



Sooner Swim Club Member Handbook

Welcome to Sooner Swim Club (SSC)! This handbook contains useful information about SSC, how we operate, and the expectations we have of our swimmers and their parents.

New Member Registration

All online registration actions must be completed within the first 30 days of the child swimming. **Please complete the following items online:**

1. Team Registration
2. USA Swimming Registration/USA Swimming Transfer Form at USA swimming

Monthly dues payments received after the 10th are subject to a \$10.00 late fee. Parents must set up auto pay via the SSC website (<http://soonerswimclub.com>) by adding a credit or debit card on their account. The auto drafts occur on the first day of each month. Swim meets are billed 3 days after registration deadline to the card on file.

All swimmers and their parents/guardians must sign a Code of Ethics and Conduct when they first join. This code lists rules for Sooner Swim Club; however, our swimmers and parents also are bound by the rules set down by OK Swimming and USA Swimming as well. When you join SSC, you also are joining those two organizations.

If at any time you have questions, comments, or concerns, please feel free to contact any board member. If you have questions specifically related to your child's swimming, please contact your child's primary coach.

General Information

Kent Nicholson is our head coach and can be reached at kentn@normanps.org. Sooner Swim Club is a non-profit organization that is directed by a parent-run board. SSC considers competitive swimming to be a year-round sport. The swim year is broken into two seasons, short course and long course. Short course season runs approximately late August – early March and long course runs approximately April – the beginning of August. A short break from practice is taken at the end of each season. SSC considers the year to run from short course through long course, roughly August – July. Financial and Other Commitments

Through the years, SSC has evolved into one of the finest competitive swim programs in Oklahoma. The attention given by our dedicated coaches has created an excellent atmosphere for the development of young swimmers. Commitment to quality does not come without cost, however. SSC has many fixed, year-round costs that include coaches' salaries and pool rental fees. The pool rental is not determined on a month-to-month basis, but by signing a yearly lease with The Young Family Athletic Center, our primary swim facility. In order to maintain a quality swim team, each of us must be willing to make certain commitments.

Dues

Dues are based on an annual fee, which is broken down into monthly installments for the convenience of our members. Dues are to be paid monthly on the 1st with a card that is on file. SSC depends upon prompt payment of monthly dues in order to meet the club's financial obligations. Therefore, monthly dues must be paid promptly; payments received after the 10th of the month are subject to a \$10.00 late fee. Dues and other fees are NOT prorated for partial periods EXCEPT IN THE CASE OF NEW SSC MEMBERS. If you have any questions, please contact a club board member.

All rates and fees are subject to change. Dues changes will be voted on by the board and by the parents.

The following are the current monthly and annual charges (as of this publication):

- Dolphins: \$105 per month
- Barracudas: \$125 per month
- Sharks: \$140 per month
- Seniors: \$140 per month
- An annual family fee of \$40. This will be collected in February.
- An annual uniform fee will be charged in August each year. This fee will include a team suit and team cap (additional items based on year). Amount of fee will vary based on the number of swimmers in the club.
- New swimmers pay a \$40 registration fee upon joining.
- New swimmers pay the prorated amount of their first month upon joining.
- USA Swimming registration fee of \$85 annually (amount will change each fall). New swimmers pay upon joining; SSC will bill a renewal fee each year for the current USA swimming renewal amount plus card fees. SSC will handle renewal of all athletes, coaches, board members, and officials.
- Parents with more than one swimmer may reduce the monthly fee for each additional swimmer over the first swimmer by \$5.00 per swimmer
- Swimmers who choose to quit for a period of time less than 6 months will be charged a \$100 reinstatement fee upon rejoining.
- A 30 day cancellation notice is required via email. All fees due during this time are required to be paid by the family until the 30th day is up. No monthly dues or annual fees are waived for those in the 30 day cancellation period.

Scholarships are available for those who qualify on a limited basis. Scholarships do not waive annual fees, uniform fees, volunteer requirements or fundraising for those families.

DUES ARE PAID EVERY MONTH FOR THE FULL MONTH, ALL YEAR, WHETHER WE SWIM OR NOT.

SWIMMERS WHO ARE BEHIND IN ANY PAYMENTS FOR 30 DAYS WILL NOT BE ALLOWED IN THE WATER UNTIL PAYMENTS ARE BROUGHT TO A CURRENT STATUS.

Reinstatement Fees:

When a member family discontinues paying monthly dues, unless the swimmer is injured and incapable of participating in SSC, the swimmer forfeits membership. A physician's letter will be required to validate injuries. Reinstatement occurs when the member family remits the equivalent of up to three months' dues per swimmer to be reinstated. This figure is capped at the equivalent of the two swimmers paying the highest monthly dues for families with more than two swimmers. Back dues or \$100 will be required for reinstatement.

Quitting the Team:

A swimmer wishing to leave the team must submit a written statement or e-mail SSC (by clicking on "Contact Us" in the left-hand column of the SSC homepage) **30 days before leaving**. Member families are reminded that SSC incurs pool and coaching expenses for the hours these resources are utilized, not based on the number of active swimmers. Our annual budget is developed based on the number of active swimmers at the end of each season along with assumptions about adding swimmers, losing swimmers, pool time required, and coaching required. We are obligated to pay for the pool time and coaching salaries associated with these contracts. Consequently, the loss of dues over an extended period of time creates a severe financial hardship for SSC.

Service Hours

A well-run club requires a large number of volunteers. Each family should be prepared to work the specified number of hours. There are numerous opportunities to fulfill this obligation over the two swim seasons each year.

Beginning in September, each family will be required to provide **at least 20 hours of club service for the swim year** (September – August). At the end of our year, a family will be assessed \$20.00 per hour for each volunteer hour not completed during the past year.

Families joining SSC for the first time will have their volunteer hours waived for the first year only, from their start date until the end of the following August. This only waives volunteer hours and does not exempt new families from other fundraising required.

Service Options:

Prior to each event requiring volunteers, an e-mail will go out announcing the areas where help is needed and how to sign up to help. Opportunities for obtaining volunteer hours include the following:

- Helping with hosted meets (e.g., timing, concessions, heat sheet sales, food and drinks [cost of food and drinks are credited as service hours])
- Helping with fundraisers, such as a swim-a-thon
- Helping with social events, such as end-of-season parties

- Serving on a committee (e.g., swim-a-thon committee, apparel committee)
- Serving as an official at SSC meets and USA Swimming sanctioned meets (training provided)
- Serving on the SSC Board of Directors

Fundraising

To enhance support for our team, we will host a fundraiser each spring, with details and goals announced in January. Each family is required to raise or contribute a minimum of \$100 to this annual fundraiser. Families may choose to have this amount charged to their Commit account, though a service fee will apply. This requirement applies to all families, including those on scholarships. Funds raised will support various needs such as equipment, uniform subsidies, team events, scholarships, and overall team morale.

Parental Responsibilities

Although a parent's first and foremost responsibility is to their children, they do have responsibilities to Sooner Swim Club as well. The following are general guidelines:

- At meets, do not distract the coach while another SSC swimmer is competing. Save all questions and concerns until a break occurs or after the meet.
- Attend and volunteer at SSC hosted meets and other events.
- Assist swimmers in fundraising requirements for SSC.
- Pay all dues and fees in a timely manner.
- Keep informed by reading SSC emails and newsletters sent by coaches and board members.
- Checking the SSC website regularly for meet and calendar updates.
- Attend all parent meetings and provide suggestions and input.
- Help your swimmer(s) in setting realistic goals and encourage them to achieve those goals plus any the coaches have set.
- Refrain from taking pictures or videos during SSC practices this is a safesport violation.
- Pick up your swimmer(s) in a timely manner from practices. **Swimmers must be picked up within 15 minutes of the end of their practice.** A \$50 FEE WILL BE ASSESSED TO A SWIMMER'S ACCOUNT WHEN THE SWIMMER IS NOT PICKED UP WITHIN 15 MINUTES OF THE END OF PRACTICE.

Use of Swimmer and Family Information

Swimmer pictures may be used on the SSC facebook page, SSC newsletter, SSC instagram and SSC website. Occasionally, pictures are taken for use in newspaper articles. If you wish that your swimmer not be a part of this, please put this request in writing and turn it in to a coach or board member.

Team Suits and Apparel

SSC requires a team suit. This suit will be purchased using the uniform fee each August. Swimmers will be required to wear the team suit in meet warm ups. Swimmers may change into a tech suit for competition; however, if they choose to compete in a regular suit it must be the SSC team suit. SSC caps must be worn in competition.

Swimmers should have separate suits for practice and for meets. A swim cap is provided to each swimmer upon joining. Swimmers are not allowed to wear goggles that have attached nose pieces.

All suits worn should follow the guidelines and restrictions provided by Oklahoma Swimming (OKS) and USA Swimming.

Pool Facility

Currently, SSC rents pool space and time from The Young Family Athletic Center. SSC swims year-round at The Young Family Athletic Center. The pool is located at 2201 Trae Young Drive, Norman, OK 73069. The pool facility's phone number is 405-321-9322.

Pool Rules and Regulations:

While on Young Family Athletic Center Property, all swimmers and their parents/guardians are required to adhere to the code of conduct set down by The Young Family Athletic Center, including the lifeguards instructions on the pool deck.

Pool Storm Closure Policy:

The Young Family Pool will not allow any swimming unless no thunder has been heard for at least 30 minutes. Thunder and other weather conditions (e.g., snow, ice) may require SSC swim practice to be canceled. Practice cancellations will be announced via e-mail. Weather conditions sometimes may necessitate ending a practice early; parents should stay weather aware during practice times.

Practice Teams/Groups and Schedules

SSC currently has four practice teams: Dolphins, Barracudas, Sharks, and Seniors. The coaches decide which team the swimmer is on and when the swimmer moves from one team to another based on the swimmer's ability and workout performance.

- **Dolphins:** must be capable of: freestyle with bilateral breathing, backstroke with proper body position, freestyle flip turn, backstroke flip turn, and a 300 freestyle with flip turns. Training includes using a clock, turns, starts, and lane management (circle swimming), 5-second drag and other basic techniques. They swim three days a week.
- **Barracudas:** must be capable of a racing start, legal breaststroke, legal butterfly, a 600 free with legal turns, and a freestyle set of 16 X 50 on the 1:15. They have five days a week available and are asked to commit to four days of practice.
- **Sharks:** a fully structured training group. The basic requirements are: legal 200 IM with breaststroke pull-out, 16 X 50 on the 1:00, and commit to at least four practices per week. They are scheduled for five practices per week.
- **Seniors:** a fully structured training group for highschool age swimmers. The basic requirements are: legal 200 IM with breaststroke pull-out, 16 x 50 on the 1:00, and commit to at least four practices per week. They are scheduled for five evening practices per week, two to three morning practices and occasional Saturday practices as schedule permits.

Practice schedule changes based on the season and needs of the club. Schedules will be provided at the beginning of the seasons and any changes will be communicated in a timely manner.

Swim Meets

Swim Meet Costs:

A host team incurs a cost in both money and volunteer time in order to have a swim meet. These costs may be directly proportional to the type/level of meet and the total amount of time scheduled for the meet. These costs include, but are not limited to: pool rental, equipment rental, and awards. Attending teams also may incur costs related to the number of coaches sent and the distance traveled to attend the meet. All of these costs may be passed on to the swimmer in some form.

Swim meet fees will be posted to your account. The fees that SSC charges per swimmer to attend a swim meet includes, but are not limited to:

- Charges/fees required by the host team – these amounts vary between meets.
- SSC coaching fees for meets. Fees are as follows: \$20 per swimmer for home and Edmond meets, \$50 per swimmer for Jenks, Tulsa, or Bartlesville meets, \$50 per swimmer for championship meets to include OKS Regionals and State meets, \$100 per swimmer for out of state and Sectionals meets, \$200 per swimmer for higher level travel meets

Swim Meet Policies:

- Coaches establish the meet schedule for the team.
- Coaches will be sent to the meets on the team schedule unless attendance is deemed too low. Meet information will be provided via the SSC website and emails.
- Entry deadlines must be met.

- Parents are responsible to read the meet book information.
- Some meets will have qualifying times. Swimmers must meet those qualifying times to attend.
- Swimmers are expected to swim the events they have entered unless excused by the coach.
- Relay-only swimmers (swimmers not swimming in individual events) must show up and participate in the relay. Failure to do so may result in the relay fee being charged to the family.
- Be at the meet pool at least 15 minutes prior to warm-up times.
- In a prelim/finals meet, swimmers are expected to swim in their finals unless excused by the coach. If a swimmer becomes sick at a meet, the coach should be notified as soon as possible.
- Swimmers and parents will show good sportsmanship, including but not limited to:
 - Respecting officials, competitors, teammates, coaches, and meet personnel.
 - Cheering for all SSC swimmers.
 - Refraining from poor behavior such as booing or throwing items.
 - Refraining from bad mouthing other swimmers' performance.

Swimmers are required to participate in the following number and level of meets depending on group placement per season:

Sharks/Senior – 3 away meets, all home meets, and any championship meets qualified for
Barracudas – 2 away meets, all home meets, and any championship meets qualified for
Dolphins – 1 away meet, all home meets, and any championship meets qualified for

Contacting SSC, Additional Information Sources, and Social Media

SSC Postal Address:

Sooner Swim Club
PO Box 1433
Norman, OK 73070

Websites:

SSC: <http://soonerswimclub.com>

SSC Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/SoonerSwimClub>

Oklahoma Swimming: <http://www.oks.org>

USA Swimming: <http://www.usaswimming.org>

Sooner Swim Club Board of Directors, 2024-2025

Rebekah Hightower, President - President@soonerswimclub.com
Megan Kays, Vice President - VicePresident@soonerswimclub.com
Ashley Thumann, Treasurer - Treasurer@soonerswimclub.com
Michelle Mears, Secretary
Rebecca Borden, At-Large Member
Ashley Deskin, At-Large Member

Coaches

Head Coach: Kent Nicholson - kentn@normanps.org

- Swam for Sooner Swim Club (SSC), 1972 – 1983
- Three-time All-State swimmer in high school; his high school team won State three times in four years.
- Swam at Drury College, 1983 -1987
- National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics—All-American Team National Championship, 1988
- SSC coach/assistant high school coach, 1989 - 1994
- Head coach SSC, 1997 – present
- Head coach Norman High School/Norman North High School, 1999-present
- Teaches at Dimension Academy High School (alternative high school), 1997 – present

Head Age Group Coach/Admin Lead: Pam Bradley – pamela@soonerswimclub.com

- Age Group Coach for Sooner Swim Club from 2021 to Present
- Assistant Coach for Shawnee Family YMCA from 2016 to 2021
- Assistant Coach for Norman High/Norman North Girls from 2023 to present

Assistant Coaches: Nathan Tucker, James Dyer, and Kenzie Dawson

History of Sooner Swim Club

Sooner Swim Club (SSC) was founded in 1963 by a group of Norman parents, among them Henry Enterline and Donald and Jane Menzie, who wrote the bylaws and designed the logo. The club from the beginning was a part of the national swimming organization under its various names, now called USA Swimming.

The club was formed to promote a love of swimming as a sport and as a healthy lifestyle among young people. Under SSC auspices, children and adolescents have been taught to swim competitively and provided access to all reaches of the sport. From early on, SSC produced notable swimmers, several of whom achieved state records. SSC swimmers have competed at Zones, Futures, Junior Nationals, Senior Nationals, and Olympic Trials. Many SSC swimmers have received college swimming scholarships from schools across the country; Harvard, Cornell, University of Chicago, Georgia Tech, and Delaware are some of the recent colleges and universities.

SSC originally trained at and maintained what was known as the South Base Pool and indoors at the Field House Pool until they closed. SSC then began to lease pool time from The University of Oklahoma at the Murray Case Sells Swim Complex. SSC now practices out of the Young Family Athletic Center and continues to enhance swimming in Norman and surrounding areas. Hundreds of Norman-area children and youth have participated in SSC since it was formed. The club has grown from less than two dozen swimmers in the early years to over 100 swimmers annually in recent years.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How is Sooner Swim Club (SSC) structured?

A: SSC primarily is structured to enable individuals to accomplish their personal goals within a team environment. SSC provides a well-rounded, quality, competitive swimming program for young people of varying ages and swimming abilities. There are a total of five programs available for abilities ranging from novice competitors (generally six to eight years of age) through high school age swimmers, where the focus is on success at regional and national competitive levels.

Q: How do we obtain information about practice and meet schedules?

A: For information concerning the swim club schedule and all team activities, SSC maintains a comprehensive website (<http://soonerswimclub.com>). We also send information via email. Checking your e-mail and the SSC website frequently is required.

Q: How is the business of administrating SSC handled?

A: SSC is a non-profit organization. The only paid employees are our coaches. Kent Nicholson, head coach, has supervisory responsibility for the entire swim program and day-to-day operations. Pam Bradley assists in day-to-day operations. SSC consists of a Board of Directors with elections held annually in September for President-Elect (Vice President), Treasurer, Secretary, and two At-Large Members. Other board positions are appointed as needed. The SSC Board of Directors serves to monitor and review club operations, including addressing problems that may arise. The Board also is responsible for the coaching staff, including their compensation and contractual arrangements. Parents are invited and encouraged to attend the monthly Board of Directors meeting held via zoom.

Q: What are SSC's obligations and how does SSC support itself?

A: The Board of Directors provides pool availability through contracts with The Young Family Athletic Center, coaching staff (including coaches' education, certification, and travel expenses), and pool equipment as necessary to support club activities. The coaching staff provides organized practices and professional swimming techniques, training, and instruction to provide the best opportunity for your child's swimming success. SSC supports itself through membership fees and fundraising activities.

Q: What is USA Swimming Membership and why is it required?

A: As a USA Swimming licensed swim club, SSC is obligated to ensure all swimmers are members of USA Swimming. It also is necessary for participation in any USA Swimming sanctioned swim meet. USA Swimming provides SSC liability insurance in the event of an accident, and the swimmers' medical insurance to cover catastrophic medical costs incurred during a sanctioned activity, including SSC practices and activities. No swimmer will be allowed in the pool without a USA Swimming membership.

Q: What are the swimmer's obligations to SSC?

A: Swimmers are athlete members of Oklahoma Swimming (OKS) and USA Swimming. Their primary obligations are to enjoy themselves, make new friends, practice hard, attain their swimming goals, and conduct themselves as responsible young people in accordance with SSC and USA Swimming Codes of Conduct.

Q: What are parental obligations to SSC?

A: As a parent, your most important obligation is to provide constant encouragement to your child(ren). Providing quality swim instruction and water time does require a time commitment from parents, however, in addition to the fees paid. All SSC members are unpaid volunteers who often hold down full-time jobs, limiting their available time for SSC responsibilities. As a result, parents' willingness to work together and rely on one another is paramount to SSC success. Parents can become involved in SSC in a variety of ways (e.g., serving on the board or on a committee, helping at meets hosted by SSC).

Q: I have other obligations as well. Why should I volunteer?

A: The larger the number of volunteers, the less of a burden on any individual. Moreover, many of the personnel you observe at meets have older swimmers and will phase out their participation over the next few years as their children move on to college; parents of younger swimmers are needed to take over this work. The ability of any volunteer organization to prosper depends directly on the involvement of members of the organization. The overwhelming majority of this commitment is through serving on the SSC Board of Directors and helping at swim meets, social events, and fundraising activities. The best reason to volunteer may very well be that volunteers have a better understanding of SSC's internal operations and the rules under which we function.

Q: Can I specify what I volunteer for?

A: Certainly. Each of us has certain talents and attributes which, when put to proper use, would benefit SSC. We also gain personal satisfaction in different ways. There is obviously more value to each of us as individuals, and the club in general, if we can volunteer for activities we will enjoy and will benefit the club at the same time.

Q: Why do we need so many volunteers at a swim meet?

A: It is important to understand that the primary purpose of officials and timers at a meet is to ensure compliance with the technical rules of swimming, provide a safe venue, and ensure that no one individual has an advantage over another, in other words, to ensure a level playing field. Other functions (e.g., awards, hospitality) provide encouragement, information, and sustenance to everyone in attendance.

Q: What if I still have questions?

A: Please talk to any SSC board member or any of our coaches.



MODEL POLICY: ACTION PLAN TO ADDRESS BULLYING

USA Swimming member clubs are required to establish their own anti-bullying policy. The following is a model policy as an example which shall serve as the default for any club that fails to establish its own policy. Club anti-bullying policies should be reviewed with and agreed to by all athletes, parents, coaches, and other non-athlete members of the club. Once a customized plan is developed and approved by your club, the default plan will no longer apply. Each member club is responsible for the approval and implementation of its action plan.

Action Plan of the Sooner Swim Club to Address Bullying

PURPOSE

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at Sooner Swim 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.

WHAT IS BULLYING?

Generally, bullying is the use of aggression, whether intentional or not, which 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 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 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, but 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 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 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 it 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 difficult 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.

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 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, 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 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 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 they 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 be in need of additional support.
- d. Involve the kid 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 Club, or for 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 getting kicked off 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 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, 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.

