

# SAFE SPORT POLICIES



## SAFE SPORT OVERVIEW

Safe Sport is the USA Swimming program created to raise awareness about misconduct, promote open dialogue and provided training and resources for clubs to establish rules, boundaries and best practices to protect our athletes. Along with USA Swimming, Westfield Aquatics has created Safe Sport policies to encourage athletes, parents and coaches to work together to keep everyone safe while participating in the sport they love. For these policies to be effective, everyone must participate. If you see something, say something.

## BULLYING POLICY

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at the Westfield Aquatics swim club and will not be tolerated. Bullying is counterproductive to team spirit and can be devastating to a victim. Westfield Aquatics is committed to providing a safe, caring and friendly environment for all 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 WA Safe Sport committee member.

Objectives of Westfield Aquatics Bullying Policy and Action Plan:

1. To make it clear that the Westfield Aquatics 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 Westfield Aquatics takes 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 prohibits bullying. Generally, bullying is the use of aggression, whether intentional or not, which hurts another person. Bullying results in pain and distress.

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

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method of transmission), or a physical act or gesture, or any combination thereof, directed at any other member that to a reasonable person would have 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).

## 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 Westfield Aquatics Coach, Board Member, or Safe Sport committee member;
- Write a letter or email to a Westfield Aquatics Coach, Board Member, or Safe Sport committee member;
- 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 ok 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.

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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***

**First, we get the facts.**

1. Keep all the involved children separate.
2. Get the story from several sources, both adults and kids.
3. Listen without blaming.
4. Don't call the act "bullying" while you are trying to understand what happened.
5. 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.

**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.

1. Review the USA Swimming definition of bullying;
2. To determine if the behavior is bullying or something else, consider the following questions:
  - a. What is the history between the kids involved?
  - b. Have there been past conflicts?
  - c. 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. ■
  - d. Has this happened before? Is the child worried it will happen again?
3. 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.
4. Once you have determined if the situation is bullying, support all of the kids involved.

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

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## Support the kids who are being bullied

1. Listen and focus on the child. Learn what's been going on and offer help. Assure the child that bullying is not their fault.
2. 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:
  - a. 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.
  - b. Develop a game plan. Maintain open communication between Westfield Aquatics and parents. Discuss the steps that will be taken and how bullying will be addressed going forward.
3. Be persistent. Bullying may not end overnight. Commit to making it stop and consistently support the bullied child.

## Address bullying behavior

1. Make sure the child knows what the problem behavior is. Young people who bully must learn their behavior is wrong and harms others.
2. Show kids that bullying is taken seriously. Calmly tell the child that bullying will not be tolerated. Model respectful behavior when addressing the problem.
3. Work with the child to understand some of the reasons he or she was bullied. For example:
  - a. 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.
  - b. 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.
4. 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:
  - a. Write a letter apologizing to the athlete who was bullied.
  - b. Do a good deed for the person who was bullied, for Westfield Aquatics, or for others in your community.
  - c. Clean up, repair, or pay for any property they damaged.
5. Avoid strategies that don't work or have negative consequences:

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- a. 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.

- b. 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.

6. 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.

**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 – your parent, coach, or Westfield Aquatics board member;
- 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.”
- 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.

## ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION POLICY

Westfield Aquatics swim club recognizes the prevalence of electronic communication and social media in today’s world. Many of our swimmers use these means as their primary method of communication. While our club acknowledges the value of these methods of communication, we also realize that there are associated risks that must be considered when adults use these methods to communicate with minors.

## GENERAL COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES

All communications between a coach or other adult and an athlete must be professional in nature and for communicating information about team activities. The content and intent of all

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electronic communications must adhere to the USA Swimming Code of Conduct regarding Athlete Protection.

For example, as with any communication with an athlete, electronic communication should not contain or relate to any of the following:

- drugs or alcohol use;
- sexually oriented conversation; sexually explicit language; sexual activity
- the adult's personal life, social activities, relationship or family issues, or personal problems; and
- inappropriate or sexually explicit pictures
- Note: Any communication concerning an athlete's personal life, social activities, relationship or family issues or personal problems must be transparent, accessible and professional.

Whether one is an athlete, coach, board member or parent, the guiding principle to always use in communication is to ask: "Is this communication something that someone else would find appropriate or acceptable in a face-to-face meeting?" or "Is this something you would be comfortable saying out loud to the intended recipient of your communication in front of the intended recipient's parents, the coaching staff, the board, or other athletes?"

With respect to electronic communications, a simple test that can be used in most cases is whether the electronic communication with swimmers is **Transparent, Accessible and Professional**.

**Transparent:** All electronic communication between coaches and athletes should be transparent. Your communication should not only be clear and direct, but also free of hidden meanings, innuendo and expectations.

**Accessible:** All electronic communication between coaches and athletes should be considered a matter of record and part of the club's records. A swimmer's parent or guardian should be included in the communication so that there is no question regarding accessibility.

**Professional:** All electronic communication between a coach and an athlete should be conducted professionally as a representative of our club. This includes word choices, tone, grammar, and subject matter that model the standards and integrity of a staff member.

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If your communication meets all three of the **T.A.P.** criteria, then it is likely your method of communication with athletes will be appropriate.

**Non-Emergency electronic communication of any kind with a minor athlete must be between the hours of 8am to 8pm and must include the athlete's parent or guardian.**

## **FACEBOOK, MYSPACE, BLOGS, AND SIMILAR SITES**

Coaches may have personal Facebook (or other social media site) pages, but they are not permitted to have any athlete member of Westfield Aquatics join their personal page as a "friend." A coach should not accept any "friend" request from an athlete. **Coaches are not permitted to friend or follow unrelated minor athletes on any social media unless it is a fan page or the team's page.** In addition, the coach should remind the athlete that this is not permitted. Coaches and athletes are not permitted to "private message" each other through Facebook. Coaches and athletes are not permitted to "instant message" each other through Facebook chat or other IM method.

Westfield Aquatics has an official Facebook page that athletes and their parents can "friend" for information and updates on team-related matters.

Coaches are encouraged to set their pages to "private" to prevent athletes from accessing the coach's personal information.

## **TWITTER**

Coaches are not permitted to follow athletes on Twitter. Likewise, athletes are not permitted to follow coaches on Twitter. Coaches and athletes are not permitted to "direct message" each other through Twitter.

## **TEXTING**

Subject to the general guidelines mentioned above, texting is allowed between coaches, parents and athletes during the hours from 8am until 8pm. Texting shall only be used for the purpose of communicating information directly related to team activities. When communicating with an athlete through text, a parent must also be included in the group text.

## **EMAIL**

Athletes and coaches may use email to communicate between the hours of 8am and 8pm. When communicating with an athlete through email, a parent must also be copied.

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## REQUEST TO DISCONTINUE ALL ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

The parents or guardians of an athlete may request in writing that their by coaches through any form of electronic communication.

## LOCKER ROOM POLICY

The following guidelines are designed to maintain personal privacy as well as to reduce the risk of misconduct in locker rooms and changing areas.

## FACILITIES

The following is a description of our practice and competition facilities to allow athletes and their families to plan their use:

We practice at Westfield High School.

This location has a changing area and locker rooms for multiple athletic teams in one space. The locker room doors are not locked, and this area is accessible to the public.

## MONITORING

Coaches and staff make every effort to recognize when an athlete goes to the locker room or changing area during practice and competition and, if they do not return in a timely fashion, we will check on the athlete's whereabouts.

We discourage parents from entering locker rooms and changing areas unless it is truly necessary. In those instances, it should only be a same-sex parent. If this is necessary, parents should let the coach or administrator know about this in advance.

If an athlete needs assistance with his or her uniform or gear (for example, a child under the age of eight), or an athlete's disability warrants assistance, then we ask that parents let a coach or an administrator know beforehand that he or she will be helping the athlete.

Westfield Aquatics has staggered practices, with different groups arriving and departing throughout the day. It is therefore not practical to constantly monitor locker rooms and changing areas over this extended course of time. While we do not post staff or a coach inside or at the doors of the locker rooms and changing areas, we do make occasional sweeps of these areas with women checking on female locker rooms, and men checking on male locker rooms.



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## USE OF CELL PHONES AND OTHER MOBILE RECORDING DEVICES

Cell phones and other mobile devices with recording capabilities, including cameras and video cameras increase the risk for different forms of misconduct in locker rooms and changing areas. The USA Swimming Athlete Protection Policies prohibit the use of such devices in the locker room or other changing area:

***305.3** Use of audio or visual recording devices, including a cell phone camera, is not allowed in changing areas, rest rooms or locker rooms.*

Westfield Aquatics has a no tolerance policy for cell phones and/or other mobile recording devices in the locker rooms/restrooms. This means no texting, no calling, videotaping, and no pictures.

Electronic devices should be stored in a secure location and should not be out/visible in the restroom/locker room area at any time.

Should an athlete receive a call or text while in the locker room/restroom, the student should take their device to the hall before removing the device from its stored location (such as backpack, purse, pocket) to answer the call/text.

If a coach, swimmer or parent become aware of such activity they are should:

- Remind the user that this is against club policy (if possible).
- Report the activity to a coach, board member, Safe Sport committee member, or official immediately.

Failure to comply with the No Cell Phone/Mobile Recording Device Policy may result in disciplinary action.

## TEAM TRAVEL POLICY

Athletes are most vulnerable to misconduct during travel, particularly overnight stays. This includes a high risk of athlete-to-athlete misconduct. During travel, athletes are often away from their families and support networks, and the setting – new changing areas, locker rooms, workout facilities, automobiles and hotel rooms – is less structured and less familiar.

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Team Travel is defined as overnight travel to a swim meet or other team activity that is planned and supervised by the club or LSC.

## **USA Swimming Required Policies**

Club and LSC travel policies must include these policies. These items are Code of Conduct stipulations in the USA Swimming Rulebook.

- a. Club travel policies must be signed and agreed to by all athletes, parents, coaches and other adults traveling with the club. (305.5.D)
- b. Team managers and chaperones must be members of USA Swimming and have successfully passed a USA Swimming-administered criminal background check. (305.5.B)
- c. Regardless of gender, a coach shall not share a hotel room or other sleeping arrangement with an athlete (unless the coach is the parent, guardian, sibling, or spouse of that particular athlete). (305.5.A)
- d. When only one athlete and one coach travel to a competition, the athlete must have his/her parents' (or legal guardian's) written permission in advance to travel alone with the coach. (305.5C)

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- a. Athletes should not ride in a coach's vehicle without another adult present who is the same gender as the athlete, unless prior parental permission is obtained.
- b. Swimmers must be accompanied by a parent/guardian or other designated adult for overnight travel with the Westfield Aquatics team.
- c. When there are a very limited number of athletes attending a competition, it is recommended that the coach and athletes attempt to establish a "buddy" club to associate with during the competition and possibly when away from the venue.