

# ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

August 2016



Fond du Lac Soccer Association

## **Our Mission**

The mission at the Fond du Lac Soccer Association is to provide a quality youth soccer program at both recreational and competitive levels for all children emphasizing skill development, teamwork and sportsmanship in a positive environment.

## **Statement of Intent**

The Fond du Lac Soccer Association is committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all of our children so they can play soccer in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at our club. If bullying does occur, all children should be able to openly communicate the situation and know that any and all incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. We are an open club which means that anyone who knows that bullying is suspected or happening is expected to notify the club immediately.

## **What is Bullying?**

Bullying is the use of aggression with the intention of hurting another person. Bullying results in pain and distress to the victim. Bullying consists of three basic types of abuse – emotional, verbal and physical.

*"A person is bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons, and he or she has difficulty defending himself or herself."<sup>1</sup>*

Bullying can be and does include:

- Verbal bullying including derogatory comments, lies, false rumors, teasing, ridicule and bad names.
- Emotionally being unfriendly, sending hurtful text messages, tormenting.
- Having their possessions taken and thrown about.
- Bullying through social exclusion or isolation, being ignored and/or left out.
- Physical pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence.
- Being attacked because of their religion, race or color, gender or sexuality including but not limited to taunts, graffiti, gestures, etc.
- Sexually unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments.
- Misuse of associated technology such as unwanted camera & video usage and social networking exposure.

## **Why is it Important to Respond to Bullying?**

Bullying hurts! No one deserves to be a victim of bullying and everybody has the right to be treated with respect. Individuals who are bullying need to learn different ways of behaving and the club has a responsibility to respond promptly and effectively to issues of bullying.

<sup>1</sup> Dan Olweus, creator of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*, provides us with this commonly accepted definition for bullying in his book, *Bullying at School: What We Know and What We Can Do*.

## **Objectives of This Policy**

The ultimate objective of this policy is to reduce and eliminate, as much as possible, any and all bullying from the Fond du Lac Soccer program(s) in order to protect our children, parents, coaches, referees, and board members.

- All managers, coaches, children, parents and other members of the Fond du Lac Soccer Association should have an understanding of what bullying is.
- All managers and coaches should know what the club policy is on bullying and follow it when bullying is reported.
- All children should know what the club policy is on bullying and what they should do if bullying occurs or is suspected.
- As a club we take bullying seriously. Children and parents should be assured that they will be supported when bullying is reported and that swift actions will be taken as outlined herein. Bullying will not be tolerated.

## **Why Do Children Sometimes Bully Other Children?**

Children might bully because:

- They may have not been taught that it is wrong to bully.
- They think it is fun or funny.
- They are lacking in their own self confidence.
- They are copying older siblings, friends, parents or even club staff.
- They are encouraged to bully by friends.
- They themselves have been a victim of bullying.

## **How Can Parents and Families Help the Club Prevent Bullying?**

Parents and families have an important role to play in helping to deal with bullying. It is important that the message of an open and safe environment be communicated by not only the club, but by the parents and families as well. Parents and families can help:

- Talk to your children about this policy and bullying in general.
- Discourage your child from using bullying behavior anywhere, including at home.
- Watch for signs that your child is being bullied or is bullying others.
- Contact the Coach and/or the Fond du Lac Soccer Association immediately at the first sign if you are worried that your child is being bullied or is a bully.
- Encourage your child to participate in the club.
- Avoid negative comments while your child is training, at practice or playing a game.
- When giving feedback to your child remember the positives as well as the negatives. There is always a positive however you feel your child has played and this should be the feedback your child remembers.

## Signs, Symptoms and Indicators

A child may indicate by signs or behavior that he or she is being bullied. Adults should be aware of these possible signs and they should investigate if a child:

- Says he or she is being bullied.
- Is afraid or unwilling to go to training, practice or a game.
- Feels ill before training, practice or a game.
- Changes his/her routine.
- Becomes withdrawn, anxious or lacking in confidence.
- Comes home with clothes torn or training equipment damaged.
- Is nervous and/or jumpy when a message is received (e.g. text, IM, phone, social network).
- Has unexplained cuts or bruises.
- Is frightened to say what's wrong.
- Has possessions go "missing."
- Asks for money or starts stealing money (to pay the bully).
- Gives an improbable excuse for any of the above.
- In some even more severe situations, other indicators can include:
  - Has nightmares, cries himself/herself to sleep or starts wetting the bed.
  - Starts stammering.
  - Becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable.
  - Is bullying other children or siblings.
  - Stops eating.
  - Attempts suicide, runs away or hurts themselves deliberately (self-harm).
- These signs and behaviors may indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated

## What can you do if you think your child is being bullied?

- Ask your child directly.
- Take any incidents of bullying that they tell you about seriously.
- Talk calmly with your child about their experiences.
- Make a note of what your child says.
- Reassure your child that they have done the right thing on telling you.
- Understand that your child may need to change aspects of their behavior.
- Never approach another parent directly.
- Do not encourage your child to retaliate.
- Contact Fond du Lac Soccer Association Board immediately.

## Procedures

1. Immediately report the bullying incidents/behavior to a member of the Board of Directors of the club.
2. Report the bullying incidents to your Head Coach if you are comfortable doing so.
3. The club will take every concern seriously, investigate the issue and report back to you.
4. In serious cases parents may be asked to come in to a meeting to discuss the problem.
5. If necessary and appropriate, police will be consulted.
6. If bullying is found, it will be stopped quickly.
7. An attempt will be made to help the bully (bullies) change their behavior.
8. The bully (bullies) will be asked to apologize.
9. A record will be kept of the incident(s), investigation and any action(s) taken.
10. The bully (bullies) will be placed on a probationary period with the club of no less than six (6) months.
11. If mediation fails and the bullying continues the club will initiate disciplinary proceedings as outlined below.

## Further Club Action

If the club decides it is appropriate for them to deal with the situation beyond the above or is faced with a repeat offender, the following procedures will be followed:

1. Club mediated reconciliation may be attempted by getting the parties together. It may be that a genuine apology solves the problem.
2. If this fails and/or is not appropriate a small panel (made up from active FDLA Board members) will meet with the parent(s) and child(ren) alleging bullying to get further details of the allegation. Minutes should be taken for clarity, which should be agreed by all as a true account.
3. The same panel will meet with the alleged bully and his/her parent(s) and put the incident raised to them to answer and to give their view of the allegation(s). Minutes should again be taken and agreed by all as a true account.
4. If bullying has in the view of the panel taken place and was not resolved by standard procedures, the individual will be warned and put on notice of temporary or permanent suspension from the club depending on the severity of the case and other information.
5. The FDLA panel will continue to monitor the situation for a given period of no less than six (6) months to ensure the bullying is not being repeated.
6. All coaches involved with both individuals should be made aware of the concerns and outcome of the process.

## Additional Help Information:

Stop Bullying Now: <http://www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov/kids/>

Kids Health (for parents): <http://kidshealth.org/parent/emotions/behavior/bullies.html>

Kids Health (for kids): [http://kidshealth.org/kid/grow/school\\_stuff/bullies.html](http://kidshealth.org/kid/grow/school_stuff/bullies.html)