



ANTI BULLYING POLICY

**PROTECTING OUR MEMBERS AND
PROMOTING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT**



Anti Bullying Policy Version Control History

Policy Document: ITA001

<i>Version:</i>	<i>Approved by ITA Board</i>
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Scope

The Irish Taekwon-Do Association (herein referred to as **ITA**) believes that a primary role of the association is to provide individuals with the ability to develop to their full Taekwon-Do potential. Essential to this is the provision of a safe learning environment, without fear of being bullied. Bullying can result in psychological damage to those involved. It is an anti-social behaviour, which is unacceptable and will not be tolerated within the ITA. If bullying does occur this policy should outline the procedures for dealing with the situation. This policy applies to all members, staff, volunteers, and participants of the ITA, regardless of their role or position. It covers all activities organized by or associated with ITA, both on and off the field.

The aims of this policy are:

- to create an ethos in which attending a Taekwon-Do session is a positive experience for all members within the ITA
- to make clear that all forms of bullying are unacceptable in any Martial Art or sport
- to enable everyone to feel safe while training and encourage reporting of any bullying
- to support and protect anyone who has been bullied and ensure they are listened to
- to help those who have displayed bullying behaviour to change their ways and to understand why change is needed
- to inform coaches, parents, and others relevant to the club/school/association
- to ensure all members of the ITA feel responsible for combating bullying

Definition of Bullying

Bullying is defined as:

‘The repeated use of power by one or more persons intentionally to harm, hurt or adversely affect the rights or needs of another or others.

The term bullying refers to a range of harmful behaviour, whether physical or psychological, and usually has the following four features:

1. it is repetitive and persistent- though sometimes a single incident can have the same impact over time, as part of a continuous pattern, eg: Racist bullying.
2. it is intentionally harmful- though occasionally not consciously intended by the bully or bystanders.
3. it involves an imbalance of power, leaving someone feeling helpless to prevent or stop it.
4. it causes distress, fear, loneliness and lack of confidence.

Common characteristics include:

- Motivation to demonstrate power by creating fear and to gain ‘respect’ by peers
- Often people who bully have themselves been bullied in the past
- They may feel powerless and compensate by trying to intimidate others
- Bullying can be obvious, subtle, hidden, and difficult to prove
- Males often use physical bullying and threats, but exclusion from groups is more common amongst females
- Bullying can be by one person, one-on-one, by group against one or group on group
- Bystanders often show acceptance or approval, and those on the receiving end can see them as part of the problem
- Bullying in sport can be related to tensions in schools, groups, families and local communities

Types of Bullying:

- Emotional - unfriendly, exclusion, torment (e.g. hiding belongings, threats, rumours)
- Physical - pushing, kicking, hitting, or any violence
- Racist - racial taunts, graffiti, gestures
- Sexual - unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments
- Verbal - calling names, sarcasm, rumours
- Homophobic - because of, or focussing on, sexuality

- Cyberbullying - all types of internet and email misuse, threats by text, calls by mobile phone and other devices, misuse of technology e.g. camera and video.
- Exclusion – less obvious. Person appears to be included but regularly excluded from group activity, or given wrong information about activity, e.g. times of activity
- Extortion – regularly extracting something from someone without returning the “favour” e.g. borrowing money, snacks, drinks etc.
- Gesture – a look, a signal, pulling a face, imitating the way someone walks, stands etc

Behaviour:

We need to learn that one person’s teasing may, to another, be unkind and even cruel. The way behaviour is received is important rather than what was intended. A person can be bullying and subject to bullying, at the same time. Although some are vulnerable due to physical or social character, anyone can be bullied for any reason or for no reason. Individuals may resort to bullying for a range of reasons, and the ITA will support the bully as well as those who are bullied.

The ITA membership - must be aware of how their actions are perceived and take care not to be accused of bullying. Such actions may include:

- Teasing about characteristics one has little or no control of
- Inappropriate bad temper
- Ridiculing the actions of one in front of others
- Inconsistency in application of punishment or reward
- Physical intimidation
- Insults or swearing
- Belittling others
- Non-constructive or unnecessarily personal criticism

People involved:

There may be several people involved in incidents of bullying behaviour, directly or indirectly having seen or heard about what is happening and these may be adults and/or young people. There are four typical types:

1. The person displaying bullying behaviour can be an individual or a group, this may be an individual who is popular or has discovered their behaviour evokes a reaction. Where a group is involved, they can be those most respected or thought to be part of a good team. People who behave in a bullying manner may be recognised by their own behaviours, often where:

- An individual is being intentionally hostile, aggressive, seemingly without reason
 - An individual or group exert power over another individual or group, often where an imbalance of power already exists
 - Satisfaction is gained from their bullying behaviour
 - An individual purposely causes harm to another
 - An individual repeats harmful behaviour to another
2. The person or group on the receiving end of the bullying behaviour can be known as the target. Often these are individuals who are different from others or stand out for a reason e.g. different culture, background, sexual orientation; someone with a disability; or a talented or less skilled individual
 3. Those individuals who are onlookers to bullying behaviour, often taking no part, are known as the backup and the audience. They provide the audience and the reaction to the bullying behaviour and may be afraid to speak up in case they become a target of the bullying behaviour
 4. There is usually an individual or group who know what is happening but consider it is not their problem; they don't get involved as they are not affected but don't do anything to stop the behaviour

Roles and responsibilities within the ITA

The responsibility for implementing and upholding this policy lies with all members of the ITA, including the board, instructors, coaches, students, athletes and volunteers. All individuals are expected to contribute to a safe and respectful environment.

- Anyone who is a target of bullies should not suffer in silence, but try to speak out, to end suffering by themselves and maybe others
- Everyone involved in ITA should work together to combat and to reduce and put an end to bullying

Coaches/Instructors

- Will show by example the high standards of personal and social behaviour we expect from all our participants
- Discuss bullying with our members, so that each one learns about the damage to the bullied and the bully and discuss the importance to report any bullying when it happens
- Be alert to signs of distress and other indications of bullying
- Listen to those who have been bullied, take them seriously and act to support & protect
- Report suspected bullying to the appropriate person in the Association
- Follow up any complaint from an individual or friend about bullying, and report back promptly on any actions taken
- Deal with observed bullying promptly and effectively, in accordance with agreed procedures

Students/Athletes

- Will avoid getting involved in any kind of bullying, even if it makes you unpopular
- Step in to protect anyone from being bullied, unless it is unsafe for you.
- Report to the Coach/Instructor or person in charge, any bullying seen or suspected, to avoid secrecy and to help stop further instances.

Parents/Carers, Coaches/Instructors and Assistants

- Watch for distress or unusual behaviour, which might indicate bullying
- Advise their members to report any bullying to the person in charge, and explain the dangers of the spread of bullying to themselves and others
- Advise their members not to react violently to any form of bullying
- Be supportive to their members, reassuring them that suitable action will be taken
- Keep a written note of any reported bullying

- Inform the necessary persons of any suspected bullying, even if it is other members who are involved
- Cooperate with the ITA
- If your members are accused of bullying, try to get the truth, explain the implications of bullying, both for the bullied and the bullies
- Parents and the Club Children's Officer should be informed of the issue by the person in charge, and the way it was dealt with including any action necessary if the behaviour continues
- It is better to sort issues immediately and quickly and we expect parents and adults to be supportive of this process
- The person in charge should also observe the group/individuals to ensure the bullying behaviour does not continue. The person in charge may also submit a report to the School/Clubs Designated Children's Officer

Prevention

Irish Taekwon-Do Association shall:

- Prepare and publish guidance intended to raise awareness of bullying
- Implement procedures to guide and advise how to deal with any bullying incidents and reports
- Foster a positive and inclusive culture
- Encourage open communication and reporting of any concerns

The ITA is committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of all its members. Together, we can create an environment free from bullying and harassment.

Clubs/Schools shall:

- Participate in any Anti-Bullying events available.
- Through meetings of the whole club/school with announcement of a zero-tolerance policy towards bullying, and to dispel the idea that bystanders are innocent when bullying occurs
- Through anti-bullying information displayed in clubs/schools
- Role model appropriate behaviour towards others
- By discussion of procedures with beginners as part of their induction process
- Through use of senior students as mentors with all beginners

Students/Athletes shall:

- Through learning practice social skills of negotiation, arbitration and intervention, and learn to consider issues of difference and diversity
- Through learning understand what Cyberbullying is and how to prevent yourself becoming a victim - not making personal information public, not giving out passwords, and not responding to threatening or rude messages
- Learn also what to do if cyberbullied - including keeping messages for proof, using online protection services, telling parents or friends

Dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour

The ITA's aim in the process below is to support the person suffering the bullying behaviour, and to focus on changing the behaviour of those displaying bullying behaviour.

- Instructors/Coaches take their duty of care seriously and will be vigilant and take immediate action
- If a student observes or becomes aware of an alleged bullying incident, they should record details and pass these to the Instructor/Coach
- The Instructor/Coach or their assistant, will investigate carefully and considerately by interviewing all those concerned
- The information provided will be recorded. Following investigation, the person in charge and their assistant will decide on an appropriate means to best support the person suffering, including altering their behaviour
- The action taken will be recorded.
- A date for review of the situation will be set with all those involved.

Case-specific scenarios are described below:

Where bullying behaviour involves an adult

- The behaviour of an adult may be dealt with through an informal complaints process.
- However, where a young person is involved the Club Children's Officer should talk with the young person and parent to find out what happened. The Club Children's Officer role is to support the young person in ensuring the matter is dealt with appropriately.
- An informal process is preferable to the formal process, where a resolution can be reached to the benefit of any young person involved

Where bullying behaviour involves young people only

- If an issue has not been resolved or continues after an attempt to resolve the behaviour at the time, or a report is received after an event the information should be passed to the CCO
- Often it will require an Instructor/coach or other person in charge, e.g. a team manager and the CCO to work together to resolve an issue
- The CCO will need to know who is involved i.e. the person or group who have allegedly behaved in a bullying manner, the target of the behaviour and any others who may have been present at the time, i.e. the bystanders
- The bullying behaviour should be assessed based on:
 - Information from the target of the behaviour (individual or group)

- How long the bullying behaviour has been going on
- How often the bullying behaviour is happening
- Is there an intention to cause harm to the target(s) of the bullying behaviour?

How an alleged bullying incident should be handled

Three steps to deal with incidents of bullying are:

1. To interview the person who has been bullied and the person who has displayed bullying behaviour – separately.
2. To provide support for those individuals
3. To monitor and review the situation.

When a bullying incident is reported it should be noted that:

- Each case will be different and the solution must be tailored to suit the problem
- To remain impartial – do not seek to attribute blame
- To help all individuals involved to gain insight into their behaviour
- That both behaviours have been ‘learned’ from life experience, so with support they can be challenged and changed to acceptable behaviours.

Restorative approach with young people

The preferred method to deal with reports of bullying behaviour is the ‘**No Blame**’ approach to resolve the behaviour. This can help to restore or repair a previously positive relationship and allows the young people involved to consider their feelings, their behaviour and the effects of bullying behaviour on everyone.

The **No Blame** approach seeks a resolution for young people involved in bullying behaviour whilst maintaining their relationship within their peer group. Young people involved often want certain behaviours to stop, without a need for punishments to be imposed. This approach is often difficult for adults to reconcile, often wanting punishments to be handed out. The guidance should be taken from young people involved.

The **No Blame** approach encourages young people to recognise the impact of their behaviour and to take responsibility for changing it. Using this approach, a previous relationship between individuals or within a team may be re-established and this is often the preferred option for the young people involved.

The ethos behind the **No Blame** approach is to:

- **EXPLAIN** the problem, i.e. that someone seems to be unhappy, seems to be picked on etc. and explain how that person is feeling; this should not accuse anyone
- **ASK** for ideas as to how to help this person
- **LEAVE** the individual/group to put their ideas into practice
- **MEET** with the individuals involved to check how the behaviour has changed
- **SHARE** the responsibility of changing the behaviour and encouraging everyone to speak to a trusted adult if there is bullying behaviour in the club.

The **No Blame** approach does not attempt to get 'confessions', it seeks to get an acknowledgment of behaviour and provides an opportunity for young people to change hurtful behaviour. There may be issues that are not resolved through the **No Blame** approach, where behaviour continues.

Applying the **No Blame** Approach steps

1. Meet with young person who is the target of the bullying behaviour

If there has been an incident of bullying behaviour talk to the young person who is the target of the behaviour

1.1. Find out who is involved and what the young person is now feeling

1.2. Try asking the following questions:

- What was the behaviour that has caused upset?
- Are you physically hurt and/or how are you feeling?
- Who was involved in the behaviour, i.e. was it in your own peer group?
- When and where did it happen?
- Actively listen and advise the young person of the next steps that will be taken.

2. Meet with all involved Including those who appear responsible for the bullying behaviour, some of the backup and audience participants.

This doesn't necessarily need to be a whole squad or class group

2.1. Meet the individuals informally or if meeting with the group, it will be necessary to get everyone's points of view and their suggested solution

3. Explain the problem at the meeting

i.e. it appears there is something going on in general terms without apportioning blame, e.g. you might suggest the target of the bullying behaviour doesn't seem to be happy, and you have heard they have been called names/left out/picked on etc.

3.1. Ask questions like:

- What do you think they are feeling?
- How would you feel if it was you?
- What would you do if it happened to you?
- What could we do to see it does not happen again?

3.2. Do not use specific details of the incident or allocate blame; however, explain how that person might be feeling e.g. loneliness, feeling left out, being rejected, laughed at

3.3. Listen and watch out for reactions and pick up on comments without accusing or isolating anyone

3.4. This is an opportunity to find out how others feel about bullying behaviour.

4. Ask the group/individual for their ideas.

The final outcome of the meeting is to seek suggestions that would make a target of the bullying behaviour feel happier

- Use phrases like "if it were you what would help you..... ", to encourage a response
- Listen to all suggestions and note them, especially positive responses as these will help create an environment for the young people involved to work together
- Agree actions that will create a positive atmosphere and resolve the behaviour.

5. Leave it to the group or individual

Hand the issue to the group to take the suggested actions forward and arrange to meet again a certain time frame. The responsibility is now with the group of individuals to put the suggested actions in place within that time.

6. Meet them again

Meet everyone, including the person who had been responsible for the bullying behaviour and the target of the behaviour; discuss how things are going and check if there have been other incidents. This allows for continual monitoring and keeps everyone involved in the process.

The Anti-Bullying Policy should be reinforced regularly. This encourages a team or squad to look after each other and that bullying behaviour will not be tolerated. The parents of the young people involved should be informed of the actions taken.

7. Share the responsibility

Meet with the wider group or team to discuss what should be in place to help prevent further incidents and what impact bullying behaviour may have on everyone, e.g. less free time or social activities, or other actions might need to be imposed as a preventative measure. Any action should be used in the spirit of prevention, not as a punishment. Bullying behaviour is unacceptable and may have to be dealt with through the Ethics and Disciplinary Committee. However, the outcome for young people is far better when issues can be resolved through such a restorative practice.

Summary for immediate response

- The person in charge of the group should always try to stop bullying behaviour as quickly as possible
- Children should not be forced to shake hands with each other
- If an adult is involved in the bullying behaviour this should be stopped immediately
- Parents should always be told – this may happen after behaviour has been corrected
- Club Children's Officer should be informed, the CCO should not need to do anything unless bullying behaviour continues
- Reaching a solution straightaway is usually better for all young people involved
- All those working with young people should encourage the group to follow the Codes of Conduct
- Only those involved, their parents and the CCO need to be told about what has happened
- The CCO will note the behaviour, the actions and the outcome – this record will remain with the CCO

Use of Sanctions

Use of sanctions if bullying behaviour cannot be resolved through the **No Blame** approach the issue should be sent forward as a disciplinary matter through the correct process to the Ethics and Disciplinary Committee. The Ethics and Disciplinary Committee will deal with the matter and may issue sanctions depending on their findings.

Legal Requirements

The ITA complies with all relevant sporting National Governing Body (NGB) and national laws regarding bullying, harassment, and child protection. This includes Garda Vetting, training (e.g. Safeguarding), mandatory reporting of incidents and cooperation with law enforcement agencies and child protective services.

Guiding Documents

This policy refers to the guidelines and standards set forth by national and international sports governing bodies, as well as best practices in safeguarding and child protection:

- Children First Act 2015
<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2015/act/36/enacted/en/pdf>
- ITA National Policy for Young People
https://www.taekwondo.ie/s/ITA_National_Policy_for_Young_People.pdf
- ITF Child Safeguarding Policy <https://itftkd.sport/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Child-Safeguarding-Policy-combined.pdf>
- ITF Adult Harassment Policy https://itftkd.sport/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Policy_adult_harassment_v2.pdf
- ITF Instructor's Code of Conduct <https://itftkd.sport/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Instructors-Code-of-Conduct-July-2019.pdf>

Roles & Responsibilities

- **Board Members:** Ensure this policy is up-to-date and reflective of current best practices
- **Coaches/Instructors:** Promote a positive team culture and address any incidents of bullying
- **Students/Athletes:** Respect others and report any instances of bullying to a trusted adult
- **Volunteers:** Support the implementation of the policy and uphold its principles



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