



## 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, this behavior is bullying and will not be tolerated.

### **Statement of Intent**

ESHA is 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 ESHA sanctioned event associated with our hockey program. If you as a player are being bullied or know someone being bullied, you are REQUIRED to report it to a parent, coach, manager, or any ESHA Board member. Any parent, coach, manager, or ESHA Board member becoming aware of any form of bullying within the ESHA organization is also REQUIRED to report it to the ESHA Board who will ensure the complaint is investigated by ESHA's Disciplinary Committee 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 and no one deserves to be a victim of bullying! Everybody has the right to be treated with respect and players must be discouraged from bullying. ESHA has the right and responsibility to respond promptly and effectively to all reported cases of bullying.

### **Objectives of this Policy**

All players, parents, coaches, managers, and ESHA Board members should have a clear understanding of what constitutes bullying. 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 ESHA Board members, coaches, and managers should re-familiarize themselves 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. All incidents of bullying will be referred to ESHA's Disciplinary Committee for further action, which can include warnings, discussions with parents, suspensions or exclusions, ineligibility for tournaments and playoffs, up to expulsion from the team and/or program.

### **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 event (practice, games, etc.) they should be encouraged to immediately tell one of their team coaches. Telling is not tattling and the player should be reassured that no consequences will result from them 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. Any and all incidents of bullying, whether first offense or other, deemed minor or severe, will be reported to the ESHA Disciplinary Committee or any ESHA Board Member immediately and in writing within 24 hours.
2. Parents should report bullying incidents to the team coach, hockey director, team manager, or any ESHA Board member. Any and all incidents of bullying, whether first offense or other, deemed minor or severe, the coach or board member who was contacted shall submit a written report outlining the reported bullying behavior to

the ESHA Disciplinary Committee or any ESHA Board Member immediately and in writing within 24 hours. If necessary and appropriate, police may be consulted.

3. 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 ESHA Vice President to discuss the incident. In all cases, strict confidentiality shall be maintained.
4. 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 and/or ESHA Vice President 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 Disciplinary Committee.

### **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 for the benefit of the team dynamics. 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 Disciplinary Committee.
2. If the bullying persists, disciplinary action against a player shall be taken by the ESHA Disciplinary Committee which may include, but is not limited to, immediate suspension from participation in any or all hockey events, to include but not limited to; practices, games, tournaments, etc. 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(s) has been investigated and dealt with, the situation will be continuously monitored by the respective team coaches, managers, and locker room monitors, as well as the player's parents to ensure repeated bullying does not take place.