



ASPIRE AQUATICS OF COLORADO

INSPIRING EXCELLENCE • CREATING COMMUNITY • BUILDING LEADERS

Electronic Communication Policy of Aspire Aquatics of Colorado

PURPOSE

Aspire Aquatics of Colorado (AAC) recognizes the occurrence of electronic communication and social media in today's world. Many of our swimmers use these means as their primary method of communication. While AAC acknowledges the value of these methods of communication, AAC also realizes that there are associated risks that must be considered when adults use these methods to communicate with minors.

Private electronic communications between an Applicable Adult and a minor athlete present an opportunity for the Applicable Adult to initiate grooming behaviors that may lead to abuse. Just as one-on-one interactions between an Applicable Adult and a minor athlete must be observable and interruptible, any communications between an Applicable Adult and a minor athlete should be open and transparent. Additionally, electronic communications between an Applicable Adult and a minor athlete must involve the minor's legal guardian and take place during reasonable hours.

GENERAL CONTENT

All communications between a coach or other adult and an athlete must be professional in nature and for the purpose of communicating information about team activities. The content and intent of all electronic communications must adhere to the USA Swimming Code of Conduct regarding Athlete Protection. For example, as with any communication with an athlete, electronic communication should not contain or relate to any of the following:

- drugs or alcohol use;
- sexually oriented conversation; sexually explicit language; sexual activity
- the adult's personal life, social activities, relationship or family issues, or personal problems; and
- inappropriate or sexually explicit pictures
- Note: Any communication concerning an athlete's personal life, social activities, relationship or family issues or personal problems must be transparent, accessible and professional.?

Whether one is an athlete, coach, club owner or parent, the guiding principle to always use in communication is to ask: "Is this communication something that someone else would find appropriate or acceptable in a face-to-face meeting?" or "Is this something you would be comfortable saying out loud to the intended recipient of your communication in front of the intended recipient's parents, the coaching staff, the club owner, or other athletes?"

With respect to electronic communications, a simple test that can be used in most cases is whether the electronic communication with swimmers is Transparent, Accessible and Professional.

Transparent: All electronic communication between coaches and athletes should be transparent. Your communication should not only be clear and direct, but also free of hidden meanings, innuendo and expectations.

Accessible: All electronic communication between coaches and athletes should be considered a matter of record and part of AAC's records. Include another coach or parent in the communication so that there is no question regarding accessibility.

Professional: All electronic communication between a coach and an athlete should be conducted professionally as a representative of AAC. This includes word choices, tone, grammar, and subject matter that model the standards and integrity of a staff member.

If your communication meets all three of the T.A.P. criteria, then it is likely your method of communication with athletes will be appropriate.

Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policy - Electronic Communication

I. Content

All electronic communication from Applicable Adults to minor athletes must be professional in nature.

II. Open and Transparent

Absent emergency circumstances, if an Applicable Adult with authority over minor athletes needs to communicate directly with a minor athlete via electronic communications (including social media), the minor athlete's legal guardian must be copied. If a minor athlete communicates to the Applicable Adult (with authority over the minor athlete) privately first, said Applicable Adult must copy the minor athlete's legal guardian on any electronic communication response to the minor athlete.

When an Applicable Adult with authority over minor athletes communicates electronically to the entire team, said Applicable Adult must copy another adult.

III. Requests to Discontinue

Legal guardians may request in writing that their minor athlete not be contacted through any form of electronic communication by AAC, LSC or by an Applicable Adult subject to this Policy. The organization must abide by any such request that the minor athlete not be contacted via electronic communication, or included in any social media post, absent emergency circumstances.

IV. Hours

Electronic communications must only be sent between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m., unless emergency circumstances exist, or during competition travel.

V. Prohibited Electronic Communication

Applicable Adults with authority over minor athletes (coaches, club owner, chaperones, officials, etc.) are not permitted to maintain private social media connections with unrelated minor athletes and such Applicable Adults are not permitted to accept personal page requests on social media platforms from minor athletes, unless the Applicable Adult has a fan page, or the contact is deemed as celebrity contact as opposed to regular contact. Existing social media connections with minor athletes must be discontinued. Minor athletes may “friend” or follow AAC and/or LSC’s official page.

Applicable Adults with authority over minor athletes must not follow, send private, instant or direct messages to a minor athlete through social media platforms. Applicable Adults must not post pictures of minor athletes to their personal social media platforms.

FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM, TWITTER, BLOGS, AND SIMILAR SITES

Coaches may have personal social media (or other social media site) pages, but they are not permitted to have any athlete member of AAC join their personal page as a “friend.” A coach should not accept any “friend” request from an athlete. In addition, the coach should remind the athlete that this is not permitted. Coaches and athletes are not permitted to “instant message” each other through Social Media chats. Coaches are encouraged to set their pages to “private” to prevent athletes from accessing the coach’s personal information.

Social Media

AAC has official social media pages that coaches, athletes and parents can follow for information and updates on team-related matters. Coaches are not permitted to follow athletes. Likewise, athletes are not permitted to follow coaches.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Are minor athletes still allowed to follow their favorite celebrity swimmer on a fan page?

A: Yes, under the policy, a minor athlete can follow or friend a celebrity swimmers fan page.

Q: What do I do about my pre-existing social media connections with minor athletes?

A: Applicable Adults are required to discontinue existing social media connections with minor athletes.

Q: When does a minor athlete’s legal guardian need to be copied on an electronic communication to a minor athlete.

A: An Applicable Adult with authority over minor athletes must not send a one-on-one communication to a minor athlete. A minor athlete’s legal guardian must be copied on an electronic communication sent by an Applicable Adult with authority over minor athletes to the minor athlete.

Q: How should an Applicable Adult communicate with the team or a group of minor athletes?

A: If an Applicable Adult sends a message to a group of minor athletes or an entire team, another adult must be copied on the communication. It is not required that each minor athlete’s legal guardian be copied on an electronic communication sent by an Applicable Adult to a group of minor athletes or an entire team.

Q: What would be an emergency circumstance?

A: An emergency circumstance should be an isolated incident that is an objectively reasonable emergency in order to justify an electronic communication sent outside of 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. An example would be to notify the team that early morning practice is cancelled at the last minute.

Q: Is a telephone call considered to be an electronic communication?

A: A telephone call is similar to a one-on-one interaction. Therefore, a telephone call between an Applicable Adult and a minor athlete must be observable and interruptible by another adult. A duration of a telephone call made during an emergency circumstance must be consistent with the type of emergency.

Q: Can a team change the hours during which electronic communications can be sent to a time period other than 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.?

A: No.

Q: Can an LSC send communications to a committee including an athlete representative outside of 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.?

A: No. LSC staff and board members are Applicable Adults with authority over minor athletes. Electronic communications sent to minor athletes must only be sent between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m.

Q: Can an LSC or USA Swimming committee with minor athlete representatives conduct a telephone or videoconference meeting after 8:00 p.m.?

A: Yes. If a committee is unable to hold their meeting before 8:00 p.m., then the committee can conduct the meeting after 8:00 p.m. Electronic distribution of meeting materials should not be sent between 8:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m.

Q: If an athlete member turns 18 years old and becomes an Applicable Adult, can that athlete member still communicate with minor athlete friends and teammates through social media and electronic communication?

A: Yes. If that adult athlete does not have “authority over” (e.g., a power imbalance does not exist) the minor athletes, then this provision of the policy does not apply.