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THURSDAY, APRIL 22, 2010

Victims' Lawyers Call USA Swimming's Plan to Fight Sex Abuse "Flawed" and "Vague"

BREAKING NEWS / SPORTS / LAW ENFORCEMENT & CRIME [Kathleen Wentz](#) — Thu, Apr 22, 2010 at 3:46 PM

Responding to a **report yesterday** that USA Swimming has unveiled a seven-point plan to address sex abuse by its swim coaches, three lawyers representing three alleged victims of abuse say that they're concerned the plan is "flawed because it does not meet sexual misconduct prevention criteria...." They also called the plan "vague," said it was thrown together "for public relations purposes," and "does not truly address the issue and does not prevent or minimize the risk of sexual misconduct and sexual abuse directed toward young female swimmers by USA Swimming swim coaches."

According to the **statement** released by USA Swimming yesterday, their plan includes: disseminating guidelines addressing acceptable coach behavior, enhancing the system for reporting abuse, reviewing the organization's code of conduct and comparing it to other youth organizations, reviewing USA Swimming's background screening program, increasing communication with member clubs, and educating parents and coaches about the issue, among others. As **we reported earlier**, USA Swimming's background check policy was only instituted in 2006, long after coaches like Andrew King had been abusing swimmers for years. King was a longtime swim coach in the Bay Area who was sentenced to forty years in prison in January for child molestation charges dating back to 1978. USA Swimming's policy wouldn't have flagged King anyway, since he had never been convicted or charged with a crime until recently, although there were criminal investigations into his misconduct. Officials with USA Swimming have said that some 36 coaches have been suspended in a ten-year period for sexually abusing their swimmers.

In a statement, USA Swimming President Jim Wood said, "We are taking decisive action today, but this is only the beginning. The USA Swimming Board of Directors, national staff and our dedicated volunteers will continue to work together and seek the necessary expertise — both from within the swimming community and from outside sources — to evaluate and improve our protocols and safeguards."

But that wasn't good enough for lawyers who've filed sex abuse cases against USA Swimming. In an interview with AP, one of the lawyers, Indianapolis-based Jonathan Little, called the seven-point plan a "rash, rushed reaction from USA Swimming." So today, Lynn Johnson, another of the attorneys, wrote a letter to USA Swimming also on behalf of Little and his client and San Jose-based attorney Robert Allard and his client (a victim of King's), offering its experts to work with USA Swimming to develop a better program to prevent sex abuse. Wrote attorney Johnson: "We want to make sure that the sexual misconduct prevention program adopted by USA Swimming is more than a marketing gimmick and talking points, but rather a program that is designed to prevent young swimmers from being sexually abused by

their coaches.”

Tags: [USA Swimming](#), [sex abuse](#), [swim coaches](#), [Robert Allard](#), [Lynn Johnson](#), [Jonathan Little](#), [Jim Wood](#), [Andrew King](#)

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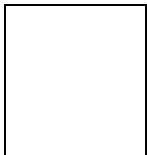
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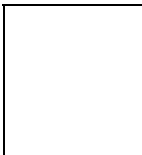
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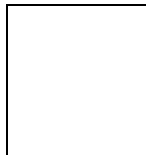
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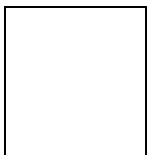
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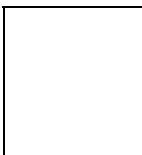
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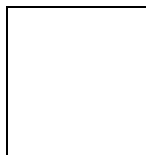
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