

The Four Formal Steps in Progressive Discipline

There are four formal levels or steps in the progressive discipline process and coaches should follow each step sequentially when an infraction is repeated or performance problem persists. Progressively more severe sanctions are imposed in order to reinforce coach's concerns, as well as to provide the swimmer with ample opportunity to improve.

However, depending on the circumstances and the severity of the problem, it may be appropriate to omit one or more of the earlier steps. For example, where the coach has issued a letter of instruction and the performance or behaviour problem persists, it may be appropriate to issue a written warning as the first step in the disciplinary process and omit the verbal warning.

For serious offences, immediate suspension or dismissal may be appropriate, see Immediate Suspension or Dismissal below.

The four steps are as follows:

1. Verbal Warning
2. Written Warning
3. Suspension
4. Dismissal

1. Verbal Warning

The verbal warning is the opportunity for the coach to constructively counsel the swimmer regarding a performance or behaviour problem and provide an opportunity for the swimmer to improve before the problem becomes part of an official record. While no official record is filed of the verbal warning, a note should be made of the particulars of the meeting, including the date and nature of the discussions. The note should be kept in a confidential file for future reference, if required.

In response to a first infraction or for an on-going performance problem, informally meet with the swimmer and:

- Clearly inform the swimmer of the action or conduct of work performance for which they are being disciplined and the impact on the group level swimmers, the Club organization, etc.
- Inform the swimmer of the appropriate behaviour/standard of performance expected;
- Permit the swimmer to provide an explanation and consider the swimmer's input;
- Advise of the improvement or behaviour change required by the swimmer. Where applicable, set a time frame for improvement and follow-up meeting to review the situation; and
- Inform the swimmer of the consequences of failing to improve (or a repeated occurrence) and the possibility of further disciplinary action being taken.

2. Written Warning

If the problem still exists after a reasonable time frame for change, or if a second similar infraction occurs, in most cases a formal written letter of warning should be considered.

The coach should conduct a meeting with the swimmer similar to the meeting conducted in the previous step. At the meeting, the swimmer should be provided the opportunity to explain their actions and the coach should consider the swimmer's input. Depending on the circumstances, the coach may meet to further investigate the situation prior to making a decision whether or not to discipline.

The written letter of warning should:

- Advise the swimmer that further to your previous meeting(s) on date(s), the problem still continues or has occurred again. Provide factual details of the subsequent infraction or performance problem and the impact on the group level, the Club organization, etc.
- Re-confirm the appropriate behaviour/standard of performance expected;
- Advise of the improvement or behaviour change required by the swimmer. Where applicable, set a time frame for improvement and a follow-up meeting to review the situation;
- Advise that a formal written warning/reprimand will be placed on the swimmer's file detailing the situation (ie: copy swimmer's personnel file).
- Advise that failure to improve (or a repeated occurrence) will result in more severe disciplinary action.

A copy of the letter should be placed on the swimmer's personnel file and the original letter given to the swimmer directly.

3. Suspension

A suspension is usually the next logical step in progressive discipline if the problem still exists, or if another similar infraction occurs, after counselling, verbal and written warnings have been issued.

Letter of Suspension

The suspension should be confirmed in writing. The letter of suspension should:

- Advise the swimmer that further to your previous meeting(s) on date(s), the problem still continues or has occurred again despite warnings, or the seriousness of the offense warranted immediate suspension. Provide factual details of the subsequent infraction or performance problem and the impact on the group level, swimmers, the club organization, etc
- Re-confirm the appropriate behaviour/standard of performance expected;
- Advise of the improvement or behaviour change required by the swimmer. Where applicable, set a time frame for improvement and a follow-up meeting to review the situation;
- Advise of the length of the suspension and the applicable dates.
- Advise that failure to improve, or a repeated occurrence, will result in more severe disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal. (*A final warning should be included in the letter of suspension, prior to dismissal*)

A copy of the suspension letter should be placed on the swimmer's personnel file and the original letter given to the swimmer directly.

4. Dismissal

If after all the above attempts have been made to improve an outstanding swim- related problem, it may be appropriate to consider termination of membership.

Before making a decision to dismiss a swimmer, the coach and Executive Officers must insure that a full and fair investigation of the facts is conducted.

Prior to dismissal of a swimmer, the Executive Officers must establish that:

- Sufficient documentation exists to support the dismissal.

Dismissal is performed in person and is confirmed in writing. Once again, the coach should meet with the swimmer to inform the swimmer of the action being taken and the reasons for it.

Letter of Dismissal

The dismissal letter should:

- Provide factual details of the infraction or performance problem which precipitated the dismissal and the impact on the group level swimmers, the Club organization, etc.
- Reconfirm the appropriate behaviour/standard of performance.
- Advise of the reason for the dismissal (ie. Further to your previous meeting(s) on date(s) that the problem still continues or has occurred again despite warnings and suspensions, or the seriousness of the offense warranted immediate dismissal).
- Advise of the effective date of the dismissal.
- A copy of the dismissal letter should be place on the swimmer's personnel file and the original letter given to the swimmer directly.

Immediate Suspension or Dismissal

In situations where a swimmer commits a serious offence, generally the swimmer should be suspended pending an investigation. The Head Coach and the Executive Officers have the onus to investigate the situation as expeditiously and as thoroughly as possible. If the allegations are supported, a lengthy suspension or dismissal may be warranted.

Serious offenses such as jeopardizing the safety and security of the swimmers, damage or theft of the Club's or swimmers' property, drinking, substance abuse, threatening behaviour, criminal acts, serious conflict of interest, serious insubordination etc. are examples of situations that may result in immediate suspension or dismissal.

Documentation

Any disciplinary action taken by the Sudbury Laurentian Swim Club may be subject to challenge. Therefore, it is important that the Head Coach keep accurate records. All communication, including verbal warnings, letters of instructions, written warnings, written suspensions and dismissals should be thoroughly documented.

Documentation should be factual and should clearly state the particulars of each meeting (eg. Date, time, location, subject, follow-up schedule, etc.). Personal or editorial comments should not be documented.