



MJCC Stingrays

Stingrays Anti-Bullying Policy

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable on the MJCC Stingrays team and will not be tolerated. Bullying is counterproductive to team spirit and can be devastating to a victim. The Stingrays are 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.

Objectives of the Stingrays' Anti-Bullying Policy:

- To make it clear that the Stingrays will not tolerate bullying in any form.
- To define bullying and give all coaches, parents and swimmers a good understanding of what bullying is.
- To make it known to all parents, swimmers and coaching staff that there is a policy and protocol should any bullying issues arise.
- To make how to report bullying clear and understandable.
- To spread the word that the Stingrays take bullying seriously and that all swimmers and parents can be assured that they will be supported when bullying is reported.

WHAT IS BULLYING?

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, 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).



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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 their parents;
- Talk to a Stingrays coach;
- Write a letter or email to a Stingrays coach;
- Talk or write to the Aquatics Program Manager or their supervisor; or
- If these individuals have failed to take appropriate action in a reasonable period of time or the perpetrator is one of these individuals, make a report to the USA Swimming SafeSport staff.
 - SafeSport is always an option anyone should feel free to use at any point in the process. Our request is that when possible, athletes and families give us a chance to first address concerns at the team level so that we may do so quickly and with the benefit of our knowledge of all the athletes involved.

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 coach as soon as possible to make sure that memories are fresh, behavior can be accurately recalled, and any bullying can be stopped as soon as possible.

HOW WE HANDLE BULLYING

If bullying is occurring during team-related activities, our goal is to stop bullying on the spot. We:

1. Intervene immediately. We may ask another adult to help.
2. Separate the athletes involved.
3. Make sure everyone is safe.
4. Meet any immediate medical or mental health needs.
5. Stay calm. Reassure the children involved, including bystanders.
6. Model respectful behavior when we intervene.

If bullying is occurring on our team or it is reported to be occurring on our team, 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. We:
 - a. Keep all the involved children separate.
 - b. Get the story from several sources, both adults and children.
 - c. Listen without blaming.
 - d. Don't call the act "bullying" while we are trying to understand what happened.



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- e. Understand it may be difficult to get the whole story, especially if multiple athletes are involved or the bullying involves social bullying or cyberbullying, so we 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. We:
 - a. Review the USA Swimming definition of bullying;
 - b. Determine if the behavior is bullying or something else, considering the following questions:
 - What is the history between the swimmers involved?
 - Have there been past conflicts?
 - Is there a power imbalance? 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 children who are bullied may be seen as annoying or provoking, but this does not excuse the bullying behavior.

SUPPORTING THE ATHLETES INVOLVED

- 1. To support the swimmers who are being bullied, we:
 - a. Listen to and focus on the child. We learn what's been going on and show we want to help. We assure the child that bullying is not their fault and is not acceptable.
 - 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. To help, we may:
 - Ask the child being bullied what can be done to make them feel safe. Changes to routine will be minimized. They are not at fault and should not be singled out. If moves are necessary, such as switching lanes, the child who is bullied will not be forced to change, but will be allowed to change if they choose.
 - Develop a game plan. We maintain open communication between the team and parents. We discuss the steps that will be taken and how bullying will be addressed going forward.
 - c. Continue to monitor and intervene when needed. We know bullying may not end overnight, but we commit to making it stop and consistently support the bullied child.
- 2. To address bullying behavior with the child who bullied, we:
 - a. Make sure the child knows what the problem behavior is. We believe that young people who bully must learn their behavior is wrong and harms others.



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- b. Show swimmers that bullying is taken seriously. We calmly tell the child that bullying will not be tolerated and we model respectful behavior when addressing the problem.
- c. Work with the child to understand some of the reasons they bullied. For example:
 - Sometimes children bully to fit in or to make fun of someone who is a little different from them. There may be some insecurity involved.
 - Other times children act out because something else—issues at home, abuse, stress—is going on in their lives. They also may have been bullied. These children may be in need of additional support themselves.
- d. Involve the athlete 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 team, or for others in the community.
 - Clean up, repair, or pay for any property they damaged.
- e. Avoid strategies that don't work or have negative consequences:
 - Zero tolerance strategies don't work. Swimmers may be less likely to report and address bullying if suspension or getting kicked off the team is the immediate or primary consequence. Bullying behavior may also continue from a swimmer who is no longer on the team (in other locations or online), and we as a team are then unable to adequately address it, as that athlete is no longer within our purview.
 - Swimmers who bully may, nonetheless, be removed from the team if other interventions are unsuccessful, as we need to protect the whole team from disruptive and negative behavior at team events.
 - Conflict resolution and peer mediation don't work for bullying. Bullying is not a conflict between people of equal power who share equal blame. Keeping the parties to the bullying separate prevents the children who have been bullied from being further upset.