



ACTION PLAN TO ADDRESS BULLYING

The Lakes Mermaids (TLM) is committed to providing a safe, caring and friendly environment for all of our members. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at TLM and will not be tolerated. Bullying is counterproductive to team spirit and can be devastating to a victim. If bullying does occur, all athletes and parents should know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. Anyone who is aware of a situation that involves bullying is expected to tell a coach, staff member or athlete/mentor.

Objectives of TLM's Action Plan to Address Bullying:

1. To make it clear that TLM will not tolerate bullying in any form.
2. To define bullying and give all 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 communicate how to report bullying behaviors.
5. To assure athletes and parents that TLM takes bullying seriously and that they will be supported when bullying is reported.

What is Bullying?

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Bullying results in pain and distress. The USA Artistic Swimming Code of Conduct prohibits bullying.

Code of Conduct

TLM defines bullying as the severe or repeated use by one or more USA Artistic 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:

1. causing physical or emotional harm to the other member or damage to the other member's property
2. placing the other member in reasonable fear of harm to himself/herself or of damage to his/her property
3. creating a hostile environment for the other member at any USA Artistic Swimming activity
4. infringing on the rights of the other member at any TLM activity
5. materially and substantially disrupting the training process or the orderly operation of any TLM activity (which for the purposes of this section shall include, without limitation, practices, workouts and other events of a member club).

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 TLM coach or other designated individual
- Write a letter or email to the TLM coach or other designated individual
- Make a report to the U.S. Center for SafeSport staff.
 - **US Center for Safe Sport's Toll Free Report a Concern Phone Number: 833-5US-SAFE (587-7233)**
 - **<https://www.teamusa.org/usa-artistic-swimming/safesport>**

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. Early reporting ensures behavior be accurately recalled, as memories are fresh. In addition, this helps the bullying behavior be addressed and stopped immediately.

How We Address Bullying

If bullying is occurring during team-related activities, we STOP BULLYING ON THE SPOT using the following steps:

1. Intervene immediately.
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 intervening.

If bullying is occurring at TLM or it is reported to be occurring at TLM, 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.
 - It may be difficult to get the whole story, especially if multiple athletes are involved or the bullying involves social bullying or cyberbullying. Collect all available information.
 - c. Listen without blaming.
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, being rude or something else.
 - a. Review TLM 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.

- 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.

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.

- 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.
- Develop a game plan.
- Maintain open communication between TLM 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 they bullied.

For example:

- 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.
- 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:

- Write a letter apologizing to the athlete who was bullied.
- Do a good deed for the person who was bullied, for TLM, or for others in your community.
- Clean up, repair, or pay for any property they damaged.

- 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.
- Support bystanders who witness bullying.

Put a stop to Bullying:

- Tell a trusted adult – your parent, coach, or Booster Club 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.