullying Policy and/or that the Policy has been explained to me or my family. I further acknowledge and understand that agreeing to comply with the contents of this Policy is a condition of my membership with Swim GSA.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_