

SWIM CLUB STAFF AGREEMENT AND UNDERSTANDING

A Swim Club program should be developed to meet the developmental needs of youth. There is much more involved than the development of skills in swimming. It is important the program proceed according to a set of developed principles and philosophies. It is vital that ALL staff function as members of a cohesive team -- speaking the same language and moving in the same direction.

All staff members must be willing to study and understand the principles and philosophy of the program. They must be willing to follow direction and conform to the aims and directions of the program.

There is plenty of room for individual input into the ongoing development of the program but this input must be done in consultation with the coaching staff. All program suggestions are welcome as long as all staff recognize the need to operate and conduct the program in a way that meets the developmental needs of the youth and not the ego needs of coaching staff, administration or parents.

The responsibility for the guidance and overall direction of the program should rest with an Executive Committee of the Swim Club. This Executive Committee should consist of an Aquatics Manager with experience in the development and management of aquatics-based programs, the Head Coach and one or two parents.

The Head Coach has the responsibility of giving direction and supervising the coaching staff. He has the responsibility of training and guiding the coaching staff and giving clear and meaningful direction to all of the activities conducted during swim club practice time so that all activities contribute to the overall goals and philosophies of the program. He must be willing to meet the individual growth and development needs of all swimmers and not just the talented ones or the ones whose parents create the most pressure.

The Coaching Staff has the responsibility of working with and under the direction of the Head Coach to implement all elements of the program and to work together as a cohesive team to meet the developmental needs of the youth. This process will require much staff development, communication and program review time outside of the swim club practice time. Time must be allowed for regular staff discussion and training. All staff members must be willing to maintain direct and open communication with the Head Coach, offer suggestions and ideas in staff meetings and be clearly a part of a cohesive coaching team.

The program being implemented would be under constant development. The developmental and research aims of the program demand that staff be willing to make a clear commitment to be a part of the program and not try to develop their own individual approach unless it has been presented and accepted as an appropriate element of the program.

The principles of developing self-esteem in youth need to be operational in the conduct of the staff. All staff members need to make a commitment to a process of open communication, problem solving and conflict resolution. The coaching staff must be actively involved with the youth during and even at times after practice sessions. Individuals who wish only to present a workout schedule and then stand back and watch it happen should not be a part of the coaching staff. The youth need constant and effective feedback as well as genuine relationship building efforts. The Coaching staff must be active and not passive. Members of the coaching staff need to understand how to motivate and help youth to become involved and to work hard without resulting to behaviors that demean or that use physical activity or threats of loss of team participation to attempt to control them. The traditional coaching method of endless swimming of endless laps is to be avoided. Research has shown that there are better ways to build endurance and that stroke mechanics is far more important. Endless swimming without clear feedback on stroke mechanics is more likely to just burn bad habits into a swimmer's stroke.

The goal of a swim club should be to teach individuals to be in control of themselves. The more attempts are made to control youth, the less able they are to control themselves. Merely having a pool full of busy swimmers who swim laps endlessly because they have been told to, is not a sign of a good swim club program.