

Eastern Shore Youth Hockey Association Anti-Bullying Policy

The Eastern Shore Youth Hockey Association (ESHA), as an active participant in the USA Hockey Association, Southeastern 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 ESHA Board as soon as possible.

If a person involved in ESHA (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 ESHA. 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 (ESHA 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 ESHA 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 ESHA 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

Bullying is defined as conduct, gestures or comments which are insulting, intimidating, humiliating, hurtful, malicious, degrading or otherwise offensive to a player, group of players and/or teammates, and which create a hostile or intimidating environment, or which negatively affects a player or player's performance. Bullying is harassment, intimidation by means of any gesture, any written, verbal or physical act, or any electronic communication, whether it be a single incident or a series of incidents that results in pain and distress to the victim. Bullying can be:

- Emotional- being unfriendly, excluding or intentionally ignoring someone
- Physical pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence
- Racist racial taunts, graffiti, gestures or other slurs
- Sexual unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments
- Homophobic remarks or focusing on the issue of sexuality
- Verbal name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumors, teasing, taunting or tormenting
- Any communication via internet, including but not limited to, use of social networking sites to send email, text messaging, internet chat room dialogue, video and any other communication by use of computer or cell phone

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 ESHA 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 ESHA 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 ESHA 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 ESHA 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 school work
- 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 ESHA 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 ESHA 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 ESHA Board, as appointed by the President.

Corrective Action

1. In a first offense situation involving bullying, an attempt will be made to encourage the bully (bullies) to modify their behavior for their benefit, for the benefit of the person bullied and other team members. The bully (or bullies) will be asked to genuinely apologize to those players affected, including all team members. An attempt will be made by the coach, manager, or parent to reconcile the situation between the players (Age and level of maturity and or severity of offense must be considered). Other consequences or disciplinary alternatives to stop the bullying may also be considered by the ESHA Board once reported by the parent, coach or manager.
2. If the bullying persists, disciplinary action against a player may be taken by the team coach and/or ESHA Operations Committee which may include, but are not limited to, immediate suspension from participation in the hockey practice or game(s) for a period of time. The Board reserves the right to suspend or otherwise discipline any player for bullying in addition to any action taken by the coach. In severe cases, the Board reserves the right to prohibit further participation in the hockey program by any player deemed to be involved in the bullying other players.
3. After the incident/incidents have been investigated and dealt with, the situation will continued to be monitored by the respective team coach and player parents to ensure repeated bullying does not take place.
4. Any and all incidents of bullying, whether first offense or other, deemed minor or severe, will be reported to the ESHA Executive Committee or any ESHA Board Member immediately and in writing within 24 hours.