



As a USASF Member Program, Cheergymns.com considers the safety and well-being of the youth in our program a top priority. We prohibit abuse and strive to proactively address reports of this type of conduct. We want to hear about problems or concerns, and we will strive to act on them in a fair way in accordance with our policies and those policies set forth by the U.S. All Star Federation.

We will report suspected abuse to the proper law enforcement agencies.

### **Policy and Procedures:**

Cheergymns.com has adopted the following Policy and Procedures in an effort to provide a safe environment for our coaches, athletes, and their families:

### **Policy 1: Youth Sexual Abuse Prevention - USASF Adopted Policy**

1. The Employee Hiring & Volunteer Appointment process to include the following:
  - a. Application – Every individual that may have the opportunity to interact with youth must complete our organization’s written application that sets forth appropriate background information, requires disclosure of any prior claims or allegations of sexual abuse or other inappropriate conduct, and provides the names of at least two individuals as references.
  - b. Screening – A designated representative(s) of the organization will interview each prospective employee and volunteer.
  - c. Background Check – Prior to interacting with minors, any potential employee or volunteer will be subject to a background check, including appropriate inquiries regarding any previous record of sexual abuse or other unlawful activity. This background check will be updated at least every two (2) years for each employee or volunteer. All current employees and volunteers are required to update their background check every two (2) years. This is in addition to the required screening by the U.S. All Star Federation for all eligibility as program owners, coaches and personnel at USASF Sanctioned events.
  
2. Education and Awareness Training to include the following :
  - a. An Abuse Prevention Orientation conducted annually :

A member of our management team will review this policy with coaches, volunteers and parents each year. The Positive Coaching Alliance/Kidpower video, “Protecting Youth Athletes from Sexual Abuse”, will be shown and the companion information sheet, “Protecting Youth Athletes From Sexual Abuse: Key Actions for Parents and Coaches”, will be distributed to every coach, volunteer and parent.

    - Safesport Tool Kit for parents:  
<https://resources.safesport.org/toolkits/Parent-Toolkit-Complete/index.html> ,
    - FREE online parent training is available at [www.athletesafey.org](http://www.athletesafey.org) ,
    - Darkness to Light Website <https://www.d2l.org/>
    - Stewards of Children Prevention Toolkit App available on mobile devices, and
  - b. The acknowledgment and support by our Program of the following statement: Parents are an important part of the solution, as we all work together to prevent abuse in sport. We will share with the parents in our program resources to educate themselves on preventative measures and steps to take if they believe misconduct has occurred. At minimum the program we will share via email and on our website links to such resources.
  - c. Consistent and ongoing training for all adults in our Program who have interaction with minors. Our staff is educated on the prevention and reporting of child abuse as well as training that allows them to see and recognize problematic behaviors before a minor is abused.
  
3. Outlining Prohibited Behavior  
As Member Program of the U.S. All Star Federation, we are bound by the USASF SafeSport Code which includes the Policies of the U.S. Center for SafeSport and outlines Abuse and Misconduct. Some examples of prohibited behavior are:

- a. Use of degrading language or behavior. Coaches are also responsible for stopping disrespectful behavior between team members, including sexual harassment.
  - b. Threatening or intentionally inflicting physical injury upon anyone, especially a minor. Coaches are also responsible for stopping threatening behavior by athletes.
  - c. Committing any sexual offense against a minor, or engaging in any sexual contact with a minor.
  - d. Making any sexual advance, or engaging in other verbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature with a minor.
  - e. Non-related one-adult/one-child interaction except in an emergency where following this policy would be dangerous to the child. In an emergency situation, the coach or volunteer must contact a representative of the organization's management to inform him or her of this contact and the reason for it. If a child is receiving individual instruction or working with a private coach, this activity must be in a public setting rather than behind closed doors.
  - f. **New in 2019 – Cheergyms.com will no longer allow non-employee video recordings or photographs during practices for the protection of our athletes. While we understand parents want to record/photograph their athletes we must limit the risk or concern of all the athletes on the teams. Coaches are happy to record and take photos as needed for learning purposes and post to a private team page.**
4. Reporting of Suspected Child Sexual Abuse
- a. A member of our management staff or other official representative will be designated to receive reports of sexual abuse or other inappropriate conduct. This representative will promptly notify the proper law enforcement agencies.
  - b. All coaches, volunteers, parents and program participants are directed to report any incident of abuse or suspected abuse that they witness or that is reported to them to the designated representative. Note: This does not preclude individuals from reporting abuse or suspected abuse to the proper law enforcement authorities
  - c. The designated representative will keep the owner(s) and management members fully informed.
  - d. The Program Owner or designated representative will report any incident of abuse or suspected abuse to the USASF. Note: This does not preclude individuals from reporting abuse or suspected abuse to the proper law enforcement authorities.
  - e. Should a suspected incidence of abuse be reported, the coach/volunteer in question may be temporarily suspended from duties while an investigation takes place.

## **Policy 2: Electronic Communication – USASF Adopted Policy**

As part of the U.S. All Star Federation's emphasis on safety and athlete protection, communications involving any participant, and especially our minor participants, should be appropriate, productive, transparent and observable. Effective communication concerning travel, practice or competition schedules, and administrative issues among coaches, administrators, participants and their families is critical. However, the use of mobile devices, web-based applications, social media, and other forms of electronic communications increases the possibility for improprieties and misunderstandings and also provides potential offenders with unsupervised and potentially inappropriate access to participants. The improper use of social media, mobile and electronic communications can result in misconduct. Adherence to the Electronic Communications Policy helps reduce these risks.

*This policy is designed specifically for U.S. All Star Federation Members for the protection of athletes. The objective is for all members who provide a platform for adults and minors to interact must minimize any opportunity for one on one private communication and all communications must be observable.*

*The following are considered adults:*

1. Any person, 18 years of age or older affiliated with the program, that has a role within the program (other than being an athlete on a Senior team) that does or could have interaction with participants.
2. Any adult athletes, 18 or older and on an Open team, that is a member of the program that may train within the program or be a member of a team.

*This includes, but is not limited to, program owners, coaches, choreographers, photographers, team parents, adult age participants and employees of the member organization.*

*Dual Roles:*

- 1. Adults that are affiliated with the program that are also the parent or relative of the minor participant serve dual roles and the parent/family role supersedes the role as owner or coach.*
- 2. Adult Athletes that are 18 as of August 31st, and on a Senior team with minor athletes may communicate digitally with minors as long as it is observable by others.*
- 3. Age parameters are still in effect for adult and minor athletes that compete on an open team.*

All electronic communication between coach and participant must be for the purpose of communicating information about team activities. Coaches, participants and all team personnel must follow common sense guidelines regarding the volume and time of day of any allowed electronic communication. All content between coaches and participants should be readily available to share with the public or families of the participant or coach. If the participant is under the age of 18, any email, text, social media, or similar communication must also copy or include the participant's parents.

### **Social Media**

Social media makes it easy to share ideas and experiences. The U.S. All Star Federation recognizes, however, that social media, mobile and other electronic communications can be especially concerning where minor participants are involved. It is strongly recommended that owners, coaches and other adult members of the All Star community are not joined to or connected through their personal Facebook page or any other similar social media application. To facilitate communication, an official organization or team page may be set up and participants and parents may join (i.e., "friend", "follow" or "like") the official organization or team page and coaches can communicate to participants through that site. All electronic communication of any kind between coach and participant, including use of social media, must be non-personal in nature and be for the purpose of communicating information about team activities or for team oriented motivational purposes.

### **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:

1. May not invite or allow an athlete to "friend" or join a personal social media site or similar online community that is not observable or open to the minor's parent as well.
2. May not "private", "instant" or "direct" message athletes.
3. Must inform parents and athletes that the above is not permitted.
4. It is recommended that adults make their pages "private" to restrict athlete access.
5. Social media accounts that allow an athlete to "friend" or "follow" or have no privacy restrictions may only have posts that are appropriate for minors to view.

### **Email, Text Messaging and Similar Electronic Communications**

Owners, coaches, team parents and participants may use email and text messaging to communicate. All email and text message content between coaches/team parents and participants must be non-personal in nature and be for the purpose of communicating information about team activities. Emails and text messages from a coach to any minor participant that are not related team activities must include a copy to the participant's parents. Where possible, a coach should be provided and use the organization website email center (the coach's return email address will contain "@organization.com") for all communications with the team, participants, and participants' parents, where applicable.

### **Request to Discontinue All Electronic Communications or Imagery with Athlete**

Following receipt of a written request by the parents of a minor participant that their child not be contacted through any form of electronic communication by coaches or other adults in the program, the program, team, coaches and administrators shall immediately comply with such request without any repercussions for such request.

*Any adult member may not directly message a minor athlete participant unless the minor athlete is a member of their program. All contact must be initiated to the parent, adult owner or adult coach.*

## **Abuse and Misconduct**

Social media and other means of electronic communication can be used to commit abuse and misconduct (e.g., emotional, sexual, bullying, harassment, and hazing). Such communications by any employee, volunteer, independent contractor or other participant of a U.S. All Star Federation Member Program will not be tolerated and are considered violations of U.S. All Star Federation's SafeSport Program.

Reporting infractions of U.S. All Star Federation's Electronic Communications Policy should be reported to the appropriate person as described in the Professional Responsibility Code V8.0.

A U.S. All Star Federation participant or parent of a participant who violates this Electronic Communications Policy is subject to appropriate disciplinary action including but not limited to suspension, permanent suspension and/or referral to law enforcement authorities.

All content must adhere to the U. S. All Star Federation Code of Conduct and the Professional Responsibility Code V8.0 regarding the protection of athletes. Non-Compliance with the Professional Responsibility Code is subject to disciplinary hearing and potential penalties.

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, and/or
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 any time?
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.*****

## **Latitude Clause**

It is understood that there may be times when a minor athlete is in distress or seeking counsel from an adult. In the case where:

1. A minor athlete reaches out to an adult
2. The adult responds to a minor athlete
3. The adult takes proactive measures to reach the minor

The adult must be vigilant in evaluating their communication and interaction. The safety of the athlete and addressing the situation that initiated the contact must be the focus of the communication. Adults who are not trained or equipped to mitigate the situation at hand are advised to seek professional assistance *and* involve the minor's guardian in resolution.

## **Policy 3: Addressing Bullying – USASF Adopted Policy**

### **PURPOSE**

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at Cheergyms.com 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 the process of 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.

## **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. 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:

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 U.S. All Star Federation activity;
4. Infringing on the rights of the other member at any U.S. All Star Federation activity; or
5. 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; and/or
- 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.

## **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, 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 cyberbullying. Collect all available information.

### **2. Then, 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:
  - 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 formations for everyone. If bigger moves are necessary, such as switching practice groups, the child who is bullied should not be forced to change.
  - 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:
  - 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 the Program, or for others in your community.
  - Clean up, repair, or pay for any property they damaged.
- e. Avoid strategies that don't work or have negative consequences:
  - 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.
  - 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.