



# OLYMPIAN SWIM CLUB POLICY & ACTION PLAN TO ADDRESS BULLYING POLICY

## 1.0 Definitions

- 1.1 The following terms have these meanings in this Policy:
- 1.1.1 “Board” means the Board of Directors of the OSC;
  - 1.1.2 “Coach” means a member of the OSC coaching staff;
  - 1.1.3 “Swimmer” means a swimmer registered in any OSC competitive or noncompetitive program;
  - 1.1.4 “OSC” means the Olympian Swim Club;

## 2.0 Purpose

- 2.1 Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at OSC and will not be tolerated. Bullying is counterproductive to team spirit and can be devastating to a victim. OSC is committed to providing a safe, caring and friendly environment for all Swimmers. If bullying does occur, all Swimmers should be aware that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. Anyone who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell a Coach or member of the Board.
- 2.2 The objectives of this Policy and Action plan are as follows:
- To make it clear that OSC will not tolerate bullying in any form;
  - To define bullying and give all Board members, Coaches, parents and Swimmers a good understanding of what bullying is;
  - To make it known to all parents, Swimmers and Coaches that OSC has a policy and protocol should any bullying issues arise;
  - To make how to report bullying clear and understandable;
  - To spread the word that OSC takes bullying seriously and that all Swimmers can be assured that they will be supported when bullying is reported.

## 3.0 What Is Bullying

- 3.1 Generally, bullying is the use of aggression, whether intentional or not, which hurts another person. Bullying results in pain and distress.
- 3.2 Bullying is the use by one or more Swimmers of any expression, whether oral, written, or electronic (regardless of method of transmission), or any

physical act or gesture, or any combination, directed at any other Swimmer, that to a reasonably objective person has the effect of:

- Causing physical or emotional harm to the other Swimmer or damage to the other Swimmer's property; or
- Placing the other Swimmer in reasonable fear of harm to himself/herself or of damage to his/her property; or
- Creating a hostile environment for the other Swimmer at any OSC activity; or
- Infringing on the rights of the other Swimmer at any OSC activity; or
- Materially and substantially disrupting the training process or the orderly operation of any OSC activity (including but not limited to practices, competitions, training camps, social activities, fundraising activities)

#### 4.0 Reporting Procedure

4.1 A Swimmer who feels that he or she has been bullied is asked to do one of more of the following things:

- Talk to your parents; or
- Talk to a Coach or Board member; or
- Write a letter or email to a Coach or Board member.

4.2 There is no express time limit for initiating a complaint under this Policy, but every effort should be made to bring the complaint to the attention of the appropriate OSC 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.

#### 5.0 How We Handle Bullying

5.1 If bullying is occurring during OSC related activities, Coaches will **STOP BULLYING ON THE SPOT** using the following steps:

- Intervene immediately, involving another coach if necessary;
- Separate the Swimmers involved;
- Make sure everyone is safe;
- Meet any medical or mental health needs;
- Stay calm. Reassure the Swimmers involved, including bystanders.
- Model respectful behavior when intervening.

5.2 If bullying is occurring at OSC or is reported to be occurring at OSC, Coaches will address the bullying by finding out what happened and support the Swimmers involved using the following approach:

5.2.1 **First, Coaches will get the facts.**

- Coaches will keep all the involved Swimmers separate;
- Coaches will get the story for several sources, both adults and kids;
- Coaches will listen without blaming;
- Coaches won't call the act "bullying" while gathering information;
- It may be difficult to get the whole story, especially if multiple Swimmers are involved or the bullying involves social media or cyber bullying. Coaches will endeavor to collect all available information.

5.2.2 **Then, Coaches will determine whether it is bullying.** There are many behaviors which look like bullying but require different approaches. It is important to determine whether the situation is bullying or whether it is something else.

5.2.3 To determine if the behavior is bullying or whether it is something else, Coaches will consider the following questions:

- What is the history between the Swimmers involved?
- Have there been past conflicts between the Swimmers involved?
- Is there a power imbalance? Power imbalance is not limited to physical strength and is not easily recognized. If the targeted Swimmer feels like there is a power imbalance, there probably is.
- Has this happened before?
- Is the Swimmer worried it will happen again?

5.2.4 It may not matter "who started it". Some Swimmers who are bullied may be seen as annoying or provoking, but this will not excuse bullying behavior.

5.2.5 If Coaches determine that a situation is bullying, they will support all of the Swimmers involved.

## **6.0 Supporting the Swimmers Who are Involved**

6.1 Coaches will listen to and focus on the Swimmer who is being bullied. They will assure the swimmer that the bullying is not their fault.

6.2 Coaches will work together with the Swimmer to resolve the situation and protect the bullied Swimmers. The Swimmer, the Swimmer's parents, fellow team members, and Coaches may all have valuable input.

- 6.3** Coaches will ask the Swimmer being bullied what can be done to make him/her feel safe. Changes to routine will be minimalized wherever reasonable possible. The victim of the bullying is not the one at fault and should not be singled out. For example, Coaches will consider rearranging lane assignments for everyone. If bigger moves are necessary, such as switching practice groups, the Swimmer who is being bullied should not be the one forced to change.
- 6.4** Coaches will develop a game plan which includes open communication between OSC and the Swimmer's parents. They will discuss the steps which will be taken and how the bullying will be addressed going forward.
- 6.5** OSC recognizes that bullying may not end overnight. However, OSC commits to making the bullying stop and will consistently support the bullied Swimmer.

## **7.0 Addressing the Bullying Behaviour**

- 7.1** Coaches will make sure that the bullying Swimmer knows what the problem behavior is.
- 7.2** Coaches will show Swimmers that bullying is taken seriously. The Swimmer who is bullying will calmly be told that bullying will not be tolerated. Coaches will model respectful behavior when addressing the problem.
- 7.3** Coaches will work with the bullying Swimmer to understand some of the reasons he/she bullied. For example:
- 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.
  - Other times children act out because something else – issues at home, abuse, stress – is going on in their lives. They may also have been bullied. These kids may be in need of additional support.
- 7.4** Coaches will involve the Swimmer who bullied in making amends or repairing the situation. The goal is to help them see how their actions affect others. For example, the Swimmer can:
- Write a letter apologizing to the Swimmer who was bullied;
  - Do a good deed for the Swimmer who was bullied, for OSC, or for others;
  - Clean up, repair, or pay for any property they damaged. We will avoid strategies which do not work or have negative consequences:

- 7.5** Zero tolerance or “three strikes and you’re out” strategies do not work. Suspending or removing from OSC Swimmers who bully does not reduce bullying behavior. Swimmers may be less likely to report and address bullying if suspension or getting kicked out of the club is a consequence.
- 7.6** Conflict resolution and peer mediation do not 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 Swimmers who have been bullied.

## **8.0 Support Bystanders Who Witness Bullying**

- 8.1** Every day, kids witness bullying. They may want to help, but do not know how. There are a few simple safe ways which Swimmers can help stop bullying when they see it happening:
- Be a friend to the person being bullied;
  - Tell a trusted adult – parent, Coach, OSC Board Member;
  - Help the swimmer 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 (ie. “Let’s go, practice is about to start”);
  - 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.

## **9.0 Implementation**

- 9.1** All Coaches will review this Policy with the Swimmers in their Group in September, January, and April of each swim season. More frequent reviews of this Policy with Swimmers may occur at Coach’s discretion following incidences of bullying.
- 9.2** This Policy does not replace the OSC Code of Conduct and Swimmers, Coaches, parents, and Board Members are still entitled to follow the process outlined in the Code of Conduct if they desire. However, the use instead of the processes outlined in the Policy and Action Plan to Address Bullying is encouraged.