

CANOE CITY SWIM CLUB | ACTION PLAN TO ADDRESS BULLYING

PURPOSE

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at the Old Town - Orono YMCA's Canoe City Swim Club and will not be tolerated. Bullying is counterproductive to team spirit and can be devastating to the victim. The Canoe City Swim Club is committed to providing a safe, caring, and friendly environment for all of our members. If bullying occurs, 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 member of the coaching staff immediately.

OBJECTIVES OF THE CANOE CITY SWIM CLUB'S BULLYING POLICY AND ACTION PLAN

1. To make it clear that the Old Town - Orono YMCA's Canoe City Swim Club will not tolerate bullying in any form.
2. To define bullying and give all athletes, parents/guardians, volunteers, and coaches an understanding of what bullying is.
3. To make it known to all athletes, parents/guardians, volunteers, and coaches 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 the Canoe City Swim Club takes bullying seriously and that all athletes and parents/guardians 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 member of the Canoe City Swim Club of an oral, written, electronic, or technological expression, image, sound, data, or intelligence of any nature (regardless of 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 causing physical or emotional harm to the other member or damage to another member's property;

1. Placing the other member in reasonable fear of harm to himself/herself or of damage to his/her property;
2. Creating a hostile environment for the other member at any USA Swimming activity;
3. Infringing on the rights of the other member at any USA Swimming activity; or
4. 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:

1. Talk to your parents;
2. Talk to, write a letter, or email a member of the Canoe City Swim Club's coaching staff;
3. Talk to, write a letter, or email the Old Town - Orono YMCA's Healthy Living Director, Senior Program Director, or Executive Director;
4. 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 athletes involved.
3. Make sure everyone is safe.
4. Meet any immediate medical or mental health needs.
5. Stay calm. Reassure the athletes 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 athletes involved** using the following approach:

FINDING OUT WHAT HAPPENED

1. **First, we get the facts.**
 - a. Keep all the involved athletes separate.
 - b. Get the story from several sources, both adults and athletes.
 - 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:
 - i. What is the history between the athletes involved?
 - ii. Have there been past conflicts?
 - iii. Is there a power imbalance? Remember that a power imbalance is not limited to physical strength and is sometimes not easily recognized. If the targeted child feels like there is a power imbalance, there probably is.
 - iv. 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 ATHLETES INVOLVED

1. Support the athletes who are being bullied

- a. Listen and focus on the athlete. Learn what's been going on and show you want to help. Assure the athlete that bullying is not their fault.
- b. Work together to resolve the situation and protect the bullied athlete. The athlete, parents, fellow team members, and coaches may all have valuable input. It may help to:
 - i. Ask the athlete being bullied what can be done to make them feel safe. Remember that changes to routine should be minimized. The athlete being bullied 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 athlete who is being bullied should not be forced to change.
 - ii. Develop a game plan. Maintain open communication between the coaching staff and parents/guardians. 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 athlete.

2. Address bullying behavior

- a. Make sure the athlete knows what the problem behavior is. Young people who bully must learn their behavior is wrong and harms others.
- b. Show athletes that bullying is taken seriously. Calmly tell the athlete that bullying will not be tolerated. Model respectful behavior when addressing the problem.
- c. Work with the athlete 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 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 athlete can:
 - i. Write a letter apologizing to the athlete who was bullied.
 - ii. Do a good deed for the athlete who was bullied, for the Club, or for others in the 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 athletes who bully from the team does not reduce bullying behavior. Athletes may be less likely to report and address bullying if suspension or getting kicked off the team is a 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 the athletes who have been bullied.
- f. Follow up. After the bullying issue is resolved, continue finding ways to help the athlete 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 they 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/guardian, coach, or member of the Old Town – Orono YMCA's Leadership Team.
 - c. Help the athlete 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 (i.e. "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.