

JCAT Bullying Prevention & Response Policy - 2026

JCAT Swim

Purpose

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at JCAT Swim and will not be tolerated. JCAT is committed to providing a safe, respectful, caring, and positive environment for athletes. This policy establishes how bullying concerns may be reported and how JCAT will respond to matters that are appropriate for club-level action.

This policy works together with the JCAT Parent & Athlete Code of Conduct, JCAT Grievance Procedure, JCAT MAAPP, and applicable USA Swimming Safe Sport requirements.

Policy Objectives

- Make clear that JCAT does not tolerate bullying.
- Help athletes, parents/legal guardians, and coaches recognize behavior that may constitute bullying.
- Provide a clear method for reporting bullying concerns.
- Stop unsafe or harmful behavior promptly when it occurs during JCAT activities.
- Support affected athletes and address inappropriate behavior in a fair and age-appropriate manner.
- Refer matters to USA Swimming, the U.S. Center for SafeSport, law enforcement, child-protection authorities, or another appropriate authority when the matter is outside JCAT's club-level jurisdiction.

What Is Bullying?

Bullying generally involves severe or repeated oral, written, electronic, technological, or physical conduct directed at another person that causes or is reasonably likely to cause harm, fear of harm, a hostile environment, interference with another person's rights, or material disruption of training or team activities.

Bullying may be physical, verbal, social/relational, or electronic. Not every disagreement, argument, isolated rude comment, coaching correction, or conflict between athletes is necessarily bullying. JCAT will consider the facts and circumstances before determining the appropriate response.

Examples of Prohibited Conduct

- Repeated insults, humiliation, threats, intimidation, or deliberately degrading another athlete.
- Physical aggression, threatening gestures, or intentionally damaging another person's property.
- Excluding, targeting, or manipulating another athlete in a manner intended to cause substantial emotional harm or create a hostile team environment.
- Cyberbullying through texts, social media, group chats, images, videos, or other electronic communications.
- Encouraging other athletes to participate in bullying or deliberately providing an audience for bullying behavior.
- Retaliating against an athlete or other person for reporting bullying or participating in a review of a concern.

Reporting Bullying

Athletes are encouraged to tell a trusted adult when they experience or witness bullying. A concern may be reported to a parent/legal guardian, the athlete's coach, the Head Coach, or another appropriate JCAT contact.

Parents/legal guardians may report a bullying concern verbally or in writing. Written reports are encouraged when practical because they help JCAT document the concern and relevant details.

Reports should be made as soon as reasonably possible so harmful behavior can be addressed and relevant information can be gathered. JCAT will not reject a good-faith bullying concern solely because it was not reported immediately.

Bullying matters appropriate for club-level resolution will be handled consistently with the JCAT Grievance Procedure. If the reported conduct falls within an external authority's jurisdiction or creates a mandatory reporting obligation, JCAT will use or direct the matter to the appropriate reporting process.

Immediate Response During a JCAT Activity

When potentially harmful bullying behavior is occurring during a JCAT practice, meet, or team activity, coaches or other responsible adults should prioritize immediate safety.

- Intervene promptly when it is safe to do so and obtain additional adult assistance when needed.
- Separate the athletes involved when appropriate.
- Make sure the individuals involved are safe and address any immediate medical or safety needs.
- Remain calm and model respectful behavior.
- Avoid forcing an immediate confrontation, apology, or face-to-face mediation before the facts and safety needs are understood.

Reviewing What Happened

For matters within JCAT's authority, the appropriate coach, Head Coach, or reviewer under the JCAT Grievance Procedure may gather relevant information before deciding how the matter should be handled.

- Speak separately with the athletes involved when appropriate.
- Obtain information from relevant adults, athletes, or witnesses.
- Listen without assuming blame before the facts are understood.
- Consider whether there is a pattern of repeated conduct, a meaningful power imbalance, fear of future harm, or substantial disruption of the team environment.
- Consider relevant electronic communications, images, or other information when appropriately provided.
- Distinguish bullying from ordinary conflict, disagreement, or other misconduct that may require a different response.

Supporting an Athlete Who Has Been Bullied

- Listen to the athlete and take the concern seriously.
- Ask what would help the athlete feel safe and supported.
- Work with the athlete and parent/legal guardian, when appropriate, on reasonable steps to reduce continued harmful contact.
- Avoid unnecessarily penalizing or isolating the athlete who reported or experienced the behavior.

- Maintain appropriate follow-up to determine whether the harmful behavior has stopped.
- Provide information about appropriate outside support or resources when circumstances warrant.

Addressing Bullying Behavior

JCAT's response will depend on the age of the athletes, severity and frequency of the conduct, safety concerns, prior relevant behavior, and applicable policies.

- Clearly identify the behavior that must stop and explain why it is inappropriate.
- Use age-appropriate corrective action designed to protect athletes and reinforce respectful team behavior.
- Involve parents/legal guardians when appropriate.
- Consider reasonable restorative steps when safe, voluntary, and appropriate. An athlete who experienced bullying will not be required to participate in mediation or an apology process.
- Follow up after corrective action to determine whether the behavior has stopped.

Possible Corrective or Disciplinary Action

When a bullying matter is properly within JCAT's club-level authority, action may include:

- Verbal or written warning.
- Parent/athlete conference.
- Behavioral expectations or conditions for continued participation.
- Changes intended to protect athlete safety while minimizing unnecessary disruption to the athlete who experienced the conduct.
- Removal from a practice, meet, or team activity.
- Temporary suspension.
- Dismissal from JCAT Swim when warranted by the circumstances.

JCAT does not use an automatic 'three strikes' or identical penalty for every bullying incident. The response will be based on the facts, severity, safety needs, applicable policies, and appropriate jurisdiction.

Bystanders and Teammates

Athletes who witness bullying are encouraged to help safely rather than participate in or reinforce the behavior.

- Tell a trusted adult.
- Support the athlete being targeted.
- Do not encourage, share, repost, laugh at, or provide an audience for bullying behavior.
- When safe, help the affected athlete move away from the situation or seek adult assistance.
- Model respectful conduct toward teammates.

Electronic and Social Media Bullying

Bullying through text messages, social media, group chats, images, video, or other electronic communications may violate this policy when it affects JCAT athletes or JCAT activities. Electronic communications involving Adult Participants and Minor Athletes are also subject to the JCAT MAAPP and applicable USA Swimming Safe Sport requirements.

Good-Faith Reporting and Retaliation

Retaliation against a person for making an appropriate good-faith report of bullying or participating in a review is prohibited. JCAT may separately address knowingly false statements or independent misconduct when supported by appropriate information.

Related Policies

- JCAT Parent & Athlete Code of Conduct - 2026
- JCAT Grievance Procedure - 2026
- JCAT Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policy (MAAPP) - 2026
- JCAT Locker Room, Changing Area & Bathroom Supervision Policy - 2026
- JCAT Photography & Video Policy - 2026