

PVS Athlete Protection Committee

Outline of Suggested Club Policies on Athlete Protection Relating to Use of Public Facilities:

For practices and meets, PVS Clubs utilize public facilities that are, other than the lanes assigned to the club, generally open to adult and other patrons. In addition coaches cannot always be in position to supervise directly all athletes, in particular in locker rooms or other areas where facility staff are also not present. (NOTE: USA Swimming requires coaches to have “direct line of sight” oversight of all athletes during practice and at meets, but that only relates to the training/meet time and location.)

Clubs need to consider having specific policies on the following, and with every category child athletes of all ages need to know that clubs openly encourage reporting of all incidents observed:

- I. Locker Rooms/Bathrooms. Parents can clear younger athletes through the locker room before and after practice and at meets. During practice or meets clubs, if possible, should have a coach, including a senior athlete/coach assistant accompany a younger athlete to the locker room or bathroom. In general a “buddy” system of two younger athletes alone should not be used. If not possible, the athlete needs to be told to return and advise the coach if they are uncomfortable with anything going on when they enter the locker room/bathroom.
- II. Bullying/Harassment. Bullying may include verbal abuse and intimidation, acts of physical or other abuse and coercion. Whatever its form it must be clear it is unacceptable within any club, and appropriately addressed. If it comes from outside the club, that must also be challenged and also appropriately addressed. In summary, all Clubs need to be sure it has policies so that reporting of any act perceived as bullying is dealt with.
- III. Vandalism. Vandalism means misuse of any property of the facility. It does not have to result in obvious damage to soap dispensers, etc. to constitute vandalism. Clubs need to be sure to have policies which not only actively cover in advance what is not acceptable in the locker rooms or pool deck, but also encourage reporting of any incidents observed, even if it involves a friend of the observer.
- IV. Inappropriate behavior. This covers any other situation/incident that makes a child athlete uncomfortable. It can include coarse language, conduct of an adult patron or another facility user acting alone, or other situations not included above. “Inappropriate” means not acceptable in any standard social setting. Clubs should also have policies that encourage reporting of any such event observed by one of your athletes in the facility.

Suggested Guidelines for Handling a Report of One of these Situations.

If a child makes a disclosure relating to the above, the following actions are to be taken:

1. React calmly so as not to frighten or deter your athlete.
2. Listen carefully to what he or she tells you without interrupting and take it seriously.
3. Ask questions for clarification only. Avoid asking questions that suggest a particular answer.
4. Do not stop them if they are freely recalling significant events. Allow them to continue at their own pace.
5. Acknowledge how difficult it might have been for them to share this with you.
6. Reassure them that they have done the right thing in telling.
7. Tell them that they are not to blame if applicable to the situation.
8. Never promise them that what they told you can be kept a secret. Explain to them that you have a responsibility for their safety and therefore have to tell somebody in authority. Let them know that there are others who can help them and that they are not alone.
9. Tell them what you will do next and with whom the information will be shared.
10. Ensure the safety of them if this involves bullying or other direct concern about future incidents.
11. As soon as possible take care to record in writing what was said using the child's own words. Record the date, time, setting, any names mentioned, to whom the information was given and other people present. Sign and date the record.
12. Record any subsequent events and actions.

It is not your responsibility to decide if a child has been bullied, harassed, etc. Any disclosure must be with the parents and the appropriate authorities.