



Anti-Bullying Policy

Statewide Amateur Hockey of Florida Anti-Bullying Policy

The **Statewide Amateur Hockey of Florida** (SAHOF), as an active participant in the USA Hockey Association, Southeast District, has adopted its own anti-bullying policy. We consider bullying to be behavior ranging from verbal teasing to physical aggression. It is our position that no amount of bullying is acceptable. Not all joking or horseplay is bullying, but when the intent or effect is to cause distress, repetition of such behavior is bullying and will not be tolerated.

Physical bullying can include pushing, hitting, or kicking a person or interfering with their property. Verbal bullying is the use of words or gestures to hurt or humiliate another person, including name-calling, racial or derogatory insults and teasing. It is the responsibility of everyone to stop bullying. If you are being bullied, or know of someone being bullied, you must tell parents, coach, manager, or a member of the SAHOF Board as soon as possible.

If a person involved in SAHOF (and this includes players, coaches, managers, parents and volunteers) has taken part in bullying behavior, a warning will be given. If the behavior continues, that person may be subjected to sanctions such as suspension from SAHOF. All incidents of Bullying will be referred to the Board for further action, which can include further warnings, discussions with parents, further suspensions or exclusions, ineligibility for tournaments and playoffs, up to removal from the team.

Statement of Intent

We (SAHOF Board) are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all hockey participants so they can learn the game of hockey and the skills necessary to participate in the game in a fun, positive and secure atmosphere. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable and will not be tolerated at any practice, game or other SAHOF sanctioned event associated with our hockey program. If bullying is reported to any parent or player, they should immediately report the incident to their respective coach, team coordinator, or any SAHOF Board member who will ensure the complaint is investigated and dealt with promptly and effectively. We will promote a *TELLING atmosphere*. This means that *anyone* who knows that bullying is taking place is expected to report the incident, as indicated previously.

Definition of Bullying

It is the policy of USA Hockey, and SAHOF as its affiliate, that there shall be no Bullying of any Participant involved in any of its Member Programs by any other Participant. The hockey environment should be conducive to the enjoyment of hockey and free from any type of bullying behavior. Bullying is any repeated and/or severe behavior(s) that occurs within a context that is reasonably related to hockey and that is (a) aggressive (b) directed at a Minor, and (c) intended or likely to hurt, control, or diminish the Minor emotionally, physically or sexually. Bullying-like behaviors directed at adults are addressed under other forms of misconduct, such as Hazing and/or Harassment. Examples of Bullying behavior may include, without limitation, repeated and/or severe:

a. Physical. Hitting, pushing, punching, beating, biting, striking, kicking, strangling, spitting or slapping, or throwing objects (such as sporting equipment) at another person.

b. Verbal. Ridiculing, taunting, name-calling or intimidating or threatening to cause someone harm.

c. Social, including cyberbullying. Use of rumors or false statements about someone to diminish that person's reputation; using electronic communications, social media or other technology to harass, frighten, intimidate or humiliate someone; socially excluding someone and asking others to do the same.

d. Sexual. Ridiculing or taunting that is sexual in nature or based on gender or sexual orientation (real or perceived), gender traits or behavior, or teasing someone about their looks or behavior as it relates to sexual attractiveness.

e. Discriminatory. Bullying includes any physical, verbal, or social behavior related to race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, gender or gender expression or sexual orientation, meant to harass, frighten, intimidate, or humiliate someone.

f. Criminal Conduct. Bullying behavior includes any conduct described as bullying under federal or state law.

g. Exclusion. Conduct may not rise to the level of Bullying behavior if it is merely rude (inadvertently saying or doing something hurtful), mean (purposefully saying or doing something hurtful, but not as part of a pattern of behavior), or arising from conflict or struggle between persons who perceive they have incompatible views and/or positions.

Bullying does not include professionally accepted coaching methods of skill enhancement, physical conditioning, team building, appropriate discipline, or improved athletic performance. Bullying also does not include rough play or conduct between opponents that occurs during or in connection with a game or any conduct that might otherwise be considered bullying that occurs between Participants during a game, and is subject to penalties and discipline as provided for in the Playing Rules. Any conduct defined as Bullying in the SafeSport Code that is not expressly included in the definition of Bullying above, is prohibited and shall be a violation of this Policy. While other team members are often the perpetrators of Bullying, it is a violation of this Policy if an Adult Participant knows or should know of the bullying behavior but takes no action to intervene or report on behalf of the targeted Participant(s). A USA Hockey Participant who engages in any act of Bullying that occurs within a context that is reasonably related to hockey is subject to appropriate disciplinary action including but not limited to suspension, permanent suspension and/or referral to law enforcement authorities. The severity and pattern, if any, of the Bullying behavior and/or result shall be taken into consideration when disciplinary decisions are made.

Why is it Important to Respond to Bullying?

Bullying hurts. No one deserves to be a victim of bullying. Everybody has the right to be treated with respect. Players must be discouraged from bullying and SAHOF has the responsibility to respond promptly and effectively to issues of bullying.

Objectives of this Policy

All players, parents, coaches, and Association Board members should have a clear understanding of what bullying is. Coaches and Managers shall ensure that all players and parents are provided a copy of the SAHOF Anti-Bullying Policy and discuss the important points of the policy each year during the respective Parent/Coach Meeting. All players and parents should understand what they should do to report incidents involving bullying.

All coaches and Association Board members should be familiarized with the SAHOF Anti-Bullying Policy each year and be made aware of the procedures to follow when bullying is reported.

As an Association, we take bullying seriously. Players and parents should be assured that they will be supported when bullying is reported.

Bullying will not be tolerated at any practices, games or other SAHOF sanctioned events.

Signs and Symptoms

A child may indicate he or she is being bullied through various signs and symptoms. While some children are prone to report bullying to their parents, coaches or adults, others will not, due to fear, intimidation, or other factors. Coaches and parents should be aware of the following possible signs indicating that bullying may be taking place prompting them to investigate further and/or share their concerns with coaches or Association Board members:

If a child:

- is frightened or unwilling to attend practice
- doesn't care to associate with team members
- asks to be picked up promptly from practice
- changes their usual routine
- feigns illness prior to practice or game time
- becomes withdrawn, anxious, or lacking in confidence
- starts stammering
- attempts or threatens suicide or runs away
- cries themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares
- begins to do poorly in schoolwork
- comes home with missing or damage equipment or clothing
- asks for money or starts stealing money (to pay bully)
- has unexplained cuts or bruises
- becomes aggressive, disruptive, or unreasonable
- is bullying other children or siblings
- stops eating
- is frightened to say what's wrong
- gives improbable excuses for any of the above

These signs and behaviors could indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated.

Player Education

Coaches are encouraged to discuss the problems of bullying openly with their players in order to promote a "Telling Atmosphere". Players should be encouraged to do the following to stop and discourage bullying tactics:

1. Players should tell their parents.
2. If a player is bullied at hockey practice/games, they should be encouraged to immediately tell their team coach. Telling is not tattling and the player should be reassured that no consequences will result to them for coming forward. If necessary, players should write down what happened when it happened, and identify who bullied them.

3. If players are concerned or nervous about coming forward, they should be encouraged to talk with a friend or teammate. Team captains and assistant captains should be encouraged to intervene in any bullying situation.
4. Players should be encouraged to not fight back when confronted by a bully. They should calmly tell the player to stop or say nothing and walk away. Again, they should report the incident to their team coach.

Procedures for Parents, Coaches and Board Members

1. Parents should report bullying incidents to the team coach, coaching director, manager or any SAHOF Board member. In cases of bullying, the coach or board member who was contacted shall submit a written report outlining the reported bullying behavior to the SAHOF Executive Committee. If necessary and appropriate, police may be consulted.
2. In all cases of reported bullying, parents of the player who was bullied shall be informed immediately and may be asked to meet with the respective team coach and/or coaching director to discuss the incident. In all cases, strict confidentiality shall be maintained.
3. The bullying behavior or threats of bullying must be investigated, and the bullying stopped immediately. The parents of any player who is reported to be bullying will be contacted immediately by the respective team coach, coaching director, or board member and asked to meet to discuss the incident. Depending on the severity of the situation, the parents may be asked to meet with representatives of the SAHOF Board, as appointed by the President.