

**DEKALB COUNTY
SWIM TEAM**

Competitive Swimming Handbook

Policies • Philosophy • Program Governance

Kishwaukee Family YMCA | Established 1980

August 26, 2026

About This Handbook

This Handbook is a statement of the current policies, philosophy, and operating principles of the DeKalb County Swim Team (DCST) and is not a contract. It may be amended from time to time by the Director of Competitive Swimming and, where applicable, Kishwaukee Family YMCA leadership. The current published version controls. This current edition contains the permanent handbook only; annual and seasonal materials are maintained separately. See Handbook Authority, Interpretation & Amendment at the end of this Handbook.

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CHAPTER 1

Welcome

Welcome to the DeKalb County Swim Team (DCST) and the Kishwaukee Family YMCA. We are honored that you have chosen to become part of the DCST community.

Since 1980, DCST has proudly served DeKalb County and Northern Illinois through a year-round competitive swimming program dedicated to developing athletes of character, confidence, and excellence. For more than four decades, swimmers, coaches, families, volunteers, officials, alumni, and YMCA staff have worked together to create an environment in which athletes are challenged to achieve their personal best, both in and out of the water.

DCST has a proud tradition of developing swimmers from introductory and local competition through collegiate and national-level swimming. Those accomplishments are an important part of our history, but they are not the whole story.

Our greatest success is measured not only by medals, records, or championships, but by the confidence, integrity, resilience, discipline, friendships, and lifelong appreciation for healthy competition that swimmers carry with them beyond the pool.

Whether an athlete is learning a first legal stroke, pursuing a championship qualifying standard, preparing for collegiate swimming, continuing to compete after college, competing at the national level, or simply enjoying the camaraderie of teammates and coaches, every swimmer deserves exceptional coaching, meaningful challenges, and the opportunity to reach their fullest potential.

CHAPTER 2

Mission, Vision & Values

Mission

DCST exists to provide a year-round competitive swimming program that develops swimmers through excellent coaching, healthy competition, personal responsibility, sportsmanship, and meaningful opportunities for growth at every level of the sport.

Vision

DCST seeks to be a healthy, technically strong, inclusive, and highly competitive YMCA and USA Swimming program that serves athletes from introductory competition through collegiate, post-collegiate, and national-level swimming while preserving a lifelong connection to the sport and to the DCST community.

Enduring Values

As the competitive swimming program of the Kishwaukee Family YMCA, DCST is grounded in the YMCA's core values of Caring, Honesty, Respect, and Responsibility.

These values guide how we treat one another, how we conduct ourselves, how we make decisions, and how we represent the YMCA and the DeKalb County Swim Team.

Within competitive swimming, DCST expresses these values through four enduring principles:

Character through honesty, integrity, personal responsibility, respect for others, and doing what is right even when no one is watching.

Excellence through preparation, discipline, courage, continuous improvement, and the pursuit of each athlete's fullest potential.

Community through caring for one another, teamwork, service, volunteerism, inclusion, and a shared commitment to the success of the entire program.

Sportsmanship through respect for teammates, competitors, coaches, officials, volunteers, and the sport itself; humility in success; resilience in disappointment; and fairness in competition.

These principles are not separate from the values of the Kishwaukee Family YMCA. They are the way DCST seeks to live those values through competitive swimming.

Together, these values guide DCST in pursuing excellence, supporting teammates, competing with integrity, accepting responsibility for development, and carrying the lessons of swimming beyond the pool.

CHAPTER 3

Organizational Structure

Our Organizational Philosophy

The DeKalb County Swim Team is the competitive swimming program of the Kishwaukee Family YMCA.

DCST operates through distinct but complementary roles carried out by YMCA leadership, professional staff, athletes, volunteers, officials, families, alumni, and supporters.

Clear responsibilities, mutual respect, open communication, and accountability allow governance, professional management, coaching, athlete leadership, and volunteer service to work together without blurring authority.

Kishwaukee Family YMCA

The Kishwaukee Family YMCA is the parent organization of the DeKalb County Swim Team and provides the organizational foundation upon which the competitive swimming program operates.

- Employment of coaching and administrative staff.
- Human Resources, payroll, and employee supervision.
- Budget approval and financial oversight.
- Risk management and insurance.
- Legal and regulatory compliance.
- Facility management and scheduling.
- YMCA Membership administration.
- HR athlete/employee-protection policies.
- Long-range organizational planning.

The YMCA provides the facilities, administrative support, financial stewardship, and organizational leadership necessary for the continued success of the competitive swimming program.

The Kishwaukee Family YMCA retains responsibility for facility operations, emergency procedures, closures, severe-weather decisions, and other facility-safety requirements. DCST follows those determinations and does not maintain a separate facility-emergency system.

CHAPTER 4

Coaching Staff Organization

DCST's coaching organization is designed to provide clear professional leadership, continuity, and dependable coverage at every level of the competitive swimming program. The coaching staff operates under the leadership of the Director of Competitive Swimming / Head Coach, with defined responsibilities for the Lead Age Group Coach, Lead Developmental Coach, Assistant Coaches, and Meet Director.

DCST coaches are professional educators responsible for teaching the sport of competitive swimming and supporting the development of every athlete. Under the leadership of the Director of Competitive Swimming, coaches provide daily instruction, technical development, athlete evaluation, competition preparation, meet coaching, mentoring, safety supervision, and leadership of a positive team culture. Coaches are encouraged to pursue continuing education and maintain all credentials required for their roles.

DCST believes a strong coaching organization should not depend upon the presence of any single individual. Vacations, illness, professional development, competition schedules, and other circumstances will occasionally require staff members to assume additional responsibilities. The coaching structure is therefore designed to provide continuity of leadership and athlete supervision whenever a member of the staff is unavailable.

Director of Competitive Swimming / Head Coach

The Director of Competitive Swimming serves as the YMCA's professional administrator and Head Coach of the DeKalb County Swim Team, with responsibility for the leadership, management, operation, administration, and competitive philosophy of the program. The Director maintains a culture of excellence consistent with the mission of the Kishwaukee Family YMCA and the traditions of DCST.

The Head Coach has primary coaching responsibility for the Great Danes, Bulldog, National Team Training Group, and the Post-National training group, including their daily training, technical development, competition preparation, athlete evaluation, and long-term competitive development.

The Director establishes the program's coaching philosophy, seasonal training objectives, practice-group structure, competition calendar, athlete-development pathway, and standards for professional coaching. The Director also supervises and mentors the coaching staff, coordinates staff assignments, evaluates athlete development, oversees meet entries and relay selection, and represents DCST in its relationships with the Kishwaukee Family YMCA, USA Swimming, YMCA Competitive Swimming, Illinois Swimming, and other swimming organizations.

Responsibilities include:

- Strategic planning and competitive program administration.
- Athlete development, coaching philosophy, and seasonal training plans.
- Practice planning, implementation, and practice group placement.
- Meet scheduling, meet entries, relay selection, and competition strategy.
- Athlete evaluation and long-term development.
- Coach recruitment recommendations, mentoring, professional development, staff scheduling, and supervision.

- Team communications, official social media, media relations, program marketing, recruitment, public communications, and community engagement.
- Partnerships with USA Swimming, YMCA Competitive Swimming, Illinois Swimming, educational institutions, and community organizations.
- Equipment and technology planning.
- Budget recommendations, program growth, and innovation.
- Athlete safety and day-to-day administration of the competitive swimming program.
- Appointment and supervision, in consultation with YMCA leadership, of DCST club administrative and system-access roles.

Club-Level Appointments and Administrative Access

The Director of Competitive Swimming appoints, supervises, and may remove or replace individuals in DCST's club-level administrative and system-access roles, in consultation with designated YMCA leadership and subject to applicable YMCA personnel, volunteer, risk-management, and information-security policies.

Covered roles include the USA Swimming Club Administrator, Club Registrar, Club Meet Director, OME Administrator, OTS Administrator, and any DCST-controlled permission for Meet Edit, Times Upload, member administration, registration, reporting, or comparable access.

Assignments shall reflect operational need, qualifications, governing-body requirements, separation of duties, and least privilege. Access shall be reviewed annually and when responsibilities change, and removed when an appointment or need ends. Advisory Board office, officiating certification, prior service, employment history, or volunteer status does not independently confer a DCST role or system access.

The YMCA may maintain backup access. The Director's authority is limited to DCST roles and does not extend to external personnel, sanctions, certification requirements, or meet-official assignments.

The Director is accountable to the Kishwaukee Family YMCA for the successful operation and continued development of the competitive swimming program. Professional coaching and operational decisions are entrusted to the Director because they require technical expertise, objective evaluation, professional accountability, and long-term planning.

Lead (Head) Age Group Coach

The **Lead Age Group Coach (LAGC)** serves as the senior assistant coach and **First Assistant to the Director of Competitive Swimming / Head Coach**.

The Lead Age Group Coach provides leadership for DCST's age-group program and works closely with the Director to ensure that training, technical instruction, athlete development, and competition preparation remain consistent throughout the program.

The LAGC assists in mentoring other coaches, coordinating age-group practices, evaluating swimmers, recommending practice-group advancement, communicating with swimmers and families, and supporting the implementation of the Director's long-term athlete-development philosophy.

When the Director is unavailable because of vacation, illness, travel, competition responsibilities, or another temporary absence, the Lead Age Group Coach ordinarily serves as the Director's primary coaching substitute and assumes appropriate day-to-day coaching responsibilities until the Director returns.

This designation provides continuity of leadership without altering the Director's ultimate administrative responsibility for the program.

Lead (Head) Developmental Coach

The **Lead Developmental Coach (LDC)** provides leadership for DCST's introductory and developmental swimming programs and serves as the **First Assistant to the Lead Age Group Coach**.

The Lead Developmental Coach is responsible for helping establish the technical foundation upon which future competitive development is built. The LDC emphasizes stroke development, water confidence, starts and turns, appropriate practice habits, sportsmanship, team culture, and the successful transition of swimmers into more advanced training groups.

The Lead Developmental Coach also helps coordinate and mentor assistant coaches working with developmental swimmers and communicates regularly with the Lead Age Group Coach and Director regarding athlete progress and readiness for advancement.

When the Lead Age Group Coach is unavailable, the Lead Developmental Coach ordinarily serves as the LAGC's primary coaching substitute for appropriate age-group responsibilities.

Because continuity works in both directions, the **Director of Competitive Swimming / Head Coach serves as the primary coaching substitute for the Lead Developmental Coach** when necessary. This reciprocal coverage allows developmental programming to continue under experienced professional leadership when the LDC is unavailable.

Accordingly, the principal coaching coverage structure is:

Director / Head Coach → Lead Age Group Coach → Lead Developmental Coach

with the Lead Age Group Coach serving as the Director's primary substitute, the Lead Developmental Coach serving as the Lead Age Group Coach's primary substitute, and the Director serving as the primary substitute for the Lead Developmental Coach when necessary.

This structure is intended to provide reliable professional coverage rather than create rigid boundaries between coaches. Assistant Coaches may also assume temporary coverage duties when assigned, and temporary coverage does not change permanent positions or reporting relationships.

Assistant Coaches

Assistant Coaches support the Director, Lead Age Group Coach, and Lead Developmental Coach in the daily instruction and supervision of DCST swimmers.

Assistant Coaches may be assigned to particular practice groups, lanes, technical areas, meets, clinics, or special programs based upon their experience, certifications, availability, and the needs of the team.

Their responsibilities may include technical instruction, practice supervision, starts and turns, athlete feedback, meet coaching, safety supervision, and other duties assigned by the appropriate lead coach or Director.

DCST encourages Assistant Coaches to continue developing professionally and to gain experience across different levels of the program. The Lead Developmental Coach, Lead Age Group Coach, and Director share responsibility for mentoring Assistant Coaches and helping prepare qualified staff members for increased coaching responsibility.

Meet Director

The **Meet Director** is a designated DCST/YMCA staff role, filled by the Director of Competitive Swimming or the Director's designee responsible for the planning, administration, and operational execution of swim meets hosted by the DeKalb County Swim Team.

The Meet Director works in coordination with the Director of Competitive Swimming but has primary responsibility for **meet operations** so that the coaching staff can remain focused on coaching athletes and managing competition.

The Meet Director's responsibilities include coordinating host-meet preparation, facility requirements, operational timelines, meet files and administrative entries required to conduct the hosted competition, equipment and technology, communications with visiting teams and officials, meet set-up and tear-down, and other operational requirements necessary to conduct a safe, efficient, and professionally managed competition. The Meet Director does not determine DCST swimmer event selection, relay selection, or competition strategy; those remain professional coaching responsibilities under the Director of Competitive Swimming.

The Meet Director or their designee (volunteer coordinator) also has responsibility for the organization and supervision of **Meet Operations Volunteers**.

Timers, safety marshals, announcers, computer operators, timing-system personnel, admissions workers, meet administrative personnel, set-up and tear-down volunteers, equipment and technical-support volunteers, and other operational meet assignments work under the direction of the Meet Director or the Meet Director's designated operational supervisors.

Certified officials retain the independent authority and responsibilities assigned to them under the applicable rules of competition. The Meet Director coordinates operational support for officials but does not interfere with officiating judgments or the authority of the Meet Referee.

Fundraising, hospitality, social activities, and other non-operational volunteer functions may continue to be coordinated through the DCST Advisory Board and Volunteer Coordinator. This separation allows the **Meet Director to manage the competition itself while volunteer leadership supports the broader team experience.**

One Coaching Staff

Although individual coaches have different areas of responsibility, DCST operates as **one coaching staff serving one competitive swimming program.**

The Director provides overall leadership. The Lead Age Group Coach provides senior coaching support and age-group leadership. The Lead Developmental Coach provides leadership for the foundation of the competitive program. Assistant Coaches provide instruction and support throughout the team. The Meet Director provides professional leadership for hosted-meet operations.

Together, this structure creates clear responsibility, meaningful opportunities for coach development, dependable staff coverage, and continuity for swimmers throughout the DeKalb County Swim Team.

CHAPTER 5

DCST Advisory Board

Purpose

The DCST Advisory Board serves as the volunteer advisory and support organization for the DeKalb County Swim Team.

Working collaboratively with the Director of Competitive Swimming and the Kishwaukee Family YMCA, the Advisory Board promotes volunteerism, fundraising, hospitality, community engagement, and initiatives that strengthen the competitive swimming program.

The Advisory Board exists to support the mission of DCST by enhancing the experience of swimmers, coaches, officials, volunteers, alumni, families, and supporters. It is an advisory body and does not govern the competitive swimming program or supervise professional staff.

Membership

Membership on the Advisory Board is open to individuals committed to supporting the mission and goals of DCST. Membership may include parents and guardians of current swimmers, adult swimmers, alumni, certified officials, community volunteers, individuals with professional expertise beneficial to the program, and other individuals whose experience and service support the continued success of DCST.

The Advisory Board should strive to represent a variety of practice groups, competitive levels, backgrounds, and experiences. Board members shall comply with applicable Kishwaukee Family YMCA volunteer policies. Additional certifications, registrations, background screening, or governing-body memberships are required only when mandated for a specific volunteer assignment. Membership on the Advisory Board alone does not require USA Swimming non-athlete membership, SafeSport training, or other credentials unless those credentials are specifically required for the duties being performed.

Athlete Representation

Current adult swimmers may serve as voting members of the Advisory Board. The Director of Competitive Swimming may also appoint one or more Junior Athlete Representatives to serve in a non-voting advisory capacity. Athlete representatives may attend meetings, participate in discussion, represent swimmer perspectives, assist with leadership initiatives and special projects, and strengthen communication between athletes and program leadership.

Officers

Typical officers include Chair, Vice Chair (Volunteer Coordinator), Secretary, and Treasurer. Additional officer positions or committee chairs may be established as program needs evolve.

Standing Committees

The Advisory Board maintains standing committees to provide continuity in recurring areas of volunteer responsibility. Standing committees operate under the Advisory Board bylaws and within the guidelines of this handbook, applicable Kishwaukee Family YMCA policies, and current DCST seasonal schedules and materials. Committee chairs should report regularly to the Advisory Board and coordinate closely with the appropriate executive officer and the Director of Competitive Swimming.

whenever committee work affects team operations, coaching priorities, fundraising, or program resources.

Equipment Exchange Committee

The Equipment Exchange Committee is a standing committee of the Advisory Board responsible for administering the DCST Swim Equipment Exchange Program in coordination with the Director of Competitive Swimming.

Swim Equipment Exchange Program

Competitive swimming requires specialized training equipment that changes as swimmers grow and advance. To reduce unnecessary costs and promote responsible stewardship, DCST maintains a Swim Equipment Exchange Program.

Swimmers and families are encouraged to donate clean, gently used, and serviceable equipment that is no longer needed, including fins, kickboards, pull buoys, hand paddles, center-mounted snorkels, mesh equipment bags, resistance equipment, swim caps, and other approved training items.

All DCST swimmers are encouraged to use available donated equipment whenever the need arises, including when trying new equipment, replacing outgrown items, borrowing a forgotten training item, meeting a temporary need, or reducing equipment costs.

The Equipment Exchange Committee oversees collection, inspection, organization, and distribution so that donated items are clean, serviceable, and suitable for use. The Director of Competitive Swimming or appropriate coaching staff may determine whether particular equipment is appropriate for an individual swimmer or training group. Borrowed or outgrown equipment may be returned or donated whenever practical so that it can continue to benefit other DCST swimmers.

Give when you are able. Receive when you have a need.

Scholarship & Financial Assistance Fundraising Committee

The Scholarship & Financial Assistance Fundraising Committee is a standing committee dedicated to expanding access to competitive swimming for swimmers with demonstrated financial need. The committee may organize approved fundraising campaigns, sponsorship efforts, donor outreach, special events, and other initiatives that build resources for scholarships and financial assistance for DCST specific fees and charges consistent with currently maintained Kishwaukee YMCA scholarship policies.

Because financial need involves confidential personal and financial information, the committee does not independently determine eligibility for assistance or make individual scholarship awards.

Applications, need determinations, account adjustments, and disbursements are administered through the applicable Kishwaukee Family YMCA processes in coordination with the Director of Competitive Swimming. The committee's role is to raise and steward resources so that financial circumstances do not unnecessarily prevent qualified swimmers from participating in DCST.

YMCA Nationals Fundraising Committee

The YMCA Nationals Fundraising Committee is a standing committee dedicated to supporting DCST athletes who qualify for and participate in YMCA National Championship competition. The committee may organize approved fundraising campaigns, sponsorship efforts, donor outreach, special events, and other initiatives to support approved team expenses associated with DCST participation at YMCA Nationals.

Funds raised for YMCA Nationals are team-designated funds and are not direct cash awards or individual scholarships to swimmers or families. Subject to donor restrictions and Kishwaukee Family YMCA financial procedures, YMCA Nationals funds shall be applied in the following order of priority: first, to offset approved team travel expenses; second, to offset approved team hotel and lodging expenses; and third, to offset approved team meal expenses. The funds are administered through the Kishwaukee Family YMCA in coordination with the Director of Competitive Swimming for the benefit of the YMCA Nationals team and shall be used for those approved team purposes in that order of priority.

The committee does not determine athlete eligibility, qualifying status, meet entries, relay assignments, team selection, travel rosters, or competition strategy. Those responsibilities remain with the Director of Competitive Swimming and the applicable governing organizations. The committee exists to strengthen the team experience by helping make YMCA National Championship participation more financially sustainable for DCST athletes and the program as a whole.

Coaches' Equipment Wish List Committee

The Coaches' Equipment Wish List Committee is a standing committee that works with the Director of Competitive Swimming and coaching staff to support equipment, technology, and training resources identified by the coaches as priorities for the program. The Director and coaching staff are responsible for identifying and prioritizing the wish list based upon athlete development, safety, competitive needs, facility considerations, and the long-term direction of DCST.

The committee may organize approved fundraising, sponsorships, donor campaigns, in-kind contributions, and other initiatives to help acquire items on the wish list. The committee does not independently determine coaching or equipment priorities and does not make purchases outside applicable YMCA approval procedures. All acquisitions are coordinated with the Director and administered in accordance with Kishwaukee Family YMCA financial and purchasing policies.

Additional Committees

The Advisory Board may establish additional standing or special committees for volunteer coordination, hospitality, officials, fundraising, sponsorship development, team apparel, community outreach, alumni relations, technology, athlete recognition, special events, and other appropriate projects. Additional committees may be created, modified, or dissolved as program needs evolve, subject to the Advisory Board bylaws and the responsibilities established in this handbook.

Bylaws and Internal Operations

The Advisory Board maintains its own bylaws and internal operating structure governing matters such as officer duties, elections, meetings, committees, voting procedures, and other matters of Board administration. The Board may organize and revise its internal procedures as program needs evolve, every effort will be made to ensure that those bylaws and procedures remain consistent with this handbook, applicable Kishwaukee Family YMCA policies, and current DCST seasonal schedules and materials when appropriate.

The Advisory Board's bylaws and internal structure are intended to support effective volunteer leadership without changing the responsibilities assigned elsewhere in this handbook. They may not transfer professional coaching, personnel, financial approval, athlete safety, or day-to-day program authority away from the individuals or organizations responsible for those functions.

Meetings and Director Participation

The Advisory Board should meet regularly throughout the year to conduct business, coordinate volunteer activities, and discuss initiatives supporting the program. Meetings are generally open to current DCST members and families except when confidential matters require executive session. Meeting agendas and approved minutes should be made available whenever practical.

The Director of Competitive Swimming serves as an ex officio, non-voting member of the Advisory Board. The Director may present program updates, recommend strategic priorities, receive recommendations and feedback, coordinate volunteer initiatives, answer questions, and participate in discussion, but does not vote in Board elections, officer selection, or internal governance matters.

The relationship between the Director and the Advisory Board's executive officers is especially important to the successful operation of DCST. Although the Director and Board officers have distinct responsibilities, they share a common obligation to keep the program organized, responsive, and moving toward its long-term goals. Close communication, mutual trust, timely exchange of information, and coordinated planning are therefore expected as part of each role.

The Director is expected to prioritize attendance at regularly scheduled Advisory Board meetings whenever reasonably possible. Coaching responsibilities, competition travel, illness, or other unavoidable circumstances may occasionally prevent attendance, but regular participation by the Director should be the norm because it allows professional staff and volunteer leadership to plan together, identify needs early, and resolve routine issues before they become larger problems.

Between meetings, the Director and the executive officers, as defined by the Advisory Board's bylaws, should maintain regular direct communication. During active portions of the competitive season, that communication may occur daily as needed regarding team operations, volunteer coordination, fundraising, special events, equipment and program needs, communications, and other matters requiring cooperation between professional and volunteer leadership. Executive officers are likewise expected to communicate promptly with the Director about Board activities that may affect team operations.

This close working relationship does not alter the Advisory Board's advisory status or the Director's professional authority. Rather, it recognizes that the Director and executive officers can fulfill their individual duties most effectively when they also work together to fulfill their collective responsibility to strengthen the DeKalb County Swim Team.

Advisory Role

The Advisory Board serves as a forum for constructive dialogue among swimmers, families, supporters, volunteers, officials, alumni, the Director of Competitive Swimming, and the Kishwaukee Family YMCA. Recommendations are welcomed and thoughtfully considered by the Director and YMCA leadership. While recommendations are advisory in nature, the Director and YMCA leadership are encouraged to carefully consider them and provide appropriate feedback whenever practical.

DCST believes the best decisions are made through open communication, thoughtful discussion, professional expertise, and mutual respect.

Organizational Responsibilities

The Advisory Board does not direct or supervise coaching philosophy, athlete development, practice planning, practice group placement, meet schedules, meet entries, relay selection, competition strategy, coach hiring or supervision, personnel matters, athlete discipline administered by the coaching staff,

SafeSport investigations, or day-to-day operation of the competitive swimming program. These responsibilities remain with the Director of Competitive Swimming under the supervision of the Kishwaukee Family YMCA.

The Advisory Board does not appoint or remove club-level administrators or system-access personnel. Those appointments—including Club Administrator, Club Registrar, Club Meet Director, OME Administrator, and OTS Administrator—are made by the Director of Competitive Swimming in consultation with appropriate Kishwaukee Family YMCA leadership.

The Advisory Board does not independently direct or control DCST marketing, official social media accounts, press releases, official public statements, or other official public communications. Advisory Board officers, committees, and volunteers may prepare and distribute communications within their assigned responsibilities consistent with the Media, Marketing & Official Communications chapter of this handbook.

Likewise, the Director values the experience, ideas, and volunteer leadership provided by the Advisory Board and recognizes its important role in strengthening the program.

Financial Stewardship

The Advisory Board and its standing committees may organize fundraising activities and support projects that enhance the competitive swimming program. Funds raised through Advisory Board initiatives should support priorities such as athlete development, equipment and technology, coach education, scholarships and financial assistance, volunteer support, athlete recognition, special projects, and other initiatives consistent with the mission of DCST.

The Director of Competitive Swimming is responsible for identifying operational priorities and program needs. Fundraising priorities should be developed collaboratively between the Director and the Advisory Board, and all expenditures shall be administered in accordance with Kishwaukee Family YMCA financial policies and approval procedures.

Elections and Terms

Officers shall be elected annually by the Advisory Board. Terms ordinarily begin at the start of the competitive swimming season unless otherwise established by the Board. Vacancies may be filled by appointment until the next regular election, and officers may serve consecutive terms when re-elected.

The YMCA governs. The Director manages. The Advisory Board advises and supports. Athletes have a meaningful voice.

Every decision should ultimately be guided by one question: What best serves our swimmers and strengthens the long-term success of the DeKalb County Swim Team?

CHAPTER 6

Registration Policies

Registration

Registration for each competitive season is completed through the official DCST online registration system. Returning swimmers are encouraged to register early to assist with practice planning, coach scheduling, practice group assignments, meet planning, and program administration. New swimmers may participate in an evaluation before final practice group placement.

Registration is considered complete when required registration forms have been submitted, required memberships have been verified, emergency and medical information has been completed, financial arrangements have been established, and the swimmer has been assigned to an appropriate practice group.

Optional Contributions at Registration

At registration, swimmers and families may make a voluntary one-time contribution to one or more currently designated DCST support purposes. Contributions are entirely optional and are governed by the Voluntary Designated Contributions policy in Chapter 7.

Required Memberships

Kishwaukee Family YMCA Membership

Participation in DCST requires an active Kishwaukee Family YMCA membership. Information regarding membership categories and current rates is maintained by the YMCA and published separately from this permanent handbook.

USA Swimming Membership

DCST is a member club of USA Swimming. Swimmers participating in USA Swimming-sanctioned practices or competitions must maintain current USA Swimming athlete membership as required by governing-body rules. USA Swimming membership fees are established externally and are separate from DCST program fees.

YMCA Competitive Swimming

DCST also participates in YMCA Competitive Swimming. Eligibility for YMCA Championship competition is governed by current YMCA Competitive Swimming rules, including applicable qualifying standards, participation requirements, and eligibility provisions. Swimmers and families should consult current governing-body information before championship competition. Athletes who are outside YMCA championship eligibility may continue to pursue appropriate competition through DCST's USA Swimming pathway, including the Post-National training group when appropriate.

Current registration dates, trial opportunities, membership rates, incentives, and other time-sensitive information are published separately in seasonal registration materials.

CHAPTER 7

Financial Policies

Our Philosophy

The DeKalb County Swim Team is committed to providing a professionally managed, financially responsible, and accessible competitive swimming program. The program is committed to transparency, fairness, open communication, and responsible financial stewardship.

Program and Practice Group Fees

Program fees are based upon the swimmer's assigned practice group and support professional coaching, facility usage, equipment, administration, insurance, program operations, athlete development, coach education, and other approved operating expenses. Current fee amounts are published before each season in the annual fee schedule and are not fixed in this handbook.

Seasonal Registration Fee

A seasonal registration fee may be assessed to offset registration systems, athlete records, website administration, team communications, governing-body administration, and program management. Current amounts are published with annual registration materials.

Meet Entry Fees

Meet participation is voluntary as provided in Chapter 11. Swimmers and families who elect to participate are responsible for individual meet-entry fees and the related transportation, lodging, meals, and personal or incidental expenses of participation, except where DCST or the Kishwaukee Family YMCA expressly provides otherwise. Meet entry fees are separate from monthly program fees and may include individual event fees, facility surcharges, governing-body assessments, host-team administrative fees, and other competition expenses. Relay entry fees are generally paid by DCST as part of the team's commitment to relay competition. Only events accepted by the host organization will be billed.

Billing Procedures and Payment Options

Program fees are generally billed monthly through the Kishwaukee Family YMCA/ DCST platforms. Meet fees, apparel purchases, special events, camps, clinics, and other optional activities may be billed separately as incurred. Payment methods are established by the YMCA and may include ACH, credit card, debit card, cash, check, or other approved methods. Any payment incentives or discounts are announced in current seasonal materials.

Voluntary Designated Contributions

As part of the seasonal registration and payment process, each swimmer or family may make a voluntary one-time donation in addition to required registration and program fees. The donation is not recurring and creates no future financial obligation. All contributions will be received and administered through applicable Kishwaukee Family YMCA financial procedures. Any charitable-contribution acknowledgment will be provided in accordance with YMCA policy and applicable law.

Donors may direct their contribution to one or more approved DCST support purposes, including the YMCA Nationals Fund, the Coaches' Equipment Wish List, scholarship and financial assistance for swimmers with demonstrated need, or other designated funds and initiatives approved by the Kishwaukee Family YMCA. YMCA Nationals Fund contributions are team-designated funds, not

direct payments to individual swimmers or families, and are applied to approved team expenses in the following order of priority: team travel, team hotel and lodging, and then team meals. All donations will be received and administered through applicable YMCA financial procedures and used for the designated purpose consistent with those procedures.

Making or declining a donation will have no effect on a swimmer's registration, practice group placement, meet entries, relay selection, coaching decisions, eligibility, access to financial assistance, or any other aspect of participation in DCST.

Volunteer Participation Credits

Volunteer Participation Credits earned through approved DCST volunteer service are applied directly to the swimmer or family account and may be used toward one on one individual coaching fees. Credits are intended to recognize service, have no cash value, and are not transferable unless specifically approved by the Director and YMCA leadership. Current credit amounts for DCST one on one coaching are published with seasonal volunteer information.

DCST especially encourages swimmers and families to earn and use Volunteer Participation Credits to expand individual development opportunities with one-on-one coaching sessions throughout the swim season. This use allows volunteer service to be reinvested directly in the swimmer while also supporting DCST coaches and strengthening communication and shared understanding of the swimmer's developmental needs and progress.

Financial Assistance

The Kishwaukee Family YMCA and DCST believe financial circumstances should not unnecessarily prevent participation in competitive swimming. Swimmers and families experiencing financial hardship are encouraged to contact the YMCA or Director of Competitive Swimming to discuss available need-based scholarships, financial assistance, payment arrangements, or other approved resources. Requests will be handled respectfully and confidentially. The Advisory Board's Scholarship & Financial Assistance Fundraising Committee supports fundraising for these resources but does not determine individual eligibility or receive confidential applicant information except as expressly authorized by the YMCA.

Billing Questions

Questions regarding account balances, billing statements, payments, refunds, credits, financial assistance, or payment arrangements should be directed to the Director of Competitive Swimming or their designee.

Delinquent Accounts

Swimmers and families experiencing temporary financial difficulty are encouraged to contact the Director of Competitive Swimming or their designee as early as possible. Whenever practical, reasonable payment arrangements may be considered before an account becomes significantly delinquent. Participation restrictions should be viewed as a last resort rather than a first response, with the goal of resolving financial matters promptly while preserving opportunities to continue participating whenever reasonably possible.

Withdrawals and Refunds

Anyone planning to withdraw from the program should notify the Director of Competitive Swimming as soon as practical. Program fees already billed or attributable to periods of participation generally are

not refundable. Meet entry fees may not be refundable after host-team deadlines. Unused prepaid amounts or other charges may be adjusted when appropriate based upon timing, meet deadlines, expenses already incurred, governing-body fees, and extraordinary circumstances. Refund determinations are made in accordance with Kishwaukee Family YMCA financial policies.

Extraordinary Circumstances

The YMCA recognizes that injuries, illnesses, family emergencies, military service, relocation, and other unforeseen circumstances may affect participation. Whenever practical, reasonable accommodations, payment arrangements, account adjustments, or other solutions will be considered on an individual basis with fairness, compassion, and responsible stewardship of program resources.

Financial Transparency

Before each competitive season, current registration fees, practice group fees, meet entry fees, apparel information, equipment recommendations, volunteer participation credits, scholarship opportunities, payment options, and registration deadlines will be published through the official registration system, team website, or current Season Guide.

CHAPTER 8

Bickner Family Scholarship

Purpose and Legacy

The Bickner family has a longstanding relationship with the Kishwaukee Family YMCA and the DeKalb County Swim Team. The family recognizes the important role the YMCA and DCST play in providing young people opportunities to compete, instilling strong values, and giving swimmers a foundation and skills that can contribute to success in future endeavors.

The Bickner Family Scholarship recognizes a graduating DCST swimmer who has demonstrated dedication and commitment to the program and who reflects the values emphasized by the Kishwaukee Family YMCA. It is a college scholarship and is separate from need-based financial assistance for participation in DCST.

Scholarship Award

The scholarship provides a \$1,000 annual award to an eligible DCST high school senior swimmer. The recipient is announced and the scholarship is presented in connection with the DCST Winter Swim Banquet.

Eligibility Criteria

- The applicant must be a DCST high school senior swimmer.
- The applicant must plan to enroll as a full-time student at an accredited college or university in the fall.
- The applicant must have demonstrated dedication and commitment to competing in swimming at DCST.

Application Requirements

Applicants must submit an essay of 500 to 2,500 words addressing the scholarship prompt. Applications may be submitted electronically or in paper form to the swim office in accordance with the current submission instructions published on the official DCST Bickner Family Scholarship page and in current seasonal materials.

Scholarship Essay Prompt

The scholarship materials identify the Kishwaukee Family YMCA core values as Honesty, Respect, Care, and Responsibility. Applicants are asked to explain how their experience with DCST helped instill one or more of those values in their lives. The scholarship is intended to recognize a high school senior swimmer who demonstrates and upholds those values.

Previous Recipients

- Nicole Skrzypek
- Hannah Raetzke
- Ana Hall

The official DCST scholarship page provides the program's published scholarship information and current application materials: [Bickner Family Scholarship](#)

CHAPTER 9

Team Banquet, Awards & Recognition

The DCST team banquet provides an opportunity to celebrate the accomplishments, growth, service, and contributions of swimmers, coaches, volunteers, officials, families, and supporters throughout the competitive season.

Athlete Performance and Development Awards

Awards recognizing **swimming performance, competitive achievement, improvement, technical development, training progress, or other aspects of athlete development** shall be selected by the DCST coaching staff under the leadership of the Director of Competitive Swimming.

The appropriate Lead Coach may recommend award recipients. Final responsibility for athlete performance and development awards rests with the Director of Competitive Swimming.

Performance and development awards are professional coaching determinations and are not selected by the DCST Advisory Board.

DCST Team Records & Bickner Family Pool Records

DCST maintains an official team record display in the lobby of the Bickner Family Pool at the Kishwaukee Family YMCA. The display shall be maintained as a current and visible record of the fastest recognized performances by DCST swimmers in designated events.

Only official times eligible for entry into the USA Swimming times database may be recognized as DCST team records or Bickner Family Pool records. Practice times, informal time trials, or other unofficial performances that are not eligible for entry into the USA Swimming times database are not record-eligible.

Before each season-ending DCST banquet, the Director of Competitive Swimming shall ensure that the DCST team record display is reviewed and updated to reflect all verified team records established through the conclusion of that season. Each DCST swimmer who establishes a new team record during the season shall be recognized at the banquet by the Director and the appropriate Lead Coach and presented with a framed commemorative photograph identifying the swimmer, event, time, and record achieved.

DCST shall also establish and maintain official Bickner Family Pool records, displayed in the pool lobby or another appropriate location within the pool area. Pool records shall reflect the fastest verified, record-eligible performances achieved in the Bickner Family Pool. When a DCST swimmer establishes a new Bickner Family Pool record during a season, that swimmer shall receive the same banquet recognition and framed commemorative photograph.

The Director shall make every reasonable effort to reconstruct and maintain the historical Bickner Family Pool records from all available reliable records and official results to date. The Director may use official meet results, USA Swimming records, YMCA records, DCST archives, published results, and other reliable documentation in establishing the historical record. If more reliable official information later becomes available, the record display may be corrected accordingly.

Advisory Board Role

The Advisory Board may assist with the planning, administration, sponsorship, presentation, and celebration of the team banquet and awards program. The Advisory Board may also establish or select

recipients for volunteer, service, community, alumni, and other non-performance recognition consistent with its bylaws and this handbook.

Bickner Family Scholarship

The Bickner Family Scholarship may also be presented at the Winter Swim Banquet in accordance with the separate Bickner Family Scholarship chapter of this handbook.

Seasonal Banquet Information

Current banquet dates, locations, award categories, event information, and other seasonal details shall be published through the applicable Annual or Seasonal Documents.

CHAPTER 10

Practice Groups & Program Organization

Our Coaching Philosophy

DCST offers progressive training groups designed to meet swimmers where they are in their athletic development while providing a clear pathway for continued growth and improvement. Every swimmer develops at a different pace. Our coaching philosophy emphasizes long-term athlete development, technical excellence, healthy training habits, personal responsibility, sportsmanship, and a lifelong enjoyment of competitive swimming.

Every swimmer deserves to be challenged appropriately, supported consistently, and encouraged to become the very best version of themselves.

Success is measured not only by faster times and championship performances, but by confidence, discipline, resilience, leadership, responsibility, and personal growth.

Families and supporters are encouraged to celebrate effort, improvement, commitment, sportsmanship, and personal growth as enthusiastically as times, records, medals, and championships. Competitive swimming is a long-term developmental sport, and lasting success is built through patience, perseverance, perspective, and consistent effort over time.

DCST promotes evidence-informed training, age- and ability-appropriate progression, sound recovery habits, hydration, nutrition, strength and dryland development, and responsible communication about athlete readiness. The goal is to pursue speed through health, championships through development, and long-term performance through sustainable training.

Practice Group Placement

Practice group assignments are determined by the Director of Competitive Swimming and coaching staff. Placement may consider skill development, technical proficiency, training readiness, age and maturity, attendance and commitment, competitive goals, long-term athlete development, team balance, and available lane space.

Group assignments may change as swimmers demonstrate readiness for increased training or new competitive opportunities. Official times may serve as useful guidelines, but placement decisions are not based solely upon age or race times. The coaching staff evaluates the complete athlete and strives to place every swimmer in the training environment best suited to continued development.

Individual Advancement Benchmarks, Goal Times, and Readiness Assessments

To provide swimmers and families with clear, measurable development goals, the Director of Competitive Swimming / Head Coach or the appropriate lead coach may establish individualized advancement benchmarks for a swimmer. In the exercise of professional coaching judgment, the coach may select, combine, emphasize, revise, replace, or discontinue reasonable objective benchmarks as the swimmer develops. Benchmarks need not be identical for every swimmer or training group and do not create universal team cut times.

Objective benchmarks may include one or more achievable goal times in selected strokes, events, distances, or courses; repeat-time or interval performance within assigned sets; the ability to maintain a designated pace or technique under fatigue; legal stroke, start, and turn standards; attendance and practice habits; training consistency; dryland readiness; or other measurable indicators appropriate to the swimmer's current development and the demands of the proposed next group. The coach may

determine which benchmarks are most useful, how they will be measured, and the relative importance of each benchmark.

Goal times may be established or evaluated through official competition results or documented coach-administered assessments. A coach-administered assessment may include a timed swim, practice evaluation, controlled time trial, test set, supervised trial practice, or another appropriate evaluation selected by the coach. A time recorded during a coach-administered assessment may be used for practice-group advancement purposes even though it is not an official USA Swimming, YMCA, high school, or other sanctioned competition time and may not be used for meet entry, records, relay selection, qualifying standards, or another purpose requiring an official time.

As part of the assessment, the coach may evaluate whether the swimmer is reasonably prepared to safely and satisfactorily complete the assigned training sets of the proposed next group. This evaluation may consider training volume, interval requirements, pace expectations, repetition consistency, stroke technique under fatigue, starts and turns, dryland expectations, effort, recovery, the ability to follow instructions, and the ability to remain productively engaged throughout practice. When appropriate, the coach may use a supervised test set or trial participation in all or part of a practice with the proposed next group.

Whenever reasonably practicable, the coach will communicate the swimmer's current benchmarks to the swimmer and family so they understand the principal goals being used to evaluate continued development. Benchmarks may be adjusted when progress, injury, maturity, training needs, competition opportunities, or changes in group expectations make an adjustment appropriate.

Achieving an individualized goal time or other benchmark is evidence of progress but does not, by itself, require or guarantee advancement. The coaching staff will consider the swimmer's complete readiness, including legal and reliable stroke technique, ability to safely and satisfactorily perform the next group's assigned training, attendance, effort, maturity, coachability, personal responsibility, and readiness for the competitive expectations of the group. Available lane space and the overall operational needs of the training groups may also be considered.

If a swimmer achieves an assigned goal time or other principal benchmark but is not yet ready to advance, the appropriate lead coach or Head Coach will communicate the remaining areas of development to the swimmer and family and provide updated goals or a reasonable opportunity for reevaluation. Final practice-group placement remains a professional coaching decision under the authority of the Director of Competitive Swimming / Head Coach.

Practice Attendance & Scheduling Flexibility

Consistent practice attendance is one of the strongest predictors of long-term improvement. Swimmers are encouraged to attend scheduled practices whenever reasonably possible, with expectations naturally increasing as athletes advance to higher levels of training and competition.

DCST recognizes that athletes and families balance academics, employment, transportation, school activities, religious commitments, community involvement, family obligations, illness, vacations, and other legitimate circumstances. Open communication is encouraged, and the Director and coaching staff will work collaboratively with swimmers and families on reasonable scheduling needs whenever circumstances permit while maintaining the integrity of the training plan, fairness to other athletes, and the safe and effective operation of the team.

Illness, Injury, and Training Readiness

Swimmers are encouraged to communicate promptly with coaching staff when illness, injury, physical limitations, medication effects, or other health concerns may affect safe participation. Coaches may modify or stop training when necessary for immediate safety and may request appropriate medical clearance when required by YMCA policy or governing-body rules.

Program Groups & Designations

Terrier and Golden Retriever Groups

These introductory groups emphasize water confidence, stroke fundamentals, legal technique, starts and turns, water safety, practice habits, sportsmanship, and team culture.

Greyhound Group

Greyhound swimmers continue developing all four competitive strokes while introducing structured training, goal setting, aerobic development, race preparation, and increased independence.

Husky, St. Bernard, Labrador, and Newfoundland Groups

These progressive age-group training groups bridge developmental and advanced competitive swimming. Athletes continue improving technical proficiency while gradually increasing training volume, endurance, race strategy, dryland preparation, leadership, and personal accountability as they become ready for more demanding training and championship opportunities.

Great Dane Group

The Great Dane Group provides a developmental pathway for older or newer competitive swimmers who are still learning and refining all four competitive strokes or who are not yet ready for the training demands of the Bulldog group. Training emphasizes technical development, race skills, training readiness, confidence, and a successful transition into advanced senior swimming.

Bulldog Group

This advanced senior training group prepare athletes for championship-level competition through advanced race strategy, aerobic and anaerobic conditioning, dryland strength and conditioning, leadership, accountability, and long-term athlete development.

National Team Recognition

The DCST National Team is a permanent recognition of national-level competitive achievement within the program. National Team membership is earned by achieving a YMCA National qualifying time standard while representing the DeKalb County Swim Team.

National Team membership recognizes an athlete who has achieved a nationally recognized performance standard, regardless of age or eligibility to compete at the YMCA National Championships. A swimmer may therefore earn National Team status by achieving the applicable YMCA National time standard even when age or another eligibility rule prevents participation in the meet itself.

Once a National Team member, always a National Team member.

Once earned, National Team recognition is permanent and is not revoked because of age, graduation, changes in training group, later team affiliation, or future competitive results.

National Team members represent the highest traditions of DCST and are expected to lead by example through integrity, humility, sportsmanship, leadership, respect, commitment to excellence, and positive support of other swimmers.

National Team membership does not automatically determine practice group placement and is separate from Post-National membership. A swimmer may be both a permanent DCST National Team member and a current Post-National athlete. Training assignments remain the responsibility of the Director of Competitive Swimming and coaching staff and are based upon what best supports each athlete's continued development and the overall success of the team.

National Team Training Group

DCST may maintain a seasonal National Team Training Group for swimmers whose current training needs and competitive goals warrant that assignment. Placement in the training group is a professional coaching decision and is separate from permanent National Team recognition. Earning National Team recognition does not automatically require or guarantee placement in the National Team Training Group, and movement into or out of the training group does not affect a swimmer's permanent National Team status. Current training-group schedules, fees, equipment requirements, and other seasonal operating details are published in the applicable seasonal documents.

National Team Legacy

DCST athletes have progressed from local and state competition to collegiate swimming and many of the nation's premier events, including the TYR Pro Swim Series, USA Swimming National Championships, U.S. Open Championships, and the U.S. Olympic Team Trials. Every swimmer who earns National Team membership becomes a permanent part of that history and tradition.

DCST YMCA National Team Hall of Fame

The DeKalb County Swim Team maintains the DCST YMCA National Team Hall of Fame as a permanent recognition of every swimmer who has achieved a YMCA National qualifying time standard while representing DCST.

The Hall of Fame will include a maintained listing of all verified past and present DCST swimmers who earned a YMCA National qualifying standard while representing the team. Membership in the Hall of Fame is based upon achieving the qualifying standard and does not depend upon whether the swimmer was otherwise eligible to participate in, or actually competed at, a YMCA National Championship meet.

The official Hall of Fame listing will be maintained and displayed in the lobby of the Bickner Pool at the Kishwaukee Family YMCA together with the official DCST team records. Team records may change as new performances are achieved; Hall of Fame recognition is permanent and cumulative.

Each future swimmer who achieves a YMCA National qualifying time standard while representing DCST shall have the swimmer's name permanently added to the DCST YMCA National Team Hall of Fame. Once added, the swimmer's name remains part of the Hall of Fame in perpetuity, regardless of age, graduation, later team affiliation, future performance, or continued eligibility for YMCA competition.

The Hall of Fame preserves the connection between generations of DCST swimmers and provides a visible record of the athletes who have reached one of the program's highest competitive standards.

DCST Post-National

DCST Post-National provides a competitive training and racing opportunity for experienced swimmers who wish to continue representing the DeKalb County Swim Team in USA Swimming competition but who, because of age, prior collegiate representation, or other applicable eligibility requirements, may no longer be eligible for YMCA championship competition.

DCST believes competitive swimming can remain a lifelong pursuit. Post-National may include post-collegiate swimmers, current or former collegiate athletes when participation is permitted by applicable collegiate, institutional, and governing-body rules, adult competitive swimmers, nationally qualified athletes, and other experienced swimmers pursuing meaningful competition through USA Swimming.

Post-National membership is determined by the Director of Competitive Swimming based upon the athlete's experience, training readiness, competitive goals, available training space, and the ability of DCST to provide an appropriate training environment. Post-National athletes compete primarily through USA Swimming and must maintain all current USA Swimming membership and athlete-protection requirements applicable to them.

Post-National membership is a training and competition designation and is separate from DCST National Team recognition. An athlete may be both a permanent DCST National Team member and a current Post-National athlete.

Competitive swimming does not have to end when YMCA championship eligibility ends.

DCST Masters

DCST may maintain a U.S. Masters Swimming program for adult swimmers age 18 and older. DCST Masters extends the program's commitment to lifelong competitive swimming by providing structured training, technical development, fitness and competitive opportunities for adult swimmers of varied backgrounds and ability levels. Participation may include former age-group, high school and collegiate swimmers, current competitive athletes, triathletes, fitness swimmers and adults returning to the sport.

DCST Masters operates in accordance with current U.S. Masters Swimming requirements. Adult athletes may participate in both USA Swimming and U.S. Masters Swimming when otherwise eligible, and participation in DCST Masters does not alter an athlete's separate Post-National designation or USA Swimming eligibility.

Training Equipment

Every swimmer should arrive at practice prepared with the equipment necessary for productive training. Basic equipment normally includes a swimsuit, goggles, swim cap when appropriate, water bottle, and towel. As swimmers advance, coaches may require fins, kickboard, pull buoy, hand paddles, center-mounted snorkel, mesh equipment bag, resistance tubing, tempo trainer, or other specialized equipment. Current group-specific equipment recommendations may be published in seasonal materials.

Seasonal Practice Schedules

Exact practice times, dryland schedules, pool assignments, holiday adjustments, and seasonal calendars are published separately in the current Season Guide or Practice Schedule so they can be updated without changing this permanent handbook.

CHAPTER 11

Meet Entry Philosophy

Voluntary Meet Participation & Financial Responsibility

Participation in swim meets is an important component of competitive swimming and is strongly encouraged for all DCST swimmers. Competition provides swimmers with opportunities to apply skills developed in training, measure individual progress, establish official times, pursue qualifying standards, gain racing experience, contribute to relays and team scoring, and participate fully in the competitive life of DCST.

Meet participation also benefits DCST as a team. Regular competition strengthens team identity, provides opportunities for teammates to compete together, supports relay participation and championship preparation, develops competitive experience throughout the program, and allows DCST to represent the Kishwaukee Family YMCA within YMCA Competitive Swimming, Illinois Swimming, USA Swimming, and the broader swimming community.

Notwithstanding the importance of competition, participation in any swim meet is voluntary. No DCST swimmer is required to participate in a particular YMCA, USA Swimming, Illinois Swimming, invitational, dual, championship, or other competitive meet solely by reason of membership in DCST. The decision whether to participate in a meet remains with the swimmer and, when applicable, the swimmer's family.

The coaching staff may recommend particular meets based upon an athlete's development, competitive goals, qualifying opportunities, championship preparation, or the needs of the team, but such recommendations do not create an obligation to participate.

Swimmers who choose to participate in a meet are responsible for the costs associated with that participation. Except as otherwise expressly provided by DCST or the Kishwaukee Family YMCA, individual meet-entry fees, transportation, lodging, meals, and other personal or incidental expenses associated with meet participation are the responsibility of the swimmer and, when applicable, the swimmer's family.

DCST ordinarily pays the entry fees for team relays. Designated team funds or other YMCA-approved financial support may also be used to offset particular team expenses when expressly authorized, including approved YMCA Nationals team travel, team lodging, and team meal expenses. The availability of such support does not create an individual entitlement to payment or reimbursement.

A swimmer's decision not to attend a particular meet does not, by itself, affect the swimmer's membership in DCST or standing within the program. Competitive opportunities, relay availability, qualifying opportunities, and championship preparation may naturally depend upon participation in particular competitions.

YMCA Championship Meet Eligibility

Voluntary meet participation and YMCA championship eligibility are separate concepts. DCST does not require a swimmer to attend meets merely as a condition of team membership. A swimmer who chooses to pursue YMCA championship competition, however, must satisfy the eligibility requirements established by YMCA Competitive Swimming and the entity conducting the championship.

The YMCA Swimming Addendum to the Rules That Govern YMCA Competitive Sports requires an athlete seeking to compete in a sanctioned YMCA championship to have participated in a minimum

number of closed inter-association YMCA meets during the current season. The applicable league, district, state, region, or national championship authority establishes the required number for its event. YMCA National Championships also require participation in a sanctioned YMCA championship meet in addition to the required closed inter-association meets.

Accordingly, a swimmer may remain a member of DCST while choosing not to participate in YMCA competition, but that choice may make the swimmer ineligible for an Illinois YMCA State Championship, YMCA National Championship, or another YMCA championship even if the swimmer has achieved the applicable qualifying time. These are governing-body eligibility requirements, not DCST attendance requirements.

DCST will identify YMCA meets on the seasonal competition schedule and will publish the current championship meet-participation requirements in the applicable Annual or Seasonal Documents. Swimmers who wish to preserve YMCA championship eligibility are responsible for planning their meet participation accordingly in consultation with the coaching staff. Current YMCA rules and the applicable championship meet rules control if they differ from a published DCST summary.

Where YMCA rules provide an eligibility-waiver process, a coach may submit a request through the applicable governing process. Waivers are discretionary and should not be relied upon as a substitute for satisfying published eligibility requirements when reasonably possible.

Athlete Ownership & Meet Planning

Competitive swimming is most rewarding when athletes become active participants in their own development. DCST believes meet entry selection should be a collaborative process involving the swimmer, appropriate family or supporter when applicable, and coaching staff.

This partnership helps athletes develop responsibility, goal-setting skills, competition-planning skills, awareness of qualifying standards, a deeper understanding of developmental needs, and increased ownership of their swimming.

Meet Entry Process

Meet entries are submitted electronically through DCST's official online team-management or registration system. The swimmer and/or appropriate family member or guardian selects proposed individual events before the published entry deadline. All entries are then reviewed by the coaching staff. New or uninitiated swimmers and/or appropriate family members or guardians may, of course, request that DCST coaches assume primary responsibility for the meet entry process until completely comfortable with the process.

The Director of Competitive Swimming or designated coach may approve or modify proposed entries, discuss alternatives with the swimmer or family, and recommend a different event plan when appropriate to support athlete development, health and safety, meet objectives, championship qualification, event scheduling, training goals, relay opportunities, team objectives, or governing-body rules. Final approval of meet entries rests with the Director of Competitive Swimming.

Athlete Responsibility

As swimmers gain experience and confidence, they are encouraged to assume increasing responsibility for planning their competitive schedules. Learning how to select events, pursue qualifying standards, manage a competition schedule, evaluate performances, and establish seasonal goals is part of becoming a successful swimmer. More experienced athletes are encouraged to propose their own meet lineups and communicate directly with coaches about event needs, qualifying goals, training priorities,

and relay opportunities. This increasing responsibility develops independence and effective communication and prepares athletes for leadership, collegiate athletics, professional careers, and lifelong participation in the sport. Families and supporters remain important partners while allowing athletes increasing ownership of their development.

Communication

Successful meet planning depends upon timely communication about competitive goals, scheduling conflicts, injuries, illness, vacations, academic or work commitments, transportation concerns, and other circumstances affecting participation. DCST believes the best meet entries result from collaboration, communication, and mutual respect among swimmers, supporters when applicable, and coaches.

CHAPTER 12

Relay Selection

Relay competition is one of the great traditions of competitive swimming. Relay events celebrate teamwork, trust, shared responsibility, and collective achievement. DCST is committed to providing as many relay opportunities as reasonably possible while fielding the strongest and most competitive relay teams permitted under the rules of each competition.

Championship Relay Selection Philosophy

Championship relay selection should be objective, transparent, and performance-based. Whenever reasonably practical, relay teams will be selected using eligible current-season times recorded in the same course as the relay event and maintained on the Relay Depth Chart.

DCST will maintain a current Relay Depth Chart listing each swimmer's fastest eligible performance in each relay-eligible event. The chart will be updated regularly and made available to swimmers and families. It gives each athlete a clear understanding of current standing, which events need to be raced, what performances are required to move into a relay position, and how progression from one relay team to another can occur.

Times Eligible for the Relay Depth Chart

For short-course-yard relay selection, DCST will consider verifiable individual-event times achieved in IHSA competition during the current swimming season. High school swimmers may be away from DCST competition for a substantial portion of the short-course season and may otherwise have limited opportunities to swim particular events in YMCA- or USA Swimming-sanctioned competition. An IHSA time must appear in the official meet results or other documentation acceptable to the Director of Competitive Swimming.

An official relay lead-off time will also be considered when it is recognized as an official time under applicable USA Swimming rules and is for the applicable event, stroke, distance, and course. Times from the second, third, or fourth relay legs are relay splits and will not be used as individual-event times on the Relay Depth Chart.

Converted times will not be considered for the Relay Depth Chart or relay selection. In particular, DCST will not convert a long-course-meter performance to a short-course-yard time because course conversions are estimates and are not sufficiently precise for objective relay ranking. A swimmer must establish an eligible actual time in the course used for the relay.

Championship Relay Eligibility

- Be a current DCST swimmer eligible to represent the team at the meet.
- Be eligible under the rules of the meet and governing organization.
- Have established an eligible current-season time in the applicable event and course under the Relay Depth Chart standards above.
- Be entered in the meet.
- Be available to compete in the relay.

Provide as many relay opportunities as possible while fielding the strongest relay teams possible.

Athlete Opportunity

The Relay Depth Chart works together with DCST's meet-entry philosophy. Because swimmers actively participate in selecting many of their individual events, every athlete has an opportunity to pursue an emerging relay position by selecting events that establish eligible times for consideration. High school swimmers may also establish or improve their positions through qualifying IHSA performances, and any swimmer may do so through an official relay lead-off time recognized under applicable USA Swimming rules. The swimmer identifies a relay goal, establishes an eligible actual time in the relevant event and course, and the depth chart is updated. Converted times do not establish a relay position.

Fairness to the Relay Team

A relay is a team event. Every swimmer selected for a championship relay has earned an opportunity through performance, and every swimmer on that relay deserves to compete alongside the fastest eligible teammates available. DCST therefore has a responsibility to field the fastest and most competitive relay possible within each relay designation. This protects the interests of the relay team as a whole rather than treating relay participation as an individual entitlement.

Coaching Discretion

The Championship Relay Depth Chart serves as the primary basis for relay selection. The Director may make reasonable adjustments when necessary because of illness, injury, athlete availability, meet eligibility requirements, disqualifications, relay-order requirements, schedule conflicts, entry limitations, changes after entries are submitted, or other extraordinary circumstances. Coaching discretion is intended to address genuine competitive or operational circumstances, not to replace the objective depth chart with subjective preference. Non-championship relay (dual meets etc.) entries are within the exclusive discretion of the Head and Lead coaches of the particular relay category.

Sportsmanship

Healthy internal competition strengthens every athlete and every relay. Swimmers are encouraged to support teammates, celebrate others' accomplishments, respect the Championship Relay Depth Chart, pursue improvement, communicate openly with coaches, and respond positively when another swimmer earns a higher position.

Individual events are planned collaboratively. Relay opportunities are earned objectively.

CHAPTER 13

Championship Competition Philosophy

Championship competition represents the culmination of months, and often years, of disciplined preparation, consistent training, and personal growth. Every qualifying time earned reflects countless hours of work, difficult practices, personal sacrifice, and a commitment to continual improvement.

At DCST, championship meets are more than opportunities to achieve faster times. They are opportunities to demonstrate preparation, resilience, sportsmanship, personal responsibility, and pride in representing the DeKalb County Swim Team.

Championship swimming is fundamentally different from ordinary competition. Championship meets require athletes to manage not only their races, but also preparation, recovery, nutrition, hydration, equipment, sleep, emotions, communication, and focus over multiple days. Success is often determined as much by preparation between races as by the races themselves.

Championship Competition Priorities

The DeKalb County Swim Team proudly participates in both YMCA Competitive Swimming and USA Swimming. Because DCST is a YMCA competitive swimming program, YMCA Championship competition represents the highest team competitive priority for athletes who are eligible for those events. This priority describes DCST competitive planning and allocation of coaching resources; it does not make participation in a championship meet mandatory for an individual swimmer.

DCST will support and participate in Illinois YMCA State Championships and YMCA National Championships whenever the team or its athletes have earned eligibility under current YMCA Competitive Swimming rules. For YMCA-eligible athletes, DCST will also participate in Illinois Swimming Championship competitions for which swimmers qualify, provided those competitions do not conflict with YMCA Championship competition. When a scheduling conflict occurs, YMCA Championship competition will normally take precedence unless extraordinary circumstances are approved by the Director of Competitive Swimming.

For athletes who are not eligible for YMCA championship competition, including members of DCST Post-National, the program will support the highest appropriate Illinois Swimming and USA Swimming championship pathway for which the athlete qualifies. YMCA championship priority does not limit the competitive opportunities of athletes who are not eligible to participate in those YMCA events.

DCST will actively support swimmers who qualify for appropriate national-level competition, including USA Swimming Futures Championships, USA Swimming Junior National Championships when age-eligible, the U.S. Open Championships, USA Swimming National Championships, the U.S. Olympic Team Trials, and other recognized national qualifying or championship competitions for which DCST athletes qualify.

Preliminaries and Finals

At preliminaries/finals competitions, swimmers who qualify for a final are expected to compete unless illness, injury, scheduling circumstances, or another legitimate reason prevents participation. A swimmer who cannot compete in a qualified final should notify the coaching staff promptly so the applicable meet scratch procedures can be followed. Current governing-body and meet rules control scratch deadlines and penalties and are not reproduced in this handbook.

Technical Racing Suits

Technical racing suits are specialized competition equipment and are not necessary for every swimmer or every meet. Their use should be based upon the athlete's development, competition level, goals, applicable governing-body rules, and consultation with the coaching staff. Brand, model, purchasing, and other season-specific guidance may be published separately in current team materials.

Individual Excellence and Team Success

Competitive swimming celebrates both individual achievement and team accomplishment. This is especially true at Illinois YMCA State Championships and YMCA National Championships, where individual performances combine to determine overall team success. Every swim contributes. Every relay matters. Finals appearances, points scored, personal bests, and the energy athletes bring to supporting teammates all strengthen the team.

DCST embraces the YMCA tradition in which individual excellence and team success are complementary, not competing, objectives. Team championships are built not only by event champions, but by athletes who score points, qualify for finals, swim relays, achieve personal bests, encourage teammates, and consistently place the interests of the team alongside their own competitive goals.

Individual Responsibility and Partnership

As swimmers gain experience, they are expected to assume increasing responsibility for championship preparation, including equipment, recovery, nutrition, warm-up and warm-down, schedules, communication with coaches, and emotional readiness. Supporters remain valuable partners, while the long-term goal is to develop confident, independent athletes capable of managing championship competition at increasingly high levels.

Championship success is built upon partnership. Coaches provide technical guidance, strategic planning, and objective evaluation. Families and supporters provide encouragement, stability, and perspective. Swimmers provide commitment, preparation, and execution.

Representing DCST

Every swimmer representing DCST serves as an ambassador for the program. Championship competition should reflect respect for teammates, competitors, officials, volunteers, coaches, facilities, and the traditions of competitive swimming. Character, humility, integrity, sportsmanship, and professionalism should accompany competitive excellence.

Prepare completely. Compete courageously. Recover intelligently. Support your teammates. Learn from every race. Leave every championship meet a better swimmer than when you arrived.

CHAPTER 14

Volunteer Program

DCST is strengthened by volunteers. While coaches focus on athlete development and YMCA staff oversee the professional operation of the program, successful swim meets and team activities depend upon the dedication, professionalism, and generosity of volunteers.

Competitive swimming depends upon volunteers in ways few sports do, and hosted meets are an important source of operating revenue. Revenue from well-run competitions can support equipment, facility improvements, coach education, athlete-development programs, and efforts to keep participation costs manageable.

Meet Operations Volunteers

Meet Operations Volunteers perform the essential functions necessary to conduct a safe, efficient, and professionally operated competition. These volunteers serve under the direction of the Meet Director, a designated YMCA staff member responsible for the overall operation of the competition.

- Timers
- Safety Marshals
- Clerk of Course
- Computer Operations
- Electronic Timing System Operations
- Meet Administration
- Equipment and Technical Support
- Announcing
- Admissions
- Awards
- Meet Set-Up
- Meet Tear-Down
- Other operational assignments as needed

Certified Meet Officials

Certified officials are among the most valuable volunteers in competitive swimming. Their knowledge, professionalism, and impartiality ensure every race is conducted safely, fairly, consistently, and in accordance with YMCA and USA Swimming rules. Without certified officials, sanctioned swim meets cannot take place.

DCST is committed to recruiting, training, mentoring, and retaining outstanding officials who serve not only our team, but the broader swimming community.

- Stroke and Turn Judge
- Starter
- Chief Judge
- Administrative Official
- Referee
- Other certified officiating assignments

DCST Officials Support Program

To recognize the commitment required to become and remain a certified official, DCST will support approved officials through payment or reimbursement of required certification, registration, background screening, training, recertification, and approved continuing education expenses. Mentoring opportunities will be provided through experienced certified officials whenever practical.

Approved officials are also eligible for the current Volunteer Participation Credit for each completed officiating session at any YMCA or USA Swimming-sanctioned meet in which DCST athletes are participating, regardless of the host club.

DCST will provide an annual officiating uniform stipend and footwear stipend to assist with required officiating apparel and appropriate deck shoes. Current credit and stipend amounts are established annually by the Director of Competitive Swimming in consultation with YMCA leadership and are published separately from this permanent handbook.

By investing in certified officials, DCST invests in the integrity of competition, athlete safety, and the long-term strength of competitive swimming throughout our region.

Volunteer Participation Credits

Approved Meet Operations volunteer assignments may earn a Volunteer Participation Credit for each completed session. Credits are applied to the swimmer or family account and may be used toward one on one individual coaching fees. They are a gesture of appreciation and recognition for service, not wages or employment compensation. The current credit amount is published in annual volunteer materials so it can be adjusted without amending this handbook.

Volunteer credits are intended not only to recognize service but also to create additional opportunities within the program. Swimmers and families are strongly encouraged to generously accumulate and use these credits toward eligible one-on-one coaching sessions throughout the season. In this way, volunteer service can directly support swimmer development, coach development, and stronger swimmer-coach relationships.

Team Support Volunteers

Volunteer opportunities outside meet operations may include fundraising, sponsorship development, team hospitality, social events, banquets, awards programs, team apparel, community outreach, communications, special projects, and committees. These activities are coordinated through the DCST Advisory Board Volunteer Coordinator or other designated volunteer leadership. Meet operations remain under the guidance of the Meet Director.

Participation, Not Penalties

DCST recognizes that every household and individual has different schedules, work commitments, and personal responsibilities. Volunteer participation is encouraged because it strengthens the team and creates exceptional opportunities for athletes.

Our goal is participation, not penalties.

DCST believes volunteerism should be encouraged through appreciation, recognition, and shared ownership rather than excessive deposits, mandatory assessments, or punitive financial penalties. Every volunteer contribution strengthens DCST and helps provide a first-class competitive environment for swimmers.

Mandatory Volunteer Hour Requirements

As a general rule, DCST does not impose mandatory volunteer hour requirements on its hard working team members or families. It does however reserve the right to institute such requirement only when necessary to safely and efficiently conduct prior scheduled meets and other program essential activities.

CHAPTER 15

Individual Coaching & Coach Development

DCST believes individualized instruction is an important supplement to regular team training. Team practices remain the foundation of athlete development, while one-on-one coaching can provide focused instruction tailored to individual needs and create meaningful professional-development opportunities for coaching staff. Paid one-on-one sessions are administered through the Kishwaukee Family YMCA under the procedures below.

Individual Technical Evaluation

Every registered DCST swimmer is entitled to one specialized Individual Technical Evaluation each early season with the Head Coach or appropriate lead coach. The evaluation may address stroke technique, starts and turns, underwater skills, race strategy, goal setting, individual training recommendations, and seasonal development priorities. Sessions are scheduled based upon coach, swimmer, and facility availability.

Additional One-on-One Coaching Sessions

Beyond the complimentary Individual Technical Evaluation, registered DCST swimmers may schedule additional 45-minute one-on-one coaching sessions with a participating DCST coach selected by the swimmer or the swimmer's parent or guardian. Sessions may address stroke technique, starts and turns, underwater skills, race strategy, goal setting, or other appropriate developmental needs. Participation is voluntary and subject to coach, swimmer, and facility availability.

Coach Selection, Scheduling, and Lane Reservations

The swimmer or family selects the participating coach from a participation list with whom the swimmer wishes to work and coordinates a proposed session time with that coach. Once coach availability is confirmed the swimmer or swimmer's family is responsible for reserving a competition-pool lane through the approved YMCA process. Sessions may be conducted only during approved low-demand facility hours when the coach is not otherwise working scheduled YMCA or DCST duties, and a session is not confirmed until the lane reservation is approved.

Session Fee

A competitive flat fee will be charged to the swimmer's or family's YMCA account for each complete 45-minute one-on-one session. No lesson fee is paid directly by the swimmer or family to the coach. Eligible Volunteer Participation Credits may be applied toward one-on-one coaching charges in accordance with current program rules, policies and rates provided in the seasonal schedules.

Using Volunteer Participation Credits for Individual Coaching

DCST strongly encourages swimmers and families who earn Volunteer Participation Credits to consider applying those credits toward one-on-one coaching sessions throughout the swim season. Doing so reinvests volunteer service directly into athlete development by creating additional opportunities for focused instruction, technical feedback, goal setting, and individualized attention.

These sessions also provide meaningful compensated instructional opportunities for DCST coaches and strengthen the swimmer-coach relationship by creating additional time to discuss technique, developmental needs, goals, and progress outside the normal demands of group practice.

Cancellations and No-Shows

A session may be canceled without charge when the swimmer or family provides at least 24 hours' notice before the scheduled start time. A cancellation with less than 24 hours' notice, or failure to attend without notice, results in the full scheduled charge or loss of volunteer credit. Because the lane and the coach's time were reserved, the same allocation applies to a late cancellation or no-show.

Participating Coaches and Professional Standards

Families may choose from DCST coaches authorized to participate in the one-on-one coaching program. The Director may help a family identify a coach whose experience and expertise match the swimmer's ability level and goals when requested, but the final choice remains with the swimmer or family, subject to coach availability. Participating coaches must maintain all credentials required by the YMCA, USA Swimming, and applicable governing bodies, and all sessions remain subject to the current USA Swimming MAAPP and applicable YMCA athlete-protection requirements.

Fairness and Coaching Decisions

Participation in one-on-one coaching is entirely voluntary and will not influence practice group placement, meet entry approval, relay selection, championship team selection, National Team recognition, awards, discipline, or any other coaching decision. One-on-one coaching supplements regular training; it does not purchase preference.

Scheduling Priority and Coach Development

Regular DCST practices, YMCA programming, competitions, facility rentals, maintenance, and other scheduled activities always take priority over one-on-one coaching. Because paid sessions are YMCA-administered work, coaches may conduct them only outside their other scheduled YMCA or DCST duties and in accordance with approved scheduling, timekeeping, payroll, and athlete-protection procedures. DCST believes great swim programs are built by developing great coaches. Individual coaching opportunities help coaches expand instructional experience, strengthen relationships with athletes, and grow professionally beyond regular practice responsibilities.

When swimmers improve, coaches grow, and the YMCA thrives, the entire DCST community benefits.

CHAPTER 16

Communication

DCST is committed to open, respectful, timely, and solution-oriented communication. Ordinary questions should be directed to the person or department responsible for the matter so they can be addressed efficiently and at the appropriate level.

- Coaching matters, including training, practice groups, event entries, relay assignments, technique, athlete development, and competition decisions: Director of Competitive Swimming or the appropriate coach.
- Registration, billing, and account questions: Director of Competitive Swimming or their designee.
- Facilities, schedules, and YMCA operations: Kishwaukee Family YMCA administration.
- Team administration and volunteer questions: Director of Competitive Swimming, designated team administrator, or appropriate Advisory Board volunteer leader.

Routine coaching decisions, including practice group placement, training plans, individual event entries, relay assignments, and competition strategy, are professional coaching judgments and are not subject to a formal grievance process. DCST encourages respectful communication and good-faith resolution of ordinary concerns at the lowest appropriate level whenever possible.

Big Dog University

Big Dog University is DCST's swimmer, family, and supporter education program. It provides periodic learning and discussion sessions designed to improve understanding of competitive swimming and strengthen communication among swimmers, families, supporters, coaches, and the program.

Sessions may address DCST's coaching and training philosophy, athlete development, meet and championship preparation, relay selection, athlete ownership and self-advocacy, communication with coaches, supporting swimmers before and after competition, and other subjects that help the DCST community understand and support the competitive swimming process.

Big Dog University is educational and informational. Participation is encouraged but voluntary. The program does not alter professional coaching authority, create additional participation requirements, or replace direct communication with the appropriate coach or Kishwaukee Family YMCA staff member.

Current session dates, locations, topics, presenters, and other season-specific information are published in the applicable DCST Team Events, Fundraising & Education Calendar.

CHAPTER 17

Media, Marketing & Official Communications

The Director of Competitive Swimming is responsible for the overall marketing, public presentation, and external communications of DCST, subject to the authority and policies of the Kishwaukee Family YMCA.

Official DCST social media accounts, websites, press releases, media statements, promotional materials, public announcements, and other communications issued in the name of DCST are official program communications. The Director, a person designated by the Director, or appropriate Kishwaukee Family YMCA leadership has final authority over their content and publication.

Advisory Board and Volunteer Communications

The DCST Advisory Board and its committees play an important supporting role in communicating information concerning activities within their respective responsibilities, including fundraising, volunteer opportunities, hospitality, social activities, equipment initiatives, scholarship fundraising, YMCA Nationals fundraising, and similar Board-supported programs.

When an Advisory Board officer, committee, or volunteer wishes to publish information through an official DCST social media account or other official DCST public communication channel, the proposed communication shall first be submitted to the Director of Competitive Swimming or the Director's authorized agent or designee for approval.

Use of official DCST communication channels by Advisory Board officers, committees, and volunteers should ordinarily relate to the responsibilities, programs, events, or activities assigned to that officer, committee, or volunteer.

Approval may address content, timing, branding, photographs, graphics, coordination with other team communications, or other matters affecting the public presentation of DCST.

The Director may delegate ongoing posting authority for particular subjects or communication channels when appropriate. Such delegation does not transfer responsibility for the overall marketing or public communications of the competitive swimming program.

Press Releases and Media Inquiries

Official press releases, statements to news organizations, public announcements concerning DCST policy or operations, and responses made on behalf of DCST to media inquiries shall be issued or approved by the Director of Competitive Swimming or appropriate Kishwaukee Family YMCA leadership.

No Advisory Board member, committee, volunteer, swimmer, or other individual is authorized solely by virtue of their relationship with DCST to speak on behalf of DCST or the Kishwaukee Family YMCA.

Nothing in this provision prevents any individual from speaking in their personal capacity.

Independent and Internal Communications

Nothing in this policy restricts an Advisory Board member, committee, volunteer, swimmer, family member, or other individual from communicating information through personal email, text messaging, telephone, printed materials, meetings, private electronic groups, or other traditional or electronic means.

The Advisory Board may likewise communicate with its members, committees, volunteers, families, and the broader DCST community concerning Board activities and matters within its responsibilities without obtaining advance approval from the Director.

Such communications are not official statements of DCST or the Kishwaukee Family YMCA unless expressly authorized as such. When circumstances could reasonably create confusion, the communication should make clear that it is being made by the individual, Advisory Board, or committee rather than as an official statement of DCST.

Official Accounts and Branding

Official DCST social media accounts, websites, mailing platforms, and account credentials that are created or maintained as official program channels are administrative resources of DCST and the Kishwaukee Family YMCA. Access to those official channels may be limited to persons authorized by the Director or YMCA leadership.

Nothing in this policy prohibits an individual, the Advisory Board, a committee, volunteer, swimmer, family member, or other person from lawfully referring to or using the DCST name in personal, independent, organizational, or informational communications. Approval is required only when a person or account represents, purports to represent, or reasonably implies that it is an official DCST or Kishwaukee Family YMCA account, statement, publication, or communication. No use is permitted when otherwise prohibited by applicable state or federal law.

CHAPTER 18

Standards of Conduct, Athlete Safety & Governing Rules

Governing Policies

The DeKalb County Swim Team is the competitive swimming program of the Kishwaukee Family YMCA and operates within the rules and policies of the organizations that govern its activities. DCST members and participants are therefore subject, as applicable, to the policies and requirements of the Kishwaukee Family YMCA, YMCA Competitive Swimming, USA Swimming, Illinois Swimming, the U.S. Center for SafeSport, the United States Anti-Doping Agency (USADA), the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), and other governing authorities having jurisdiction over a particular activity or competition.

DCST does not reproduce rules and procedures already maintained and professionally administered by these organizations. When an external governing organization has jurisdiction over a matter, its current rules and procedures control. DCST policies supplement those requirements only where rules specific to the operation of the competitive swimming program are reasonably necessary.

Official Governing Resources

- [Kishwaukee Family YMCA Policies & Member Code of Conduct](#)
- [USA Swimming Rules & Policies](#)
- [USA Swimming Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policy \(MAAPP\)](#)
- [USA Swimming Safe Sport](#)
- [U.S. Center for SafeSport](#)

Standards of Conduct

All DCST swimmers, families, supporters, volunteers, and other participants are expected to comply with applicable Kishwaukee Family YMCA standards of conduct and facility policies. DCST does not maintain a separate general behavioral code duplicating YMCA rules.

Because competitive swimming presents certain team-specific circumstances, swimmers are additionally expected to:

- Follow reasonable coaching and safety instructions during DCST activities.
- Practice and compete with sportsmanship and respect for teammates, coaches, officials, volunteers, competitors, facility staff, and meet operations.
- Avoid conduct that materially disrupts training, competition, team operations, or safety.
- Comply with applicable meet rules and DCST policies specific to competitive swimming and team operations.
- Represent DCST and the Kishwaukee Family YMCA appropriately while participating in team activities.

Corrective Action

The purpose of corrective action is to correct behavior, protect participants, and maintain an appropriate training and competition environment rather than simply impose punishment. Routine behavioral concerns should ordinarily be addressed through coaching, communication, and education. When reasonably necessary, the Director of Competitive Swimming or coaching staff may use a coaching discussion, temporary removal from practice or a team activity, suspension from team activities, or dismissal for serious or repeated team-specific misconduct.

Corrective action will be proportionate to the circumstances. General YMCA conduct matters remain subject to the Kishwaukee Family YMCA Member Code of Conduct, while USA Swimming, SafeSport, anti-doping, law enforcement, or other externally governed matters are referred to the applicable professional process rather than re-adjudicated by DCST.

Alcohol, Tobacco, Nicotine & Recreational Drugs

DCST swimmers are subject to the applicable policies of the Kishwaukee Family YMCA concerning alcohol, illegal drugs, tobacco, nicotine products, vaping products, cannabis, and similar substances while on YMCA property or participating in YMCA or DCST activities.

Use, possession, distribution, or impairment involving a substance during DCST practices, competitions, team activities, team travel, or other circumstances in which an athlete is representing DCST is prohibited when such conduct is prohibited by YMCA policy, applicable law, governing-body rules, or team-safety requirements.

DCST does not seek to regulate otherwise lawful private conduct occurring outside YMCA or DCST activities. Nevertheless, competitive swimmers are strongly encouraged to make personal choices that support athletic performance, recovery, health, judgment, and long-term well-being. Alcohol, tobacco, nicotine, vaping products, cannabis, and other recreational drugs may adversely affect those objectives.

Conduct occurring in connection with DCST activities may be addressed under the Standards of Conduct provisions of this chapter.

Anti-Doping & Performance-Enhancing Drugs

DCST is committed to clean sport, fair competition, athlete health, and the integrity of competitive swimming. Anti-doping rules applicable to USA Swimming competition are established and administered through USA Swimming, USADA, WADA, and other appropriate governing authorities.

DCST does not conduct its own anti-doping testing, maintain a separate prohibited-substance list, independently investigate alleged anti-doping violations, or impose sanctions assigned to those governing organizations.

Athletes are responsible for ensuring that medications, supplements, and other substances they use comply with current anti-doping requirements. Because prohibited substances and requirements change, swimmers should consult current official resources rather than relying upon a list reproduced in this handbook. Athletes requiring a medication that may be prohibited should consult their physician and review the applicable USADA Therapeutic Use Exemption procedures.

DCST strongly encourages caution with nutritional supplements. Supplements may contain prohibited substances that are not identified on the product label. Whenever possible, athletes should consult a qualified healthcare professional before using a nutritional supplement.

Official Anti-Doping Resources

- [USA Swimming Anti-Doping Resources](#)
- [USADA Anti-Doping 101](#)
- [Global DRO Medication Checker](#)
- [USADA Therapeutic Use Exemptions](#)
- [USADA Play Clean Tip Center](#)
- [WADA Prohibited List](#)

Questions regarding medications, supplements, Therapeutic Use Exemptions, testing, or anti-doping compliance should be directed to USADA or an appropriate healthcare professional rather than DCST.

DCST expects all swimmers to compete honestly, fairly, and in accordance with the anti-doping rules established by the governing bodies of competitive swimming.

SafeSport & Athlete Protection

DCST follows the athlete-protection requirements applicable to the Kishwaukee Family YMCA, USA Swimming, and the U.S. Center for SafeSport. USA Swimming's current Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policy (MAAPP) governs matters within its scope, including one-on-one interactions, electronic communications, team travel, locker rooms and changing areas, and applicable athletic-training interactions involving minor athletes.

DCST does not substitute an internal grievance or disciplinary process for an investigation or enforcement proceeding assigned to the Kishwaukee Family YMCA, USA Swimming, the U.S. Center for SafeSport, law enforcement, or another governing authority.

Athlete Protection & Reporting Resources

- [USA Swimming: Report a Concern](#)
- [U.S. Center for SafeSport: Report a Concern](#)
- [USA Swimming: Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policy \(MAAPP\)](#)

U.S. Center for SafeSport telephone: 833-5US-SAFE (833-587-7233)

Reporting Concerns

Formal conduct, athlete-safety, and externally governed concerns should be directed to the organization with responsibility for the matter. Ordinary coaching, billing, facility, and team-administration questions are addressed through Chapter 16, Communication.

- General YMCA conduct concerns should be reported to YMCA staff in accordance with the Kishwaukee Family YMCA Member Code of Conduct.
- SafeSport, abuse, harassment, grooming, retaliation, or other reportable athlete-safety concerns should be reported through the applicable USA Swimming or U.S. Center for SafeSport reporting channel, or both when appropriate.
- Anti-doping questions or suspected anti-doping violations should be directed through the appropriate USA Swimming or USADA process, including the USADA Play Clean Tip Center when applicable.

If anyone is in immediate danger, contact 911 or local law enforcement immediately before or in addition to using the applicable reporting process. Nothing in this handbook replaces any reporting obligation imposed by law or by an applicable governing organization.

Review of Team Disciplinary Decisions

The Director of Competitive Swimming is responsible for ordinary team-specific disciplinary decisions. A swimmer, or an appropriate parent or guardian when applicable, who believes a suspension or dismissal was imposed in error may submit a written request for administrative review to the appropriate Kishwaukee Family YMCA leadership within seven calendar days of the decision.

The YMCA review is limited to determining whether the decision was reasonable, consistent with established team policies, and free from material procedural error. YMCA leadership may affirm, modify, or reverse the decision. The YMCA determination is final.

This review procedure does not apply to matters within the independent jurisdiction of the U.S. Center for SafeSport, USA Swimming, USADA, law enforcement, or another governing authority. Routine professional coaching decisions, including training plans, practice-group placement, meet entries, relay assignments, and competition strategy, are not disciplinary decisions and are not subject to this administrative-review process.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISIONS

Handbook Authority, Interpretation & Amendment

Nature and Purpose of the Handbook

This Handbook is an administrative statement of the current policies, philosophy, and operating principles of the DeKalb County Swim Team (DCST), the competitive swimming program of the Kishwaukee Family YMCA. It is intended solely as a statement of policy and guidance for the administration and operation of DCST. It is not a contract, offer, promise, or guarantee and shall not be construed to create contractual, vested, or other legally enforceable rights or entitlements in favor of any swimmer, parent, guardian, family member, volunteer, official, coach, employee, or other person. Participation in DCST remains subject at all times to applicable law, YMCA policies, governing-body rules, eligibility requirements, facility requirements, and other controlling requirements.

Authority and Administration

This Handbook is issued under the authority of the Director of Competitive Swimming with respect to matters committed to the Director's professional and operational responsibility and, where YMCA governance, approval, or action is required, under the authority of or subject to the direction of Kishwaukee Family YMCA leadership. Within the scope of the Director's authority, the Director may interpret, administer, and apply the provisions of this Handbook in the operation of the competitive swimming program. Kishwaukee Family YMCA leadership retains ultimate authority with respect to matters within YMCA governance and may approve, modify, supersede, or direct policy whenever YMCA action is required. Nothing in this Handbook limits the authority of the Kishwaukee Family YMCA as the parent organization of DCST.

Amendment and Publication

This Handbook and the policies stated in it may be revised, amended, supplemented, suspended, rescinded, or replaced at any time as circumstances warrant. Except where immediate action is reasonably necessary for athlete safety, legal or regulatory compliance, governing-body requirements, facility operations, or other exigent circumstances, material changes will be communicated through reasonable notice and publication using official DCST or Kishwaukee Family YMCA communication channels. Publication or distribution through an official DCST or YMCA channel constitutes notice unless a different form of notice is required by applicable law or controlling YMCA policy.

Annual and Seasonal Documents

Annual and seasonal documents and other official team notices supplement this Handbook and may establish or revise schedules, fees, dates, contacts, practice-group arrangements, competition plans, and other season-specific or operational information without requiring republication of the permanent handbook. Each such document may be published independently or appended to the Handbook. Where a later published annual or seasonal document or official notice expressly modifies an operational provision for a particular season or period, the later published provision controls for that season or period. No annual or seasonal document or operational notice shall be construed to alter an enduring policy or governance provision of this Handbook unless the change is stated expressly and issued by the Director of Competitive Swimming or Kishwaukee Family YMCA leadership, as appropriate to the matter.

Controlling Law and Governing Policies

If any provision of this Handbook conflicts with applicable law or a controlling policy or rule of the Kishwaukee Family YMCA, YMCA Competitive Swimming, USA Swimming, the U.S. Center for SafeSport, USADA, WADA, or another governing authority having jurisdiction over the matter, the controlling law, policy, or rule governs to the extent of the conflict. The invalidity or inapplicability of any particular provision does not affect the remaining provisions except to the extent necessary to comply with the controlling authority.

The most recently published version of this Handbook, together with any then-current Annual or Seasonal Documents and controlling YMCA or governing-body policies, constitutes the current statement of DCST policy.