**Kishwaukee YMCA**

**DeKalb County Swim Team (DCST) 2025-2026 Winter Season Handbook**

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**Welcome to the Kishwaukee YMCA / DeKalb County Swim Team (DCST)**

Congratulations! You are now a member of the DCST family. We have a tradition of developing not only excellent swimmers, but also developing swimmers mentally, physically, and socially, including the promotion of leadership talents and an attitude of sportsmanship, cooperation, and dedication.

By joining DCST you have decided to participate in the very beneficial sport of swimming; it binds families together, helps you set goals, and provides opportunities for you to strive to achieve these goals. Swimming establishes a positive self-image, provides new friendships, and teaches responsibility.

The information contained in this booklet will introduce you to DCST and competitive swimming. Please read this entire handbook. It explains the organization and operation of DCST and the obligations of its members.

**Overview of DCST**

The DCST program mission:

* to foster children's enjoyment of swimming as a life-long activity and sport by promoting individual skill improvement and achievement of personal goals through participation with other children within a framework of fun and friendship.

The DCST program vision:

* Inspire individual achievement through self-discipline and self-improvement. Unify team spirit through commitment to excellence and sportsmanship. Commit to competitive excellence through hard work and perseverance yet still maintaining a level of fun and swim/life balance.

The DCST program history:

* was organized in the summer of 1980. Its purpose is to provide a year-round, consistent, high-quality competitive swim program.
* is open to boys and girls from age 5 (or 4 with exceptions) to 21 years of age, regardless of swimming ability, race, color, ethnic origin, or religion.
* is a part of the Kishwaukee YMCA and, as such, is a nonprofit, volunteer administered, professionally coached organization. The Kishwaukee YMCA provides competitive opportunities to the area swimming community through its district, state, and national affiliations. DCST also abides by the YMCA's philosophy of competitive swimming.
* is also a member of United States Swimming, Inc. (USS), the national governing body of amateur swimming chartered by Congress under the Amateur Sports Act. The mission of USS is to promote competitive swimming and to organize the United States national swim teams, including the Olympic Swim Team. USS programs are open to everyone and range in ability from beginners to the US Olympic Swim Team. The DCST swim program participates in a wide range of educational, social, safety, and competitive programs offered by USS.

The DCST program offers:

* a balanced program of practice, competition, and social activities for 11 months a year.
* instruction and training in competitive swimming for boys and girls in a highly structured, closely supervised, regularly scheduled format.
* participation according to age and ability level in competitions sanctioned by USS and the YMCA to ensure fair competition in a safe setting. These competitions are open to all competitors within a given age and ability level.
* just-for-fun social activities including holiday celebrations and end-of-season festivities.

The values of competitive swimming:

* **Swimming has no bench sitters.** Competitive swimming is a sport in which there are no bench sitters because all groups are by age group and ability level.
* **Swimming is healthy.** Injuries are few and mild. The sport has been shown time and time again to be the best sport for the overall conditioning of the body. Swimming provides cardiovascular fitness, muscular fitness, and increased flexibility.
* **Swimming provides self-discipline.** No one can make a person swim. All swimmers must develop an inner sense of discipline to devote themselves to the sport.
* **Swimming is a direct reward system.** In swimming, the harder you work, the greater your reward. The time clock is an objective judge of the result. There are no judges with subjective scores, only you and the clock evaluate your effort.
* **Swimming teaches the relationship between team and individual.** Neither team nor individual can exist and prosper in swimming without the other. Swimming teaches people to work with others. While races are often won through personal effort, success is also built through shared training, encouragement, and accountability. Each swimmer’s growth contributes to the collective strength of the team, just as the team’s support elevates individual performance.
* **Swimming teaches organization.** Swimmers must organize their day to fit in all the life activities they want. They learn to do so, and in so doing, usually become much better students. Swimmers are almost always better students when they are training and competing.
* **Swimming teaches people how to win, how to lose with grace, and how to develop a personal philosophy that will make them long-term successes in life.** Swimmers learn to evaluate their efforts, set goals, and achieve. They gain an athlete's mind that says, "I can control my life and the results of it. If it is to be, it's up to me." Swimming is about values, and the learning of these values is why your child should be involved in swimming.

**DCST 2025-2026 Winter Season Practice Dates, Groups, & Times**

Swimmers will be divided into workout groups based on ability and age. The ages listed below are only to be used as a general guideline. Swimmers will be placed into their respective practice groups by mutual agreement between the swimmer and the Senior Head Coach. There is no required practice attendance policy apart from the National Team practice group. All swimmers, excluding swimmers in the National Team practice group, should feel free to attend as many practices as they desire. However, this does influence a swimmer’s ability to achieve their goals — consistent attendance directly correlates with greater progress and development.

**Practice Start Dates:**

Monday, September 8 Practice Begins for National, Bulldog, Mastiff, Newfie, Lab, and St. Bernard

Tuesday, September 9 Stroke Clinic Begins

\*Note: Good for ages 12 & Under

Monday, September 22 Rookie Week Begins

\*Note: For new swimmers only

Monday, September 29 Practice Begins for Remaining Groups

**There will be no practice on the following dates:**

Friday, October 31 Halloween

Thursday, November 27 Thanksgiving

Thursday, December 25 Christmas Day

Thursday, January 1 New Year’s Day

**Our practice schedule will change from Monday, December 22 – Friday, January 2 while schools are out for the Holiday Break. The exact practice schedule will be made available at a later date. All National Team, Bulldogs, and Mastiffs will go into doubles for the last two weeks of December. All 12 & Under swimmers will have Holiday Break off,** **with the exception of the Newfoundland practice group. They will be allowed to attend all morning practice sessions held for the 13+ practice groups.**

Practice groups are decided based on the swimmer’s age and the swimmer’s qualifications. **All decisions are at the Senior Head Coach, Head Age Group Coach, and Head 8 & Under Coach’s discretion.**

**DCST Practice Groups & Times**

\*Note 1: ONLY swimmers in the National, Bulldog, Mastiff and Newfoundland group can hang their equipment in Room A after practice; all other swimmers will need to bring their equipment bag to and from practice each day.

\*Note 2: If required equipment is not purchased prior to or within the first week of practice, DCST will give the swimmer pre-purchased gear, and the parent account will be charged accordingly. All equipment listed is available to purchase on our SwimOutlet team store, attached to our Home page of the website.

 **Terrier** - The Terrier group is the entry group into the program. The swimmers in this group (ages 5 - 8) are swimmers who can only swim one length of the pool. The main emphasis of this group is to learn the four competitive strokes while having fun. (Practices will be 100% instructional in a group setting.)

Required Equipment: youth racing goggles, fins, snorkel, and a practice suit that allows for minimal drag and full range of motion (boys – jammers, girls- two strap suit).

Monday – Friday: 5:30 – 6:30 PM

**Golden Retriever** - The Golden Retriever group consists of swimmers who can swim 100 yards of Freestyle and have a legal time in all four strokes: 25 Fly, 25 Back, 25 Breast, and 25 Free. Most of the swimmers in this group will have at least one season of competitive swimming experience (ages 5 - 8). Swimmers in this group will work at a faster pace than the swimmers in the Terrier group. This group will continue to concentrate on mastering the four competitive strokes, but they will also be introduced to starts and turns and given their first real exposure to training in small doses throughout the swimming season. (Practices will be 75% instructional and 25% workout.)

Required Equipment: youth racing goggles, fins, snorkel, and a practice suit that allows for minimal drag and full range of motion (boys – jammers, girls- two strap suit).

Monday – Friday: 5:30 – 6:30 PM

**Greyhound** - The Greyhound group consists of swimmers who are still learning the four competitive strokes but can swim a 50 without stopping (ages 9 – 12). This group continues to work on the mastery of the four competitive strokes, the turns, the starts, and racing techniques. (Practices will be 80% instructional and 20% workout.)

Required Equipment: youth racing goggles, fins, snorkel, and a practice suit that allows for minimal drag and full range of motion (boys – jammers, girls- two strap suit).

Monday – Friday: 5:30 – 6:30 PM

**Husky** – The Husky group consists of swimmers who can complete a 200 IM and 500 yard Freestyle non-stop at practice or a meet, and a minimum time requirement of 50.00 or faster in the 50 freestyle (ages 9-12). In a fun atmosphere, this group builds on: sportsmanship, working alongside teammates to reach goals, the mastery of the four competitive strokes, turns, starts, and racing techniques. (Practices will be 60% instructional and 40% workout.)

Required Equipment: youth racing goggles, fins, snorkel, and a practice suit that allows for minimal drag and full range of motion (boys – jammers, girls- two strap suit).

Monday – Friday: 5:30 – 6:30 PM

**Great Dane** -The Great Dane group consists of swimmers who are newer (age 13 and older) swimmers still working on the mastery of all four competitive strokes, but who can do a 100 freestyle without stopping. This group is also for swimmers who are not able to make Mastiff/Bulldog times and/or who are not ready for the intensive training workload of the Mastiff/Bulldog groups. (Practices will be 50% instructional and 50% workout.)

Required Equipment: racing goggles, fins, snorkel, a practice suit, and a black or red team suit for meets.

Monday – Friday: 3:30 – 5:00 PM

**St. Bernard** – The St. Bernard group consists of swimmer who can swim a legal 100 IM under 2:00, complete a 200 IM in competition, 500 yards of Freestyle non-stop at practice or a meet and have a minimum time requirement of 44.00 or faster in the 50-yard Freestyle (age 9-12). This group continues to work on the mastery of the four competitive strokes, the turns, the starts, and racing techniques. (Practices will be 50% instructional and 50% workout.)

Required Equipment: racing goggles, fins, snorkel, kickboard, pull buoy, practice suit, and a black or red team suit for meets.

Monday – Friday: 6:30- 8:00 PM

Dryland: Tuesday, Friday 6:00-6:30pm

**Labrador** – Entry into this group requires meeting several time standards, however, swimmers are learning to create and reach goals, while helping their teammates as well in an atmosphere of camaraderie. Swimmers (ages 9-12) entering this group are ready for a bigger challenge. The following minimum time requirements are: 100 Freestyle 1:20, 100 IM 1:32, or 200 IM 3:20, and have completed a 400 IM or 500 Freestyle in competition. This group will continue to work on mastery of the four competitive strokes, turns, starts, and racing techniques. (Practices will be 40% instructional and 60% workout.)

Required Equipment: racing goggles, fins, snorkel, kickboard, pull buoy, hand paddles, a practice suit, and a black or red team suit for meets.

Monday – Friday: 6:30- 8:00 PM

Dryland: Tuesday, Friday 6:00-6:30pm

**Newfoundland** – Generally, swimmers in this group are more mature and begin to learn how to lead and care for other team members participating in our Big Dog – Little Dog Program. The Newfie Group is for swimmers who display Courage, Care, and Consistency in all they do (ages 9-12). The following minimum time requirements are: 100 Freestyle 1:15, 100 IM 1:25 or 200 IM 3:00, and 500 Freestyle 7:00. This group will continue to work on the mastery of the four competitive strokes, the turns, the starts, and racing techniques. (Practices will be 40% instructional and 60% workout.)

Required Equipment: racing goggles, fins, snorkel, kickboard, pull buoy, hand paddles, a practice suit, and a black or red team suit for meets.

Monday – Friday: 6:30- 8:00 PM

Dryland: Tuesday, Friday 6:00-6:30pm

**Mastiff** – The Mastiff group will consist of swimmers ages 13 & older (or 12 with the Senior Head Coach approval) with the minimum time requirements (Boy/Girl): 100 Freestyle 1:06/1:08, 200 IM 2:40/2:45, and 500 Free 6:30 or 400 IM 6:00. Swimmers in this group are looking to compete at a higher level in swimming and these are swimmers who are responsible, respectful, and hard-working. (Practices will be 20% instructional and 80% workout. Instruction will be provided on an individual basis.)

Required Equipment: racing goggles, fins, snorkel, kickboard, pull buoy, hand paddles, a practice suit, and a black or red team suit for meets.

Monday – Friday: 3:30-5:30 PM

Saturday: 8:00-10:00 AM

Dryland: Monday, Wednesday, Thursday 5:45-6:30pm

**Bulldog** – The Bulldogs are leaders of this team and will be held to higher standards. They are team role models who have strong Communication skills, Commitment and Connection to those on the team. They will consist of swimmers aged 15 & Older (along with 13-14 with the Senior Head Coach’s approval), and the following minimum time requirements (Boy/Girl): 100 Freestyle 55.00/1:02, 200 IM 2:20/2:40, and 500 Free 5:45/6:10 OR 400 IM 5:25/5:40. Swimmers in this group wish to achieve their maximum swimming potential. (Practices will be 10% instructional and 90% workout. Instruction will be provided on an individual basis.)

Required Equipment: racing goggles, fins, snorkel, kickboard, pull buoy, hand paddles, drag sox, tempo trainer, practice suit, and a black or red team suit for meets.

Monday – Friday: 3:30-5:30 PM

Saturday: 8:00-10:00 AM

Dryland: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday 5:45-6:30pm

**National Team** - The National Team members are held in high regard as they are the highest level on the team. This group will consist of swimmers with at least one YMCA National Qualifying Time for the upcoming season’s YMCA National Championship Meet. Swimmers in this group wish to achieve their maximum swimming potential. Swimmers on the National Team are expected to make every single practice offered, including dryland. Those who are going to miss a practice need to get permission from the Senior Head Coach prior to the missed practice. If a practice attendance problem arises, the swimmers may be moved into the Bulldog practice group until the Senior Head Coach allows the swimmer to return to National Team. \*Each swimmer wanting to join the National group will sign an agreement with the coach that they understand and agree to the terms of being a part of a higher-level group. (Practices will be 100% workout. Instruction will be provided on an individual basis.)

Required Equipment: racing goggles, fins, snorkel, kickboard, pull buoy, hand paddles, drag sox, tempo trainer, personal stretch band for meet warmups, a practice suit, and a black or red team suit for meets.

Monday 3:15 – 5:30 PM

Saturday: 8:00-10:00 AM

Dryland: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday 5:45-6:30pm

**Alternative Mastiff/ Bulldog /National Practice Times –** Due to the early evening start times of the Mastiff, Bulldog, and National practice groups, a second workout time will be available on Monday – Thursdays. There will be limited lane space for these practices, so swimmers are encouraged to attend the earlier practice, if possible. This alternative time is mainly for swimmers who live outside the Sycamore/DeKalb area and cannot make a 3:30 PM start time after school.

Monday-Thursday: 6:30 – 8:30 PM

**DCST Registration Process and Requirements**

Registration will be done via our website, [www.dcst.org](https://www.dcst.org).

Families’ winter registrations will not be approved until any previous season outstanding balances are paid. Families will not be able to attend practice or sign up for meets until they have registered for the winter season. Families will be charged a $30 registration fee at the time of registration. Families that are 3 or more months behind on payments will not be allowed to participate in practice or meets until payment is resolved.

**Registration Requirements:**

1. All swimmers must be registered members of the Kishwaukee Family YMCA. For more information on YMCA membership rates, please contact the YMCA or come into the front desk.
2. DCST’s program fees- each swimmers’ fees are based on their practice group. Information about DCST’s practice groups is located above.
3. USA Swimming Memberships- an annual fee of $87 is required to be participate with the team. DCST will be bulk renewing all swimmers at the beginning of the season. If your swimmer is not registered, they cannot swim at meets or practices.
4. DCST offers a two-week trial period for $30. After the trial period, families will need to register in their team groups to continue attending practices.
5. Practice Group Fees- All swimmers must pay monthly payments. Regardless of whether your swimmer makes it to State or beyond, you will still be charge each monthly payment. It is split so that there are smaller charges in each month.
6. Families are expected to help run each home meet in which their family participates. Please see the Parent Handbook for details on the volunteer policy for our winter season. Families, for which this is their first season on DCST, will not be assessed fees.

**Registration Fees Winter Season 2025-2026:**

1. Terriers/ Goldens/ Greyhounds/ Huskies: 6 monthly payments of ()
2. St. Bernards/ Labs/ Newfies: 7 monthly payments of ()
3. Great Danes:
4. Mastiffs/ Bulldogs: 7 monthly payments of ()
	1. High School Swimmers will see 7 monthly payments of ()
5. Nationals: 7 monthly payments of ()
	1. High School Swimmers will see 7 monthly payments of ()

**First Day of Practice:**

The first day of practice for the 2025-2026 Winter season will be Monday, September 8th for all listed groups (Nationals, Bulldogs, Mastiffs, Newfoundlands, Labradors, and St. Bernards). All other practice groups listed (Great Danes, Huskies, Greyhounds, Golden Retrievers, and Terriers) will start practice on Monday, September 29th.

**DCST Championship Meet Policy**

DCST offers a wide range of meets in different organizations (YMCA and USA Swimming) with varying degrees of competition to meet the needs of the varying ability levels of DCST swimmers. Unfortunately, at the conclusion of a season the championship meets for these different organizations sometimes occur on the same weekend or in too close a proximity to each other for DCST to participate in and to excel to our team's fullest potential at all these meets. Therefore, DCST has formed a policy covering which championship meets DCST will attend. A coach will be present at all championship meets which DCST attends. When formulating this policy, DCST took into consideration what it thought was the best interest of DCST as a team, and the best long-term interests of DCST swimmers. The senior coach has the authority to allow exceptions to these meets, but any such exceptions will be handled on an individual basis.

Which championship meets DCST will attend at the conclusion of a season will be determined as follows:

**Winter Season (October - April)**

1. DCST will attend all YMCA championship meets. This includes the Illinois State Championship Meet, and National Championship Meet.
2. DCST will attend the USS Senior National Championship Meet.
3. DCST will attend the ISI Age Group Championship Meet unless this meet is on the same weekend as the YMCA Northwest District or YMCA Illinois State Championship Meet.
4. DCST will not attend the ISI Senior Championship Meet.

**Summer Season (May-August)**

1. DCST will attend Illinois State and National YMCA Championship Meets.
2. DCST will attend the USS Senior National Championship Meets.
3. DCST will attend the ISI Age Group Championship Meet unless this meet is the same weekend as the YMCA Illinois State Championship Meet.
4. DCST will not attend the ISI Senior Championship Meet.

DCST prelim/final meets: DCST would like all swimmers to attend finals if they qualify. These are the best meets to practice for our end of season success as individuals and a team.

DCST Behavioral Expectations: All athletes should be showing good sportsmanship during the entirety of the meet. Please read your Code of Conduct and the Violation of Code section. Athletes will be taken out of individual and relay events if they cannot behave accordingly.

DCST Technical Suit policy: A technical suit is a piece of equipment that is used to assist mature experienced swimmers at championship meets; aka our 11+, State and beyond level, athletes. Technical suits are pricey and will not last a whole season if worn at every meet. Swimmers and Coaches, ONLY, will discuss goals at the beginning of each season and make the decision whether to wear one in each part of the season.

**2025-2026 DCST Winter Schedule**

Information on each individual meet will be made available during the season. For every meet, each swimmer planning to attend will have to sign up for the meet on-line at [www.dcst.org](https://www.dcst.org). If a swimmer does not sign up for a meet on-line, then the swimmer will not be entered in the meet. Information for dual meets will be made available about two weeks before the meet, and swimmers must sign-up for the meet at least five days before the meet. Registration deadlines for invitational and championship meets may be due several weeks in advance. Swimmers must arrange their own transportation to all meets.

**September**  Monday, September 8 Practice begins for National, Bulldog, Mastiff, Newfie, Lab, and St. Bernard

Tuesday, September 9 Stroke Clinic Begins

 Thursday, September 18 Stroke Clinic Ends

 Monday, September 22 Rookie Week Begins

 Tuesday, September 23 New Parent Meeting in Pool Lobby 6:10pm

 Friday, September 26 Rookie Week Meet

 Sunday, September 28 Back to DCST Night @4:00PM Monday, September 29 First Day ALL Team Practice Begins

**October**  Fri-Sun, October 10-12 FVFY Fall Classic

 Saturday, October 18 Pumpkin Spice at SAGE

Sunday, October 26 Pumpkin Parade

**November ￼**Sat/Sun, November 8-9 ￼ Pilgrim Plunge at DCST

 Saturday, November 15 Distance Time Trials at DCST

Sunday, November 16 Swimathon

 Sunday, November 23 Red & Black Alumni Meet

**December ￼**Fri-Sun December 5-7 FVPD Penguin Plunge

Sat/Sun, December 13-14 Barb Wire Classic at DCST

Friday, December 19 DCST Dive In Movie

**January** Fri-Sun, January 9-11 SWAT Grand Prix

Fri-Sun, January 23-25 Winter Classic at DCST

**February**  Saturday, February 7 ???? at DCST

 Saturday, February 21 DCST Open

 Sunday, February 22 DCST Last Chance

 Fri/Sat, February 27-28 Districts at OTTY

**March**  Sunday, March 1 Districts at OTTY

 Fri-Sun, March 6-8 YMCA SC State at St. John

Sat/Sun, March 12-13 ISI Age Group Championships

Th-Sun, March 19-22 SSDL Dryland Championships

Tues-Wed, March 30-31 YMCA SC National Championship at Greensboro

**April** Wed-Sat, April 1-3 YMCA SC National Championship at Greensboro

**Home Meet Parent Job Duties - \*\*Revised\*\***

Swim meets held at the Y (home meets) are run by parents and family members of the swimmers. At home meets, parents are expected to help out.

For our smaller dual and tri meets, if your swimmer(s) swims that day, parents need to work a job during the meet. If your swimmer(s) swims and you DO NOT work any job during the meet, you will be assessed a $100 fee that will be added to your account and billed the following month.

For our larger big meets Pilgrim Plunge, Barb Wire, Winter Classic, and Districts, you will need to work a job for each session your swimmer(s) swims. If you DO NOT work any job during a session your swimmer(s) swims, you will be assessed a $100 fee for each session that will be added to your account and billed immediately following the meet.

If you sign up for a job and are a no-show, you will be assessed a $200 fee. Please communicate if you cannot attend at the last minute. It is your responsibility to fill your volunteer position.

Jobs for each meet will be released one week prior to the meet starting. If jobs fill up, overflow positions will open 48hours in advance for all other parents with swimmers in the meet/ session. You are then expected to talk to the volunteer coordinator at the meet. They will find a job for you and/ or switch you out with another volunteer during the meet.

DCST needs families to volunteer, not their money. Please work a job so our meets can run smoothly.

**New swimming families are not required to work at the home meets and will not be charged. However, if you would like to learn a job or jobs and help out, it is greatly appreciated.**

Please remember to check in for your job(s) the day of the meet with the volunteer coordinator. Job listings and descriptions are posted on the website and will be discussed during the Back 2 DCST Night.

Answers to Commonly Asked Questions:

1. If your swimmer does not swim in any meets, you will not be assessed any fee.
2. If you cannot work at one dual meet but can work two jobs at a different one, please let the DCST Vice President know.
3. If you cannot work one session of the Big Dog Splash but you can work two jobs during a different session, please let DCST Vice President know.

**Club Organization**

DCST is a non-profit community organization that is governed by an advisory board of directors elected from the general club membership. The Board has the responsibility and authority for advising on hiring the Senior Coach, establishing and assessing fees, and monitoring all fiscal and operational aspects of the swim club.

1. Members of DCST must have a current Kishwaukee YMCA membership.
2. Members of DCST belong to the National YMCA and USA Swimming.
3. DCST offers YMCA local, district, state, regional, and national meets; as well as USS programs to all of its members.
4. Emphasis is on ability-level grouping, team building, fun and friendship through group activities, achievement and reward through dedication, diligence, and hard work.
5. The Senior Coach directs and manages the swimming program. She is an employee of the Kishwaukee YMCA and is subject to the supervision of the YMCA management and the advice of the DCST Parent Board.

**DCST Parent Board**

The purpose of the DCST Parent Board is to foster children’s enjoyment of swimming as a life-long activity and sport by promoting individual skill improvements and achievement of personal goals through participation with other children within a framework of fun and friendship and to provide opportunities for all levels of swim competition to youth In the DeKalb County area. More specifically, the DCST Parent Board exists to support the Kishwaukee Family YMCA in its organization, operation, and funding of a year-round competitive age group swim team In DeKalb County.

The DCST Parent Board is made up of parent volunteers in the following positions:

President

Vice-President

Secretary

Treasurer

Director (up to 10)

The DCST Parent Board Directors head these committees:

Fundraising

Concessions

Technology

Socials

Hospitality

Recruitment

DCST Parent Board meetings are open to all swimmer parents/legal guardians. Our meetings are currently held on the 2nd Monday of each month at 6:00 pm.

If you are interested in joining the DCST Parent Board, please let any of the coaches know and they will connect you with the current DCST Parent Board members. Please note, all Board members will need to be non-athlete USA members, which includes a background check and some safe sport requirements (the team does reimburse costs associated with this).

**For the Parents**

Parents are the backbone of our organization. They drive the swimmers to workouts and meets; they work at all our home meets and some away meets and are involved in other matters to support the team. Parents ideally encourage their swimmers and constantly give positive support.

1. We want your swimmer to establish a constructive relationship with his/her coach concerning swimming matters as soon as possible. A good relationship between coach, swimmer, and parent produces the best results for both the swimmer and the team. When parents interfere with a coach's opinion as to how the swimmer should swim or train, it can cause considerable confusion for the swimmer. If you have a problem or concern involving your swimmer, please contact the coach immediately. The coaches are the absolute authority in matters of swimming schedules, swimmer development, and participation in meets.
2. Always offer encouragement; never lecture your child about a poor race. You will make him/her feel worse than he/she already does. Let your swimmer discuss the race with his/her coach and then do your job, that of giving him/her support and encouragement to do better next time.
3. A coach and a program can be supported or ruined in the eyes of a swimmer by his/her parent. Never complain about the number of hours your child puts in each day at practice. Rather, make him/her feel that it is worthwhile, and if this is something that they want to do, you will help. Anything worthwhile requires sacrifice and hard work.
4. New and younger swimmers are most likely to experience inconsistent performances (e.g., times). This inconsistency can be frustrating for parents, coaches, and swimmer alike. Parents and coaches must be patient and permit these young swimmers to learn to love the sport. When a younger or new swimmer first joins DCST, there may be a brief period in which he/she appears to slow down. This is a result of the added concentration on stroke technique, but this will soon lead to much faster swims for the individual.
5. Even the best swimmer will have meets where they do not swim their best times. These plateaus are a normal part of swim training. Over the course of a season, times should improve. Please be supportive when your swimmer has a "poor" meet. Older swimmers may have only two or three meets a year for which they will be rested, tapered, and at their peak performance level.
6. Use good manners at swim meets. After the starter has blown the whistle, remain silent until the race has begun, then shout your encouragement. At larger swim meets, parents are expected to share bleacher space, and not save seats. This is expected, and your swimmer may face repercussions if you do not follow the rules.
7. Officials are human and sometimes make mistakes. Remain noncommittal if your child feels an official has wronged him/her. The Head Coach will handle any appropriate protest. Teach respect for officials. Children learn from our examples.
8. Membership implies responsibility. Parents must become involved and help conduct all home meets. Before a parent can serve as a meet official, they must be certified. Officials requiring certification are: a) Stroke and Turn Judges b) Starters c) Referees Clinics are conducted to certify parents in these positions. All parents, however, can help conduct a meet by working as: a) Timers b) Announcer c) Concessions d) Awards e) Scoring f) Bullpen g) Parking h) Meet Set Up/Meet Clean Up i) Marshalls for big meets Please help when asked; even though your child may not be involved in a particular meet. We need the support of all families to make our meets run successfully. If you were not needed, you would not have been asked.
9. If you have experience in running organizations like a swim team, and you have the time and willingness, make your interest known to the Board. Most commonly, talented and wonderful parents are reluctant to step forward without being invited. Do not be bashful.
10. The happiest clubs have the most people working.

**DCST Code of Conduct**

Purpose:

To promote the best possible conduct of all DCST members at all team functions. To always create the best possible individual and team impression.

General Conduct:

1. Team members will always abide by this Code of Conduct.
2. Team members will abide by all facility rules and regulations.
3. Team members will comply with YMCA National, YMCA Illinois and USA Swimming rules and regulations.
4. Unsportsmanlike behavior, indiscreet or destructive behavior, and/or the use of obscene language will not be tolerated.
5. Every effort should be made to avoid guilt by association with any Code violations. If a DCST swimmer is present when conduct rules are broken, he/she must leave immediately or be assumed to have participated.
6. During practice all members are expected to work to their fullest capacity at every session. They will be required to pay full attention to all instructions.
7. At all times each member is to conduct himself/herself in an orderly manner so as not to cause embarrassment to DCST or himself/herself or his/her teammates.
8. Each member shall wear the defined team uniform when participating at swim meets. The team uniform shall consist of a black or red suit (options at DCST SwimOutlet team store) with or without the team logo. Swim caps, if worn, shall display a pre-printed team logo. Any exceptions shall be approved by the Head Coach.

The coaching staff wants to make it clear now and going forward that respect for your fellow swimmers and coaches is part of being an athlete on our team, and bullying will not be tolerated.

**Swimmer Expectations**

**Be on Time:** Whether arriving in a car pool or individually, be sure to arrive on time. Remember to allow time to do any flexibility work and/or fix your cap and goggles before practice begins.

**Use of Facilities:** We are guests of all the facilities we use. Please conduct yourselves as such before and after practice, in the hallways and locker rooms. We are a respected group only as long as we respect others.

**Dress:** Your success is dependent upon your staying healthy. Take care to dry off well, especially your hair, and dress appropriately for the weather. This includes a stocking cap in cold weather.

**Teammates:** This is your team; make it enjoyable for everyone on the team. Offer encouragement to at least one other swimmer each day. A "good job" or "nice set" helps make the practice time shorter.

**Problems:** If you have any questions or problems, talk to one of the coaches. They are the best source of an answer or solution.

**Violation of the Code:**

Conversation Before Consequence

First Offense: If swimmer misbehaves or is disrespectful at practice to coaches, peers, or facility:

1. Verbal warning given.

2. If the behavior persists, they will be disciplined with one or more of the following options:

a. Burpees or pushups

b. Remove swimmer from the water for a set amount of time (5-10 minutes)

c. Remove swimmer from the water for remainder of practice

d. Switch swimmer lane

e. Other appropriate response

The Head Coach, Head Age Group Coach, or the Head 8 & Under Coach will be notified given the verbal warning. If the behavior persists, a parent will be notified.

Second or repeated offense: If behavior is repeated another day(s):

1. Swimmer will be removed from the water for the remainder of practice

b. Possible exclution of the swimmer from an upcoming practice, meet, or relay.

2. The Head Coach, Head Age Group Coach, or the Head 8 & Under Coach will be notified, along with the parent(s). The swimmer may be suspended from practice, depending on severity of violation. Upon return, the swimmer may be asked to be accompanied by a parent at practice for up to 2 days.

If the swimmer is consistent with the behavior, the swimmer and parents will meet with the Coach, Board Member, and Head Coach to determine the course of discipline, suspension, or possible expulsion from the team.

**Tobacco/Alcohol/Drug Policy**

We believe that abstinence from the use of tobacco products, alcohol, and/or illegal drugs is beneficial to the health and athletic performance of our swimmers. We encourage our swimmers to pledge abstinence from these substances at all times.

Any swimmer who is determined to have used tobacco, alcohol, and/or illegal drugs while at practice, at a meet, or any other DCST function (or who is found to be in possession of such substances at any DCST function) shall be subject to suspension or dismissal from the team.

**The DCST/YMCA Philosophy of Competitive Swimming**

The YMCA's involvement in sports has been one means by which the organization has instilled ideals, values, and behavior based on its purposes and goals. Sports in the YMCA have never been an end in itself, but rather a vehicle for achieving a much more global purpose.

Concern for sports involvement is at the broad participation level rather than in fine-tuning the elite athlete. Teaching the fundamental skills, encouraging lifetime involvement in physical activity, and strengthening the values of fitness, health, and self respect for others are central themes in the YMCA sports philosophy.

The essential elements of the DCST competitive aquatic philosophy are to:

1. Work with every swimmer on the team. Everybody swims; everybody wins.
2. Work on basic skills and teach good physical fitness habits.
3. Teach fair play.
4. Help swimmers set and evaluate individual goals.
5. Keep winning in perspective.
6. Encourage lifetime involvement in sports and physical activity.
7. Work with the whole person: body, mind, and spirit.

**Communication with the Coach**

1. Any problem or concern can best be solved at the source. The coaches are available by appointment to talk to anyone who may have a concern. It is unfair to the team to discuss an individual swimmer’s problem or concern with a coach during practice. Please feel free to contact Coach Kayleigh at 815-375–5399 or by email at kkozlowski@kishymca.org, Coach Donny at dgramer@kishymca.org, and Coach Michelle at mmcgill@kishymca.org.
2. DCST distributes information via email and the web page, [www.dcst.org](http://www.dcst.org).

**Problems with the Coach**

A traditional swim team communication gap can occur if a parent feels more comfortable discussing a disagreement over coaching philosophy with other parents rather than resolving it directly with the coach. Not only is the problem never resolved in such a manner, but this approach often creates new problems. Listed below are some guidelines for how a parent should raise difficult issues with a coach:

1. Try to keep foremost in your mind that you and the coach have the best interests of your child at heart. If you trust that the coach's goals match yours, even though his approach may be different, you are more likely to enjoy good rapport and constructive dialogue.
2. Keep in mind that the coach must balance your perspective of what is best for your child with the needs of the team or training group. On occasion, an individual child's interest may need to be subordinate to the interests of the group, but in the long term, the benefits of membership in the group compensate for the occasional short-term inconvenience.
3. If another parent uses you as a sounding board for complaints about a coach's performance or policies, listen empathetically, but encourage the other parent to speak directly to the coach. The coach is the only one who can resolve the problem.
4. If you are not satisfied with a coach’s response, you may contact the current DCST President.

Parts of the remaining sections in the handbook were reprinted from John Leonard's **Parent, Coach, and Athlete.**

**Parents - Why You Should Get Involved with Competitive Swimming**

Why should you (parents) be involved with the swim team? What is your role in all of this to be? It is clear when you first visit a team that there are a lot of parents around swim teams. Most of them seem to already know what is going on. Their talk is filled with terms like "splits," "training," "prelims," "negative splits" and the always popular (and disturbing) "he died in that race." Where do you learn about all of this, and in the end, is it all worth it?

Well, much of what your child gets out of all this will depend on you. As a parent, you're the child's anchor, their stability. Over the years of your child's competitive career, what you do and do not do, will have a profound effect on the satisfaction they derive from the sport. You are critical to the quality of their experience, and the happiness that you get from your child's experience in the sport will depend entirely on the approach and philosophy that you bring to the swimming program.

You need to examine your own motives periodically . . . and you can be sure that others will evaluate your motives as well! Swim teams are a lot like small towns . . . part of the fun is relating to those around you. You should have fun, and your child the swimmer should have fun. Sports, in general, should be fun. Almost no one makes their living by performing a sport . . . and certainly not by swimming. So there is little economic pressure. You and your child participate in swimming for the pleasure it can give, and the great values and lessons it can teach. Keep that in mind.

As a parent, one of your tasks is to guide your child through some of the types of experiences that will provide the growth and values that you want them to get from swimming. Fun can mean a lot of different things at different times, places and situations. It can be "amusement park style" with laughter, excitement, and unbridled joy, and it can be a quiet satisfaction for a job well done, and an effort well made. Both experiences, and the full spectrum in between, are available in swimming. Part of what you will do in swimming is to help your child recognize the value of each type of fun.

The learning process that your child goes through will be key in their development. Swimming can help children learn to learn and realize that they do learn, and make progress, due to their own personal effort. In this process, there are lessons that teach the value of persistence, courage, and judgment, as well as direct lessons on the value of effort, and the cause and effect relationship.

Along the path that the athlete follows, is a sign that says, "Compete." This one sign is perhaps the most confusing part of the path for parents. The way to avoid the confusion, and prepare yourself in a proper philosophical framework for the sport, is to remember that the word "competition" comes from old Greek that translates to, "STRIVE WITH." The words are important . . . "Strive" . . . to try hard . . . "With" . . . a cooperative image. And that is exactly what happens in swimming. The swimmers dive in, and swim side by side down the pool, each trying to swim faster than the other. It is not against anyone . . . like football, or basketball . . . it is with. Trying with. Striving with. Competing with.

Understanding the nature of true competition is a vital lesson. In order for your child to reach their personal potential, they must be surrounded by people with whom they can truly "compete" (strive with). Without competition, it is impossible for a young person to push themselves to the true degree of their capabilities. The better the competitor, the more of themselves the young person must call on to meet the challenge and "strive with." Remember that the ultimate value that your child will gain from the sport, has everything to do with the people around them, and the competition that engenders.

Many swim parents fall prey to the "competition urge." They misinterpret the word and think things like "compete against," and there is no against. "Compete against" is an oxymoron. The parents who run afoul of this are easy to spot . . . they are the ones concerned about "winning," and "beating so and so," and say things like, "you lost to John" or "We won." These are success seekers carried to an unhealthy extreme. Learning to finish first is only a small part of the learning process, as is learning to finish in other positions in the race. In all of youth sport, there are inappropriate role models in abundance. And all because they fail to recognize the meaning of the word, "Competition."

"Success seekers" miss the point. Success is personal growth for their child . . . not first place. The "we" is a dangerous idea . . . the parent did not swim a stroke of the race, nor learn the flip turn, nor put their head down and drive the last five strokes to the wall. The child did that. The child has the learning process, and deserves the praise. The parent provides the support to help make all this happen, and that is all.

There is an emotional roller coaster for swimming parents to ride. There is a great tendency to say "we" where the child's name will suffice. There is a tendency to identify with the child's accomplishment, and it is a tendency that must be overcome if your child is to have a long and satisfying swimming career.

This brings us to an examination of what is your role as parent in the "parent, coach, athlete" triangle? For that matter, what is the proper role of the other two? The answer is simple and direct.

The parent provides emotional support (an anchor) and physical support for the athlete.

The coach provides technical expertise that is unavailable anywhere else in the triangle, and to a lesser degree, motivation in the form of vision, and challenge, and emotional support.

The athlete brings the raw material . . . the eagerness to learn, to develop, to respond. The willingness to grow as a person, and the willingness to become an active contributor in their own development.

That is really all there is to it. There are gray areas between these, and there always will be. If parents remember that they are in the sport for the values and development it can bring to their child, and coaches remember that they are dealing with a precious young life, the gray areas all work themselves out quite nicely. As a parent, you need to relax, remember that both enjoyment and development are in the sport for your child to find, and keeping your sense of humor handy at all times will get you through it. Just like being a parent at any other time or place.

**Swim Parents are Beautiful People When . . .**

Swimming people in general are the greatest folks you will ever meet. The nature of the sport itself attracts wonderful human beings. Many, many lifetime friendships have begun from swimming, both among athletes, and among their families, who often keep close contact long after their children are done competing. Expect to meet terrific people in swimming.

Parents learn the same lessons about swimming that the athlete does, but they learn second hand. What the coach hopes for, is that the parent will pick up on the important aspects of the sport, and become the critical ally in helping guide the child through the sport. Parents need to realize that coaches want, expect and need parents to grow themselves during the swimming experience.

Here is a short list of ideas of what swim coaches love to see in swimming parents. Swim parents are beautiful when . . .

* you work a full day at a swim meet, and then want to know where everybody is going after the meet.
* you cheer for athletes who are not your own children.
* you drive carpools that would make a Chicago cab driver dizzy in order to get people to practice and meets on time.
* you ask your swimmer after the race, "what did your coach say?"
* you say "what did you learn?" to your ten-year-old who just got disqualified for an illegal turn.
* you play up the importance of "team" things like relays and cheering for teammates.
* you help new parents " learn the ropes" in a positive way. - you help fund-raise for an event that your child is not involved with this year. (Next year, it is your turn.)
* you applaud everyone's efforts and comfort those that need it. - you realize that coaches are human and make mistakes.
* you know that "There is nothing heavier than a great potential," and do not put your athlete under that burden.
* you officiate a swim meet and have to DQ your own child. - you realize that no one swim is all that important. It is the process that counts.
* you make a bigger deal about your child's friend getting a best time than you do about you own child. Recognition by an adult, not your own parents is so important!
* you realize that every swimmer is a winner as long as they try. - you support your child's swimming by helping support the organization that brings your child the opportunity. On the other hand, there are some things that are not so beautiful. Swim parents have an ugly attitude when . . .
* you think every swim should be a best time and a first place.
* you say, "you did not try." - you say, " it is only a relay."
* you can only talk about your own swimmer with other swimmer's parents.
* you expect people to cheer for your child when you only cheer for your own.
* you expect the coach to see every mistake that is made, in and out of the water, by every swimmer at all times.
* you talk to your child during practice. - you get to warm-up late for a meet, because, "who cares if you miss part of warm-up."
* you offer advice on how to swim a race to your child. - you begin to think you know enough about swimming to dissect the coaches' workouts from the stands.
* you decide not to work on a club project because "the Joneses did not work last month."
* you use the swim team as a gossip machine.
* you live or relive your own athletic desires through your child's efforts.
* you are a bigger show at the swim meet than the athletes.
* you demand as much of the coach's attention as the swimmers.
* you interrupt the coach for a conversation, while he is working with a group of swimmers.
* you worry that your eight year old is not working hard enough. In reality, all of us exhibit at least a few of the traits from each list. That is OK. You are most beautiful when you are learning what to do and what to avoid, and making an effort to always do a better job of supporting your swimmer. Trying to learn, trying to grow, trying to get better. That is the swimming journey, and it is a great experience.

**What is Important in Age Group Swimming?**

There are a lot of minor ups and downs in the course of a swimming career. Some are not so minor. They can even seem pretty major when you are involved in them first hand, and the emotions of the moment are affecting your vision. What I think is important is really pretty simple. Your child should have an experience that can help them grow as human beings.

Now any experience will change you in some way. Growth is different. Growth is expansion of the capacity of the person. They are able to do, be, see, understand and cope with more. They are more fully human, in all dimensions . . . physically, emotionally, and intellectually. Their capacity is expanded. As a swimmer gets older, their freedom of choice will expand dramatically, and the price they pay for that freedom will expand just as fast. Every swimmer must understand the possibilities and the cost of those possibilities.

Fun is the number one reason young people swim, but fun has at least two different meanings. The first is amusement parks, laughs, giggles, and tickles type of fun. That can exist in swimming and frequently does. When the swimmer is younger, it is possibly the most important part of the definition for the swimmer. As they mature in the sport, fun begins a shift to satisfaction. Satisfaction is directly related to the degree of difficulty of the activity in question. The higher the difficulty, the greater the satisfaction. This has a great deal to do with how skilled the youngster and their support staff of coach and parent become at goal-setting. This will naturally mean that there will be times of failure, of not getting done what the swimmer wants to accomplish. This in not fun and games stuff. This is serious fun. There is not going to be satisfaction with a result that does not completely absorb the attention and effort of the athlete. As parents, you need to recognize when this process is going on, and relax and live through it. You might be surprised how early some swimmers get into this sort of satisfaction/success versus dissatisfaction/failure mentality. There is no magic age to look for it. It may occur at 9, or 19, or never. Usually, young ladies find their way to it before young men. It is a function of earlier maturation.

Another form of fun is improvement. Getting better is fun and rewarding. Swimming provides many ways to improve. All, at one time or another, are appropriate. Swimming time is the obvious one. How fast did you swim? How much did you improve? At first, children improve very fast. Later, that will slow down as they do a better and better job of closing in on their personal potential. Measurements best taken in seconds as an eight and under later become tenths as a high school swimmer. And as they get older, the time measurement will depend a great deal on how hard they are working at any given time. Eventually, they will have to taper (rest) in order to improve their times. This is totally to be expected. At that time, they will need to become process-oriented while asking themselves "what process do I need to go through to get faster? What things do I have to do?" This is different from results orientation . . . only the final time matters. As they become process-oriented, they realize that improvement is not just in time. It should be in stroke mechanics, in start and turn technique, in practice discipline, in physical conditioning, and in attitude. It is an important stage when they ask themselves, "what do I have to do to swim faster?" Look for it, and enjoy it as a parent. Concentrating on personal improvement in all areas is the way to happiness for the swimmer, the parent, and the coach. Remember that every race can only have one person finish first, but every person can be a winner if they improve in some way, measurable or internal. There are a number of things that parents should remember about improvement, so they can understand and support the process properly. First, improvement in sports is not a straight line process. It proceeds in fits and starts, will spurt ahead for a while, then seemingly go backward for a while, during periods of adjustment. Do not let it frustrate you, and try to educate your child that this is all normal, and to be expected. You will want to watch your child swim. Sometimes in meets, and sometimes in practice. This is good. What is not good is watching too closely, or too often. Why not? Because on a day-to-day basis, you will see little progress. Little swimmers can be in the middle of a lesson, and seemingly not able to duplicate any of what their coach is teaching them. You can swear that not a thing was learned. The next day, some of the group will have the skill practically learned, others will have a bit of it, and some will still not appear to have learned. Why is this? Because they go home, and subconsciously they work on skill . . . mentally rehearsing it . . . some more successfully than others. And they come in the next day, and the skill level is much improved. Some children will be stuck on something for as much as months, and suddenly catch on. They can be incredibly frustrating for the parent watching all this. Your learning skills are highly developed. Why is it taking your child so long? Maybe they are not very good at this? Do not get fooled. They each learn at their own speed. If you watch them continually, you will not appreciate their progress as clearly as you will if you observe their workouts and meets periodically.

Improvement comes also from the environment in which a young person does their striving. They need to learn that their success is directly tied to the success of those surrounding them. This means that they each have an important stake in the success and the successful attitudes of those in their group. They should be excited and pleased when one of their group has a breakthrough swim to a new level. The first time someone swims the 100 free under one minute, the rest of the group will not be far behind. How does this work? Well, Julie has grown up around Sally, or they spend a lot of time together now. They are buddies. They spend time together in swimming and outside of swimming. They perceive themselves as peers or as very similar. As soon as Julie goes 59.9 for the 100 free, Sally internally says, "59.9, that must be something I can do, after all, Julie does everything I do. 59.9 is the new time that we can do." The group progress owes a lot to the leader. Encourage each swimmer to be a leader at some part of the swimming experience, either physically, intellectually, or emotionally. Everyone has different skills and different fears. Each can lead at something. This also has profound implications later on in their career.

The third thing that is important is the concept of the "Rose within a Bud." Children have to be taught to strive, to try. It is not a given in our society today. Life has become very easy. The concept of trying is no longer automatic. We must teach our children that effort is required to attain the important things in their lives. It is not push-button TV, drive-through fast food windows, and instant gratification in all things. The rosebush provides an excellent model. This model can be compared to a young swimmer having trouble learning to swim breaststroke, and it applies across a broad spectrum of life, and growing up.

"Have you ever seen a rose?" . . . "yes" said a young breastroker, "well, do you remember what it looked like in the summer? All bright, beautiful, and red, and it had shiny green leaves, and lovely red flowers?" "Yes, that is a rose!" . . . "Well, in the winter, what did it look like?" "Winter? There are no roses in winter" said the breastroker. "No, the rose is still there, it just is getting ready for spring, and while it does, its leaves are all brown, the canes are brown, the thorns are hard and ugly, and generally, it looks more like a thorn bush. Then in the spring, it warms up, and some green comes back to the canes, and some leaf buds come out, and its still a rose then, isn't it? Finally, summer comes, and the rose bursts forth in beautiful flowers. But remember, all the rest of the time, is just getting ready for that beautiful bloom. That is just the way it is with little boys and girls when they learn something new. It does not have to be beautiful immediately, as long as you are getting ready for a summer bloom." Thus if every swimmer doesn't say "I can't," but starts thinking "I am a rose on the way!," and works hard every day, they will bloom too.