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## **MODEL POLICY: ACTION PLAN TO ADDRESS BULLYING**

*The following is a model procedure for owners to implement within their program. U.S. All Star Federation programs are required to have an action plan to address bullying and the plan must be reviewed with and agreed to by all athletes, parents, coaches, and other adults at the program. If a program chooses not to, or is unable to, create a written action plan, the following model plan will become the default plan for that program, and the program will be expected to implement these procedures when reports of bullying are made. Once a customized plan is developed and approved by your program, the default plan will no longer apply. Each member program has the responsibility to approve and implement its action plan. Please use the text below this line as the model policy for your program.*

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### **Action Plan of [insert name of the program] to Address Bullying**

#### **PURPOSE**

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at [insert the name of the program] (the "Program") and will not be tolerated. Bullying is counterproductive to team spirit and can be devastating to a victim. The Program 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, program owner or athlete/mentor.

#### **Objectives of the Program's Bullying Policy and Action Plan:**

1. To make it clear that the Program will not tolerate bullying in any form.
2. To define bullying and give all program owners, coaches, parents and athletes a good understanding of what bullying is.
3. To make it known to all parents, athletes 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 Program) takes bullying seriously and that all athletes and parents can be assured that they will be supported when bullying is reported.



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## **WHAT IS BULLYING?**

The U.S. All Star Federation Professional Responsibility Code prohibits bullying. Generally, bullying is the use of aggression, whether intentional or not, which hurts another person. Bullying results in pain and distress.

The U.S. All Star Federation Professional Responsibility Code defines bullying in section 2A. Bullying is the severe or repeated use by one or more U.S. All Star Federation 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 U.S. All Star Federation activity;
- iv. infringing on the rights of the other member at any U.S. All Star Federation activity; or
- v. materially and substantially disrupting the training process or the orderly operation of any U.S. All Star Federation activity (which for the purposes of this section shall include, without limitation, practices, workouts and other events of a member program or event producer).

## **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 Team Coach, Program Owner, or other designated individual;
- Write a letter or email to the Team Coach, Program Owner, or other designated individual.

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 program 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.



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## 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.
6. Model respectful behavior when you intervene.

If bullying is occurring at our program or is reported to be occurring at our program, 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 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 U.S. All Star Federation 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 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 Program 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 he or she bullied. For example:
  - i. 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.



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- 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 Program, 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 athletes who bully does not reduce bullying behavior. Athletes 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 program owner;
    - 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.



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## Electronic Communication Policy (ECP)

The USASF recognizes the need to address the presence of inappropriate messaging between adults affiliated with a USASF Member program and athletes via email, texting, and social media.

The USASF recommends (*requires, beginning the 2017-2018 season*) that all member organizations adopt a clear and concise policy regarding Electronic Communication. (ECP) It is evident that electronic communication has significant positive benefits, but we must address the availability it yields for an adult with inappropriate intentions to breach an athlete's rights of privacy and their physical and emotional safety. In order to fully protect the athlete members we serve, a clear policy and written expectations about using electronic communications should be available and implemented by every USASF Program Member.

Member programs may either use their existing policy or create their own policy. If they do neither, the model policy created by the USASF will become the default electronic communication policy for the program. Athletes, parents, coaches and adults associated with the program must read and accept the policy, whether the program's policy or the default policy.

Every member program has the responsibility for the implementation of an Electronic Communication Policy.

The attached Electronic Communication Policy is available for our members to utilize in order to establish clear boundaries.

Thank you for your commitment to keeping our kids safe!

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## Electronic Communication Policy (ECP)

*This ECP is designed specifically for USASF Member Programs for the protection of athletes. An adult affiliated with the program is considered any person 18 years of age or older that has a professional role within the program or any adult 18 years of age or older that is a current adult/athlete member of the program. This includes, but is not limited to, program owners, coaches, choreographers, photographers, team parents, adult age athletes and employees of the program.*

### INTENT

Electronic communication through email, text and social media is often the principal form of communication for young athletes. While convenient and efficient, electronic communication must be utilized appropriately and responsibly by adults when communicating with minors.

### OVERVIEW

An adult affiliated with a program must only communicate with an athlete in a professional manner and specifically to provide information regarding practices, events and other team related activities. All content must adhere to the USASF Code of Conduct and the Professional Responsibility Code regarding the protection of athletes. Non-Compliance of the Professional Responsibility code is subject to Disciplinary hearing and potential penalties.



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The following four points are defined as definitively inappropriate conduct. Any communication with an athlete, either verbal or electronic may not involve or relate to any of the following:

1. Inappropriate or sexually explicit photos
2. Sexual innuendos, sexual conversation, explicit language or sexual activity
3. Drug or alcohol use
4. The adult should not relay information about their personal life or social life outside of the professional environment or discuss relationships or personal problems.

Regardless of the adult's role in relationship to the athlete, it is the responsibility for the adult to maintain these guiding principles when communicating electronically.

1. Does the conversation pertain to the team and team activities?
2. Is the content of the electronic conversation something that any parent, boss or other adult would agree is professional in nature?
3. Is the electronic communication accessible to anyone at anytime?
4. Can the information conveyed to the athlete be used as a permanent part of the athlete's record?

Summary: An adult must ask him/herself whether the electronic communication with the athlete is **available for all to read, understand and determine as professional in nature.**

### **Personal Social Media Sites**

An adult affiliated with a program may have a personal social media page or site, with the following restrictions regarding athletes:

- May not invite or allow an athlete to "friend" or join a personal social media site or similar online community.
- May not "private" or "instant" message athletes.
- Must inform parents and athletes that the above is not permitted.
- It is recommended that adults make their pages "private" to restrict athlete access.

The program may offer an official social media or other online community that athletes and parents may join or access for team updates and information.

### **TWITTER**

Adults associated with the program and athletes:

- May follow each other on Twitter.
- May not "direct message" each other.
- Adults may not retweet an athlete message post.
- No subtweeting is allowed.

### **TEXTING**

Texting is permitted between adults associated with the program and athletes from 7:00am to 9:00pm, and only to exchange information directly related to team activities.



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### **EMAIL**

Email is permitted between adults associated with the program and athletes from 7:00am to 9:00pm. A parent and/or the program director or owner, must also be copied on an email to or from an athlete.

### **PARENT/GUARDIAN PERMISSION**

Parents or guardians may submit a written request that adults associated with the program not contact their child through electronic communication.





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## **Sexual Abuse Prevention Policy**

The safety and welfare of the all star athlete must be at the forefront of all programming considerations. All Star programs must have clear, written guidelines that prohibit adults who have contact with minors from engaging in conduct that is either inappropriate and/or illegal.

The recommended USASF Sexual Abuse Prevention Policy includes:

### **Adopting and Implementing the Positive Coaching Alliance/USASF Policy**

The program will:

1. Post the policy for participants, their guardians, and coaches to see.  
[Download by following this link](#)
2. Follow the Policy as outlined in the above link, including hosting an annual sexual abuse orientation meeting with all coaches, parents and volunteers. Links for the items needed to conduct the annual orientation meeting are listed below:
  - a. [Handout](#)
  - b. PCA produced video:  
[Protecting Youth Athletes From Sexual Abuse: Parents And Coaches](#)

### **Abiding by the Mandated Reporter Laws of their state:**

A mandated reporter is someone required by law to report if they suspect or know that child abuse is occurring. Each state has their own legal requirements and agencies for reporting. It is the responsibility of the Program Administrator and/or owner to:

1. Know the laws that are specific for their state
2. Post the legal requirements and specific reporting procedures for their state for all coaches and adult staff to reference
3. Conduct an annual staff meeting that includes training on the legal requirements and reporting procedures for their state