



**Summary of PVS Safe Sport Committee Activity
for 2018 – 2019 Season
PVS House of Delegates Meeting – May 22, 2019
Prepared by Mike O’Shaughnessy, PVS Safe Sport Chair**



In September 2018, I sent an email to the PVS membership outlining my goals as the new, incoming PVS Safe Sport Chair. These goals included: (1) Work Closely with USA Swimming Safe Sport; (2) Create a PVS Safe Sport Committee; (3) Have every team designate a Safe Sport Representative; (4) Make Safe Sport more visible; (5) Reach out to / visit teams; (6) Create Safe Sport programs; (7) Involve high-profile athletes; (8) Create a Safe Sport tab on the PVS website; (9) Make it easier to contact Safe Sport; (10) Request legislative involvement; and (11) Increase general awareness of Safe Sport.

Over the past eight months, we have made great strides towards achieving these goals, and even added some new missions. PVS Safe Sport has been extremely active, and I believe we have helped to implement Safe Sport as an integral and important component of our LSC. Indeed, PVS now boasts the highest number of Safe Spot Recognized Clubs in the United States, and has a strong working relationship with the staff at USA Swimming and the Eastern Zone Safe Sport Coordinator (Greg York). With the tremendous support of so many incredible and dedicated athletes, coaches, officials, parents, administrators, and board members, we will further build upon our efforts to serve the community, and advance our mission of keeping athletes safe.

Major Items to Address

USA Swimming recently announced its new Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policy. This new policy will require teams to take additional steps to protect athletes. For example, the Policy addresses one-on-one interactions, locker room access, social media/electronic communications, and touching of athletes. Notably, the policy **requires** that all athletes, parents, coaches, and non-members review and agree to the policy. **We recommend that all teams must require that athletes and parents read and sign the policy before registering for the season, and being allowed to swim in the meets.** Otherwise, this requirement will be impossible to monitor.

Recognitions

We would like to recognize the following individuals for their significant contributions to PVS Safe Sport during the 2018-2019 Season:

Champions of Safe Sport: _____ (athlete); _____ (coach); _____ (official)

Winner of Safe Sport Hero Contest: Mark Duff (NCAP)

Eastern Zone Safe Sport Coordinator: Greg York (YORK)

PVS Safe Sport Activities During 2018 – 2019 Season

Safe Sport Email Address: To help aid communication relating to Safe Sport, I created a new email address that is specific to PVS Safe Sport. The address is PVSSafeSport@gmail.com. By creating a separate, recognizable email address, all members of the LSC can easily communicate concerns or request information, and communication relating to Safe Sport can be consolidated and transitioned to future Safe Sport Chairs.

Safe Sport Database: I have created a confidential database that tracks every Safe Sport incident that has been reported to the Committee. This database records the names of the parties involved, a summary of the incident, and how it was resolved. This database will be useful for identifying trends, repeat offenders, and ensuring that future Safe Sport chairs are aware of incidents that have occurred in the past and how they were handled.

Incident Reports: Fortunately, I have not had to respond to a large number of Safe Sport incidents. Whenever incidents were reported, I attempted to immediately discuss the incident with the parties involved, and where appropriate, consulted with Greg York (Eastern Zone Safe Sport Chair), Tom Ugast (PVS Chair), and/or the Staff Members at USA Swimming Safe Sport. In cases where incidents occurred during a meet, I spoke to the officials present at the time. In every instance, I believe the incident was satisfactorily resolved. I think it is worth noting that PVS is very fortunate to have people like Greg York, Tom Ugast, Ellen Colket and other board members that are extremely active and supportive of Safe Sport, as well as some outstanding officials, who took a significant amount of effort to protect our athletes.

Safe Sport Committee: Before this season, there was no existing Safe Sport Committee. Accordingly, we immediately created a PVS Safe Sport Committee to become compliant with the PVS Bylaws. Consistent with the bylaws, the Committee is comprised of coaches, non-athlete members, and at least 20% athletes. The current Committee membership includes:

Athletes: Caroline DeLuca (YORK); Tori McCullough (NCAP); Bridget O'Shaughnessy (FISH); Natalie English (YORK); Isabel Robey (MACH)

Coaches: Cindy Cruzado (MACH); Leslie Tomlinson (NCAP); Greg York (YORK); Rob Green (DCPR)

Parents: Eliza Jacobs (NCAP); Steve Van Beek (NCAP); Chris Wertzler (MACH); Tracy Evans (NCAP)

Administrators: Spencer Ugast (NCAP)

We have held meetings to discuss Safe Sport initiatives, and how to best implement them. Going forward, I am hopeful our meetings can be held more regularly.

The Committee has created a Social Media campaign to help spread the message of Safe Sport. Since social media is most familiar to young people, the Athlete members have proactively undertaken to create Instagram and Facebook accounts. The athlete members have actively managed the social media accounts, and have been very impressive in their efforts to spread the message of Safe Sport.

Identification of Club Safe Sport Coordinators: One of my primary goals as Safe Sport Chair has been to make sure every club within PVS has implemented Safe Sport policies and procedures. To aid in this effort, I have hoped to find a person from each team to serve as the Club Safe Sport Coordinator. At this point, about half of PVS clubs have identified a specific Safe Sport Coordinator. I have been in communication with those individuals, as well as the administrators/head coaches of the remaining teams. If your club does not have a Safe Sport Coordinator, please help appoint someone to this position.

Achievement of Safe Sport Recognition by USA Swimming: Within the past year, USA Swimming Safe Sport created the Safe Sport Recognized Club program. This ambitious program provides specific guideposts for teams to implement Safe Sport protocols. Ultimately, if a club implements all of the policies and procedures recommended by USA Swimming, and undertakes adequate training programs, the clubs will be acknowledged as a Safe Sport Recognized Club. My goal has been to get every club within PVS Safe Sport Recognized.

The process has been more cumbersome than anticipated. The rate-limiting step is that a certain percentage of athletes and parents must complete on-line training. While the training is relatively short and painless, it has proven difficult to get athletes and parents to log onto the “Learn Portal” and take the training. As an alternative, clubs can hold group meetings where athletes and parents watch the videos, and submit names of attendees to USA Swimming. To help teams accomplish this goal, I have created a step-by-step instruction guide for navigating the program, and I have distributed it to all Safe Sport Coordinators, administrators, and head coaches within PVS. I have even provided this guide to USA Swimming for their use, and to the Safe Sport Chair from other LSCs. If you need this guide, please email me.

USA Swimming now has 25 Safe Sport recognized clubs. **PVS has four Safe Sport Recognized Clubs, making PVS the Safe Sport leader of USA Swimming.** Our Recognized Clubs include **The Fish (FISH), Maryland Suburban Swim Club (MSSC), All-Star Aquatics (ASA), and Fairfax Foxes (FXFX).** To honor PVS’s recognized clubs (and to help encourage other clubs to seek recognition), we have created banners for these clubs that may be displayed at their home pools, or during meets. A club representative will be presented with these banners at the HOD meeting.

Involvement of Specialists: In an effort to improve our abilities to address Safe Sport issues, I have sought to involve expert in the field. For example, I have reached out to the FBI and U.S. Congress for assistance.

FBI – I was introduced to an agent responsible for helping children who have been victimized by crimes relating to Safe Sport issues. The agent has volunteered to provide assistance, and we are working to develop a program that can be given as a webinar or training course.

Congress – I watched the congressional hearings on the Michigan State/Dr. Nassar atrocities. I noted all of the comments made by the testifying witnesses, as well as the concerns raised by the members of congress. I reached out to each of the congress members, and invited them to meet with the Safe Sport Committee, provide any guidance, or play any role they thought might help prevent problems going forward. I did not receive any responses.

Dissemination of Information: In an effort to get our Safe Sport message out to the community, I have attempted several methods of distribution:

USA Swimming Updates – Some people have commented that they have not seen the “Safe Sport Monday” materials this year. That is not because I have failed to distribute them. Rather, the USA Swimming Safe Sport materials have been under review by consultants / lawyers, so USA Swimming has not been sending out much Safe Sport information as of late (e.g., Safe Sport Mondays are on hold). That is why we have not been sending out USA Swimming Safe Sport information.

Handouts – The Safe Sport Committee prepared a one page flyer containing information about Safe Sport, QR codes directing readers to the Safe Sport handbook, and general guidelines for recognizing improper behavior or concerns. I visited various meet sites and passed flyers out and made several observations: (1) people were generally unreceptive to receiving handouts; and (2) people seemed to be particularly attentive to Meet Mobile and meet sheets. Accordingly, I concluded that we should make a better effort to include information in meet sheets/programs, and focus on educating parents of younger swimmers about Safe Sport risks.

Meet sheets – For a number of meets, I reached out the Meet Directors and asked them to include information about Safe Sport within the programs. In every instance, the Meet Directors (e.g., Paris Jacobs and Kelly Rowell) were extremely accommodating and allowed us to include such information. This information was included at the back of the heat sheets, and was visible to every person who attended the meet. I believe this was one of the most effective means of disseminating information, and we will continue to use this method.

Newsletters – the Safe Sport Committee prepared a number of newsletters sharing information about Safe Sport and including links to additional educational materials. While I think this was somewhat useful, it seemed somewhat redundant to repeatedly send out the same information. I requested reader feedback and participation to make newsletters more interesting.

Bag Tags – I designed Safe Sport bag tags, which included the PVS Safe Sport logo on the front, and a list of general guidelines for safe sport on the back. I discussed the purchase and distribution of the bag tags with members of the PVS board, but we concluded that the cost was prohibitively high for the entire LSC, and the goal could be accomplished in other ways, such as flyers, ads in meet sheets, or scoreboard displays (though we may consider revisiting the bag tag idea in the future if we can make it financially feasible).

Attendance of Meetings: Over the past year, either I or a representative have attended several events with USA Swimming relating to Safe Sport.

USA Swimming Annual Convention: I attended the Annual Convention with Greg York and various other members of the PVS Board. USA Swimming offered several meetings relating to Safe Sport. Through those meetings, Greg and I were able to network with the members of USA Swimming Safe Sport, as well as the Chairs from various other LSCs, and learn what other LSCs are doing, and how we can improve our LSC. We learned about current trends (mainly conflict

between coaches and officials and coaches bullying athletes), concerns about doping (make sure athletes check banned lists, and avoid supplements), and how to deal with negative relationships.

Visit to USA Swimming in Colorado Springs: While in Colorado for work, I traveled to Colorado Springs with two colleagues to discuss efforts to assist with the promotion of Safe Sport within our communities. We discussed some of the current concerns and initiatives with Safe Sport and how to improve the implementation of certain procedures. The team at USA Swimming has been very attentive and proactive in trying to improve the Safe Sport model.

Eastern Zone Conference: I will be attending the Eastern Zone Meeting in May.

Integration within Summer Swim Leagues: Since summer swim is so prevalent in our area, I have connected with the Presidents of NVSL and MCSL. We are working to introduce various Safe Sport principles into those leagues, to help keep summer swim fun for kids.

Budget

PVS's operating budget granted Safe Sport a budget of \$2,000. Safe Sport spent a portion of this budget on: (1) Awards for Champions of Safe Sport and other contests to promote awareness/implementation of Safe Sport (\$400); (2) printed materials for distribution (\$100); (3) Flags and banners to honor Safe Sport Recognized Clubs (\$200); (4) Travel for meetings / conferences (including USA Swimming Conference and Eastern Zone Conference) (\$600); and (5) Refreshments for Committee Meetings (\$50). The Safe Sport Committee plans to use the remaining budget for forthcoming travel, meetings, recognition awards, distribution materials, and hopefully the creation of content for display at PVS meets

Future Activities

While we have made great strides this year, there is still room for improvement. Over the next year, I would like to see:

Every team identify a designated Safe Sport representative (both athlete and non-athlete)

Get every club Safe Sport recognized

Improve the visibility of Safe Sport. Add Safe Sport banners to the common areas at meets. Have Safe Sport information included in meet sheets / on scoreboards where possible.

Training: I would like to add segments on Safe Sport training as part of officials' training

Official Protocols: I would like to work with USA Swimming on developing explicit protocols on how to deal with particular incidents/circumstances to ensure there is a uniform and appropriate response in responding to Safe Sport incidents.

Suggestions?

I am open to all feedback, ideas, and critiques. Please email me at PVSSafeSport@gmail.com