

Chapter 4.4

Rules, policies and ethics

Benefits of this chapter

Whether through rules or policies, your National Federation should put in place some sort of structure which allows for the maintenance of up-to-date regulations which can serve as a guiding tool for all your members and staff.

Introduction

Rules, policies and ethics are each separate terms that are aimed at giving structure and organisation to your national aquatics federation. While it would be ideal if all your members and staff were on the same level in terms of awareness and ambition, unfortunately this is usually not the case. This is why federations need to implement rules, policies and ethics.

While not everyone agrees with some rules and policies, they are there to keep members and staff safe and satisfied, and serve to protect your federation. They can contribute to the culture of your federation as well, usually because of the external assumptions based on the rules or policies in place. For example, your federations policies on anti-doping testing can lead to assumptions that your federation values drug-free sport.

When rules, policies and ethics are understood by your federation this can help to ensure that everyone is working towards the goal of winning in water.

What is policy?

A typical definition of the term policy is a set of rules or guidelines, a set of principles from which your aquatics federation can outline how things are done and helps to create a framework for the way your federation is run on a day-to-day basis. Policies set the standards for the organisation; they arise from best practice.

Some important reasons why policies should be implemented in your aquatics federation:

- To create a framework for the activities and projects that members and staff within your federation can use to get their job done
- To solve a reoccurring problem – one thought out decision can be applied to many similar cases
- To meet your federation's aquatics requirements
- To improve quality and standards throughout your federation

What are rules?

Rules are a set of guidelines that your federation can use to tell your members and staff what they are allowed to do. Rules are set in place in order to provide detailed guidance about how a strategy can be translated into action. Gathering a set of rules can help your federation stay on track for success.

Enforcing the rules can be tricky, however the following guidelines can be helpful for your aquatics federation:

- 1/ Make sure the rule is reasonable for your members and staff. It should relate to the goals of your aquatics federation and should not just be a random rule.

2/ With any rule or policy, learn about laws that may affect it. Don't violate someone's rights by mistake because you didn't do your research. Most rules should relate to your federation's legitimate interests or be necessary to carry on operations in an orderly and efficient manner.

3/ Get support

When your members and staff understand why a rule is in place, they're more likely to support it. When you consider a new rule or policy, educate the team about why you're taking action. Discuss the rule, and adjust it to meet everyone's needs.

4/ Stress the consequences

Make sure that everyone knows the consequences of not following the rule. The rule itself must be clear, and your federation must tell workers about it before punishing someone for breaking it. Use hypothetical examples to communicate the need for the rule.

5/ Communicate new rules and changes to old rules

Use various ways to communicate – posters on bulletin boards, emails, meetings, and fliers are just some examples. Your goal is for everyone in your federation to know the rule, not just the people who are directly affected. Include information on why the rule exists, why it needs to be enforced, and how it will improve the workplace.

Rules and policy development

When deciding which rules and policies to adopt, a good reference is to look at FINA's official website for guidance. However, since each country is different, additional rules and policies your aquatics federation will most likely need to be implemented.

Some useful questions to ask when making new policies and rules can be:

- 1/ What is the policy/rule and what is the background behind it?
- 2/ What problem is the policy/rule trying to solve?
- 3/ On what values is the policy/rule based?
- 4/ What processes have been used in developing the policy/rule?
- 5/ Who has to be consulted in the process of developing the policy/rule?
- 6/ Who is the legitimate authority making the policy/rule?
- 7/ Who benefits from the policy/rule?
- 8/ Who is disadvantaged by the policy/rule?
- 9/ How will the policy/rule be implemented?
- 10/ Who are the winners and losers in practice when the policy/rule is implemented?
- 11/ How will the relevant members of your aquatics federation find out about the policy?

Criteria for good policy and rules

Criteria for good policy include:

- What is the focus of the policy or rules?
- Will it be useful for the intended users?
Will it improve the quality of your aquatics federation?
- Is it easy to find and access?
- Will it inspire your federation's members and staff?

Reactive policy and rules are too late

As the leader within your National aquatics Federation, you are constantly being faced with a number of issues. Creating policies and rules usually does not get the attention it deserves, however waiting until something happens to create a new policy or rule is not an effective way of managing your team. Policies and rules should be in place before they are needed, not the other way around.

Therefore, you must consider the potential risks and problems which can affect your federation when policies and rules aren't followed. By being pro-active you can avoid creating unfair policies and rules at the last minute. This will help you manage the expectations of your federation as a whole.

Ethics

Just like athletes, coaches and officials have codes of ethics that they obey and so should your federation. As the National aquatics Federation in your country, you represent and promote fair play, respect, development and education of aquatics.

Your commitment to ethics within your federation you should also be reflective of the FINA standards for ethics. When it comes to integrity, honesty, transparency and fairness, the success and winning spirit of aquatics is all our responsibility.

Useful tips

Know how rules and policies are viewed by your staff and members and what benefit the rules serve. By being more aware of how rules are interpreted and enforced, you can better understand which rules are needed and which are no longer useful.

Make sure the rules of your federation are reasonable, legitimate, and well communicated – if they are accepted it is more likely they'll be accepted, followed, and enforced.