APPENDIX Q

ATHLETE SAFETY POLICY

Amendments to this Appendix Q are the responsibility of the Board of Directors.

ARTICLE 1

1.01 United States Synchronized Swimming (USSS) is committed to providing a safe environment for its members, athletes, coaches, officials, volunteers and employees. USSS advocates building strong self-images among youth participants, strives to promote good sportsmanship throughout the organization, and encourages qualities of mutual respect, courtesy, and tolerance.

1.02 When any member, athlete, coach, official, volunteer or employee is subjected to physical, sexual, emotional or verbal abuse or harassment, it undermines the mission and values of USSS. All members of the organization, employees, parents, spectators, and other invitees are expected to observe and adhere to the jurisdiction, policies and procedures of the SafeSport Code for U.S. Olympic and Paralympic movements.

A. USSS will not accept or tolerate bullying, hazing, harassment, emotional misconduct, physical misconduct or sexual misconduct in any form by, or directed toward, any USSS member, athlete, coach, official, volunteer, employee, parent, spectator, or other person while participating in or preparing for activities or events conducted under the protection and support of USSS.

B. Harassment and abuse are defined in various sources, such as SafeSport Code for U.S. Olympic and Paralympic movements, state statutes, case law, sports organization and professional association codes of conduct and training manuals, corporate and business workplace documents, and human rights commission materials. USSS has adopted the definitions from the U.S. Center for SafeSport for bullying, hazing, harassment, emotional misconduct, physical misconduct and sexual misconduct as defined in the U.S. Center for SafeSport Code. The U.S. Center for SafeSport Code can found at: https://safesport.org/files/index/tag/policies-procedures.

ARTICLE 2

2.01 Athlete Safety Policy: USSS requires training concerning the key elements of the Athlete Safety Policy for members who USSS formally authorizes, approves or appoints to a position of authority over athletes or who has frequent contact with athletes and USSS staff. USSS Covered Individuals is defined in Section 2.02, below. All information regarding training for Covered Individuals and SafeSport is available on the USSS website at https://www.teamusa.org/usa-synchronized-swimming/resources/safesport.

A. USSS requires Athlete Safety Policy training to be completed before contact with athletes begins, and in any event, must be completed within 60 days of initial contact.

2.02 Covered Individuals.

All USSS Covered Individuals as defined below are subject to the jurisdiction, policies and procedures of the U.S. Center for SafeSport and USSS Athlete Safety Policy.

A. The SafeSport Code defines Covered Individuals as any individual who:

1. Currently is, or was, at the time of possible violation of the SafeSport Code within governance or disciplinary jurisdiction of USSS or who is seeking to be within the governance or disciplinary jurisdiction of USSS;

2. Is an athlete or non-athlete participant that USSS formally authorizes, approves or appoints to a position of authority over athletes or has frequent contact with athletes; or

3. USSS identifies as being within the U.S. Center for SafeSport’s jurisdiction.
B. USSS Covered Individus include:

1. USSS employees, all members of the Board of Directors, support staff and consultants;
2. All National Team Coaches, consultants (working more than one day), volunteers who have constant and consistent interaction and/or authority over athletes and chaperones;
3. All National Talent, Olympic Development and Elite Camp Coaches, consultants (working more than one day), volunteers who have constant and consistent interaction and/or authority over athletes and chaperones;
4. All National Team athletes currently listed in the USADA Registered Testing Pool;
5. All Athletes (18 years of age and older) who practice or compete with minor age athletes;
6. All members (18 years of age and older) serving on all USSS committees, subcommittees and boards;
7. All USSS Member Club employees, contract coaches, chaperones, support staff and volunteers who have constant and consistent interaction and/or authority over athletes. This includes, but is not limited to, Dance, Acrobatics, Flexibility, Swimming Staff, etc at any national or local training facility;
8. Optional, but highly recommended: USSS Member Club board members.
9. All officials (Levels 1 through FINA “A” & Emeritus);
10. All staff, including coaches, managers, chaperones and adults who have constant and consistent interaction and/or authority over athletes while traveling with athletes to national, regional and local events or for the Club Option, Private Invitation, or International Club Exchange (ICE) Programs. Excludes adults traveling as fans;
11. All Life and Professional members who have constant and consistent interaction and/or authority over athletes or are 18 years of age or older and train with minor age athletes.

ARTICLE 3

3.01 Recommended Actions.
The entire synchronized swimming community shall work cooperatively to promote an environment that is free of sexual, physical, emotional and verbal abuse or harassment in any form. USSS requires that each individual participating in a USSS activity follow the Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policy from the U.S. Center for SafeSport. This policy can be found in its entirety on the USSS website at https://www.teamusa.org/usa-synchronized-swimming/resources/safesport.

ARTICLE 4

4.01 Reporting Abuse and Action to U.S. Synchronized Swimming and U.S. Center for SafeSport.
Refer to USSS Administrative Rule Article 24.
A. Any individual who believes that s/he has been the victim of physical, sexual, emotional or verbal abuse or harassment by any coach, manager, independent contractor, employee, volunteer, official or other member should immediately report the matter to the Executive Director or President of USSS and/or the U.S. Center for SafeSport.
1. Reporting may be made anonymously, and no direct fees or other costs are involved in making a report.
B. The U.S. Center for SafeSport has the exclusive authority to investigate and resolve conduct involving sexual misconduct and prohibited conduct under the SafeSport Code that is reasonably related to the underlying allegation of sexual misconduct. Exclusive authority means only the U.S. Center for SafeSport will investigate and manage any related arbitration involving sexual misconduct; and neither USSS nor the USOPC will
conduct its own investigation or arbitration with respect to possible sexual misconduct, except as otherwise provided.

C. USSS will promptly and thoroughly investigate any and all allegations of abuse or harassment (except for reports of sexual misconduct as outlined in Section 4.01 B above) in matters that are within its jurisdiction. On the written request of USSS or the USOPC, the U.S. Center for SafeSport may, in its discretion, accept authority over alleged violations of any prohibited conduct under the SafeSport Code.

D. If USSS or the U.S. Center for SafeSport determines that any coach, manager, independent contractor, employee, volunteer, official or other member has engaged in any action or conduct constituting such abuse or harassment, the individual will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including immediate termination of any contractual relationship, decertification, or expulsion from the membership of the organization.

E. USSS cannot guarantee complete confidentiality of complaints. However, USSS shall strive to ensure that all complaints are handled in a manner that, to the greatest degree possible, protects the rights of all parties.

F. When necessary and appropriate, this information shall be communicated to the appropriate authorities for investigation and should be reviewed by appropriate officials, whose response shall include timely notification of such allegations to the alleged offender.

G. Any individual accused of sexual or physical abuse may be suspended until the matter is investigated and resolved. An individual who is accused but later cleared of the charges may apply to have a suspension lifted or, if applicable, to be reinstated within the organization. Reinstatement is not a right, and no assurance is made that the individual will be reinstated to his/her former position.

H. Any individual or member organization that fails to appropriately report, who makes a false report, or who threatens retaliation or reprisal against an individual for reporting sexual, physical, emotional or verbal abuse or harassment in any form will be subject to discipline or other action as may be within the jurisdiction of USSS.

ARTICLE 5

5.01 Background Checks and Disqualification from Service.
It is the policy of USSS that it will not authorize or sanction the participation of any individual who has routine access to athletes, who refuses to consent to a background check by USSS before s/he is allowed to have access to athletes in USSS programs that it directly controls. Further, it is the policy of USSS, that it will require its affiliates to adopt this policy as a condition of its affiliation with USSS. Background checks listed herein may also be applied to Appendix P.

A. Background checks are required for all USSS Covered Individuals listed in Section 2.02 B above. Parental consent is required for minors under 18 years of age.

B. USSS requires background checks be completed before contact with athletes begins, and in any event, must be completed within 60 days of initial contact. Background checks are valid for two (2) years and USSS recommends reapplying prior to the expiration of the current background check.

C. Criminal offenses that will trigger a “Red Light” report through the USSS approved background check company, National Center for Safety Initiatives (“NCSI”), are as follows:
1. National Council of Youth Sports Standards
2. United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee Standards
Both of these standards can be found in their entirety on the USSS website at https://www.teamusa.org/usa-synchronized-swimming/resources/safesport.

D. The Ethics Committee will review and assess all background check reports flagged as a “Red Light” and will determine the eligibility and right to participate of any individual who has received a “Red Light” background check report.
1. Any individual with an offense that triggers a “Red Light” report shall receive directions on how to question or challenge the report from NCSI.
2. If the individual fails to contact NCSI, that person’s background check report will be finalized and the results will be provided to USSS.

E. Any individual, club or Association who has been party to, or has knowledge of, any degrading, hazing or initiation rite, without reporting it or taking action, shall be subject to suspension from participating, or holding office with any Team, club or Association that is a member of, or affiliated with, USSS.

ARTICLE 6

6.01 Compliance.

A. USSS tracks member compliance to its Athlete Safety Policy on a periodic basis.

B. All members who are not compliant shall remain in pending membership status until all requirements are completed.