



Houston Junior Aeros Hockey Association, Inc.

Anti-Bullying Policy

The Houston Junior Aeros Hockey Association, Inc. (the Junior Aeros), as an active participant in USA Hockey and in support of USA Hockey's SafeSport Program, 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. The Junior Aeros understands that 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 a parent, coach, manager, or a member of the Junior Aeros Executive Committee as soon as possible.

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

Statement of Intent

The Junior Aeros Executive Committee 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 practice, game, or other Junior Aeros-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 manager, or any Junior Aeros Executive Committee 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
- **Cyber** - any communication via the 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.

Objectives of this Policy

All players, parents, coaches, and Junior Aeros Executive Committee 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 Junior Aeros 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 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.

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 Junior Aeros Executive Committee 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 damaged 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:

- Players should tell their parents.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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 Junior Aeros Executive Committee Members

- Parents should report bullying incidents to the team coach, manager or any Junior Aeros Executive Committee member. In cases of bullying, the coach or Junior Aeros Executive Committee member who was contacted shall submit a written report outlining the

reported bullying behavior to the Junior Aeros Executive Committee. If necessary and appropriate, police may be consulted.

- 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 manager to discuss the incident. In all cases, strict confidentiality shall be maintained.
- 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, manager, or Junior Aeros Executive Committee 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 Junior Aeros Executive Committee.

Consequences of Bullying

- 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 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 Junior Aeros Executive Committee once reported by the parent, coach, or manager.
- If the bullying persists, disciplinary action against a player may be taken by the team coach and/or the Junior Aeros Executive Committee that may include, but is not limited to, immediate suspension from participation in the hockey practice or game(s) for a period of time. The Junior Aeros Executive Committee 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 Junior Aeros Executive Committee reserves the right to prohibit further participation in the hockey program by any player deemed to be involved in the bullying of other players.
- After the incident/incidents have been investigated and dealt with, the situation will continue to be monitored by the respective team coach and player parents to ensure repeated bullying does not take place.
- Any and all incidents of bullying, whether first offense or other, deemed minor or severe, will be reported to the Coaches and Junior Aeros Executive Committee Member immediately and in writing within twenty-four (24) hours.

Reporting Reports of any actual or suspected infractions or violations of this Policy may be reported to the **Junior Aeros SafeSport Representative** as set forth on the Junior Aeros's website or to **USA Hockey** at **Safesport@usahockey.org** or **1-800-888-4656**.