

## Montclair Cobras Junior Program **Anti-Bullying Policy**

The Montclair Cobras Junior Program(MCJP), as an active participant in USA Football and a founding member of the New Jersey Garden State AYF. Teaching and reinforcing positive behavior on and off the football field is integral to our mission as a premier youth sports organization with a long tradition of success and leadership. Thus, we require adherence to this policy by everyone involved with MCJP in order to do what is best for our young people. All sports and especially football require some measure of physically and mentally “dominating” your opponent thus we must help our young athletes make the distinction between what is acceptable behavior on and off the football field. As always we require all adults involved with the MCJP program to model positive social behavior for our young people.

**Not all joking or horseplay is bullying, but when the intent or effect is to cause distress, repetition of such behavior becomes bullying and will not be tolerated.** Physical bullying can include pushing, hitting, or kicking a person or interfering with or damaging their property. Verbal bullying is the use of words or gestures to hurt or humiliate another person, including name-calling, sexually harassing, racial/ethnic or derogatory insults and teasing. It is the responsibility of everyone to stop bullying. If you are being bullied, or know of someone being bullied, you must tell parents, coaches, or the MCJP Director as soon as possible.

### **Statement of Intent**

The MCJP program is committed to promoting a family like culture that is caring, friendly and a safe environment for all of our young football players so they can learn the knowledge and skills of football necessary to participate in a fun, positive and safe manner. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable and will not be tolerated at any practice, game or any other MCJP sanctioned event. If bullying is reported to any parent or player, they are required to immediately report the incident to their respective coach, team coordinator, and the MCJP Director who will ensure the complaint is investigated and dealt with promptly and effectively. **We promote a *TELLING atmosphere based on honesty and caring*. Our ultimate goal is to prevent and identify bullying to help both the target and the accused grow from the experience. This means that anyone who knows that bullying is taking place is required to report the incident.**

### **Definition of Bullying**

Bullying is defined as conduct, gestures or comments which are insulting, intimidating, humiliating, hurtful, malicious, degrading or otherwise offensive to a player, group of players and/or teammates, and which create a hostile or intimidating environment, or which negatively affects a player’s participation or performance. Bullying is harassment or intimidation by means of any gesture, any written, verbal or physical act, or any electronic communication, whether it be a single incident or a series of incidents that results in pain and distress to the victim. Bullying can be:

- Emotional- being unfriendly, excluding or intentionally ignoring someone
- Physical pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence
- Racist racial taunts, graffiti, gestures or other slurs
- Unwanted sexual contact or sexually abusive comments
- Homophobic remarks or focusing on the issue of sexuality

- Verbal name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumors, teasing, taunting or tormenting
- Any electronic communication via internet, including but not limited to, use of social networking sites to send email, text messaging, internet chat room dialogue, video and any other communication by use of computer or cell phone

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

Bullying hurts and in extreme cases it can have long lasting negative effects on those who are bullied and those who do the bullying. People who engage in bullying behavior are usually acting out of feeling very insecure and/or having been a victim or witness to bullying themselves. Research shows that bullies often have bad outcomes in life including substance abuse, criminal behavior and early mortality rates. Moreover, bullying behavior can erode and even destroy the teamwork and climate of respect that football requires. No one deserves to be a victim of bullying. **Every person has the right to be treated with respect.** Players, Coaches, parents, family members and anyone associated with MCJP must be discouraged from bullying and MCJP has the responsibility to respond promptly and effectively to issues of bullying.

### **Objectives of this Policy**

**Procedures-** MCJP Staff will ensure that all players and parents are provided a copy of the MCJP Anti-Bullying Policy and discuss the important points of the policy each year during the respective Parent/Coach Meeting. **All players and parents will be required to sign off** that they understand what bullying is and what they should do to report incidents involving bullying. All MCJP Staff should be familiarized with the MCJP Anti-Bullying Policy each year and be made aware of the procedures to follow when bullying is reported.

### **Signs and Symptoms**

A child may indicate he or she is being bullied through various signs and symptoms. While some children are prone to report bullying to their parents, coaches or adults, others will not, due to fear, intimidation or other factors. Coaches and parents should be aware of the following possible signs indicating that bullying may be taking place prompting them to investigate further and/or share their concerns with coaches or Association Board members:  
If a child:

- is frightened or unwilling to attend practice
- doesn't care to associate with team members
- asks to be picked up promptly from practice
- changes their usual routine
- feigns illness prior to practice or game time
- becomes withdrawn, anxious, or lacking in confidence
- starts stammering
- attempts or threatens suicide or runs away
- cries themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares
- begins to do poorly in school work
- comes home with missing or damage equipment or clothing
- asks for money or starts stealing money (to pay bully)

- has unexplained cuts or bruises
- becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- is bullying other children or siblings
- stops eating
- is frightened to say what's wrong
- gives improbable excuses for any of the above

These signs and behaviors could indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated.

### **Player Education**

Coaches are encouraged to discuss the problems of bullying openly with their players in order to promote a “Telling Atmosphere.” The MCJP applies this policy fairly to all players regardless of any factor, including the player’s ability. **We are prepared to discipline any player who violates this policy regardless of how it affects game outcomes.** Players should be encouraged to do the following to stop and discourage bullying tactics:

1. Players should tell their parents.
2. If a player is bullied at football practice/games, they should be encouraged to immediately tell their team coach. Telling is not tattling and the player should be reassured that no consequences will result to them for coming forward. If possible, players should write down what happened, when it happened, and identify who bullied them.
3. If players are concerned or nervous about coming forward, they should be encouraged to talk with a friend or teammate. All players are encouraged to intervene in a non-violent manner in any bullying situation. **Anyone who witnesses bullying behaviors and does not at the very least report it, may be subject to disciplinary consequences.**
4. Players should be encouraged to not fight back when confronted by a bully. They should calmly tell the player to stop, or say nothing and walk away. Again, they should report the incident to their team coach.

### **Procedures for Parents and MCJP Staff**

1. Any and all incidents of bullying, whether first offense or other, deemed minor or severe, will be reported to the MCJP Director immediately and in writing within 24 hours. Parents will report bullying incidents to the MCJP Director. **If necessary and appropriate, police may be consulted.**
2. In all cases of reported bullying, parents of the player who was targeted and parents of the player accused shall be informed immediately and may be asked to meet with the respective team coach and/or coaching director to discuss the incident. In all cases, strict confidentiality shall be maintained.
3. The bullying behavior or threats of bullying must be investigated and the bullying stopped immediately. The MCJP Director will interview players one at a time in cases of suspected bullying. The parents of any player who is involved in a reported incident will be contacted immediately by the MCJP Director and asked to meet to discuss the incident.

4. After the incident/incidents have been investigated and dealt with, the situation will continued to be monitored by the MCJP Director, respective team coach and parents of involved players to deter repeated bullying from taking place.

### **Consequences of Bullying**

1. In a **first offense** situation involving bullying, an attempt will be made to encourage the bully (bullies) to modify their behavior for their benefit, for the benefit of the person bullied and other team members. The bully (or bullies) will be asked to genuinely apologize to those players affected, including all team members. An attempt will be made by the Director and those involved coach, manager, or parent to reconcile the situation between the players (Age and level of maturity and or severity of offense must be considered). Other consequences or disciplinary alternatives to stop the bullying may also be considered by the MCJP Director once reported by the parent, coach or manager. Players may be suspended for part of a game even for a 1st offense.
2. If the bullying persists into a **second offense**, disciplinary action against a player will be taken by the MCJP Director which may include, but are not limited to, immediate suspension from participation in football practices or game(s) for a period of time (at least one whole game). In severe cases, the Director reserves the right to prohibit further participation in the football program by any player deemed to be involved in the bullying other players. MCJP reserves the right to require that the family of a player found to be engaged in bullying behavior must document they are getting the player professional help to address the causes of the bullying behavior.
3. **Third offenses** will result in suspension from the MCJP program for any remaining games/practices for that season and post-season. The MCJP Director can expel a player permanently if the bullying behavior is severe and there is no evidence that the player's family is addressing the player's issues.
4. There are no appeals to the disciplinary decisions rendered by the MCJP Director.
5. There will be **no refunds** to any parent who's child is suspended or removed from the program for bullying.

**Anti-Bullying Consent Agreement:**

Montclair Cobra Football players and cheerleaders will not be permitted to participate in practices, scrimmages, or games unless he/she and a parent/guardian have signed the Anti-Bullying Policy.

These signatures represent your understanding of the Anti-Bullying Policy of the Montclair Cobras and that you will abide by its provisions.

**SIGNATURES REQUIRED ... PLEASE SIGN BELOW**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian (Please print name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian (Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Player/Cheerleader (Please print name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Player/Cheerleader (Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date