



# Swim Team Handbook

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[www.westernwahoos.org](http://www.westernwahoos.org)

# **Introduction**

This handbook has been designed for the Western Wahoo families as a reference source for team philosophy, structure, policy, and helpful information. It is divided into sections and has an appendix for easy reference. The majority of the information in this handbook will be valid year after year. Current schedules, time standards, and other updates will be posted on the website each year. While this handbook contains a large amount of information, there will inevitably be questions not answered within its pages. Please contact either the Competitive Aquatics Director or Head Coach immediately if you have a question concerning the swim team program.

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# Message from the Competitive Aquatics Director

Welcome to the Western YMCA Wahoos Swim Team. Our mission is to help build honest, caring, responsible, and respectful young adults through a competitive swim team program. Our dedicated, trained, and experienced coaching staff will guide each swimmer through technical training to compete at his or her highest potential. With an emphasis on teamwork and sportsmanship we will prepare swimmers for a lifetime of success both in and out of the water.

The objectives of all YMCA programs, including competitive swimming, are to enable participants:

- To grow personally through the building of self-esteem and self-reliance.
- To clarify values and to develop moral and ethical behaviors based on the YMCA's founding principles.
- To improve personal and family relationships by learning to care, communicate and cooperate with family and friends.
- To appreciate diversity and to respect people of different ages, abilities, incomes, races, religions, cultures and beliefs.
- To become better leaders and supporters through the give-and-take experiences of working toward a common goal.
- To develop specific skills, acquire new knowledge, and ways to grow in spirit, mind and body.

*and most importantly,*

- **To Have Fun and enjoy life!**

While there will be some experiences that are tougher than others, the coaches and parents comprise an important team in teaching the valuable lessons of a young person's life. We are excited that you are a part of our YMCA program and look forward to your family's involvement throughout the year. GO WAHOOS

**Adam Braun**  
**Competitive Aquatics Director**

# Team Structure

The Wahoo Swim Team is divided into training groups based on ability and age. These groups will enable swimmers to progress at a constant rate while building friendships with other team members in the same age range. We encourage swimmers age thirteen and under to participate in other activities outside of swimming while they develop the technique, endurance and competitiveness that are the foundation for successful swimmers. As swimmers get older we will encourage them to gradually make a greater commitment to the team and the sport by participating in more practices and competitions. National level swimming, both in the YMCA and USA Swimming is more demanding and competitive than the sport is for younger swimmers. Our program reflects that reality and aims to equip its swimmers not only to compete, but to succeed at each level of competitive swimming. All swimmers are expected to budget their time and to maintain above average grades in school.

## Practice Groups

**Introduction:** Prerequisites: All first time swimmers must be evaluated by a swim coach before officially joining the team. Participants must be able to swim one full length (25 meters) of freestyle without stopping. Children must also be able to tread water in place and also float on their back comfortably for a minimum of 30 seconds.

**Bronze:** Prerequisites: All swimmers must be able to complete 2 full lengths (50 meters) of freestyle, with rotary breathing, without stopping and 2 full lengths of legal backstroke without stopping. A basic understanding of breaststroke and butterfly is recommended.

**Silver:** Prerequisites: All Swimmers must be able to practice for 90 minutes and repeat sets of 50 meters of freestyle, backstroke, butterfly, breaststroke, and a 200 meter IM. A coach's recommendation is needed to move from Bronze to Silver group. During the winter season, USA-Swimming membership is included in the team fee.

**Gold:** Prerequisites: All swimmers must be able to practice for 90 minutes and repeat sets of 100 meters of freestyle, backstroke, butterfly, and breaststroke. A coach's recommendation is needed to move from Silver into Gold group. During the winter season, USA-Swimming membership is included in the team fee.

**Advanced:** Prerequisites: Participants must be able to practice for 2 hours and repeat sets of 200 meters of all strokes. Swimmers are expected to make a commitment to becoming a better swimmer by setting realistic goals with a group coach. Practices will continue to focus on technique and increasing endurance, while race strategy and strength training will be taught. A coach's recommendation is needed to move from Gold to Advanced group. During the winter season, USA-Swimming membership is included in the team fee. Swimmers in this group are now encouraged to make more of a commitment to the team and the sport.

**National:** National Group participants are those with aspirations of representing the club at the National level and perhaps continuing on at the collegiate level. Participants make lifestyle decisions that will help them obtain their individual and team goals. Practices will consist of intense workouts geared toward increasing strength, endurance, technique, and race strategy. To be eligible to participate at YMCA Short Course Nationals in the spring or Long Course Nationals in the summer, individuals are required to have made it to 75% of practices during that season. A coach's recommendation is needed to move from Advanced to National.

**High School Warm-Up:** This program is available to high school swimmers who do not want to make a winter team commitment. Group is limited to space dependent upon the size of the team. Practices will focus on technique, increasing endurance, race strategy and strength training in preparation for the upcoming high school season. Swimmers must be able to practice for 2 hours and know all four strokes.

## **Seasons and Programs**

**Winter Season:** This season runs from the middle of September to March. Depending on certain championship meets your child may qualify for, the season could run into early April. Because this season runs so long this is where you will see the biggest improvements to your child's technique, stamina, and speed.

**Spring Conditioning:** This season usually starts at the end of March (2 weeks after District Championships) until the middle of May when the summer season begins. This program is perfect for continuing to refine technique while keeping swimmers in competitive shape for the upcoming summer season. Also, it is a great way for those individuals who did not swim for a winter program to get back in shape before the start of summer.

**Summer Season:** This season runs from the middle of May through July and is a great way for first time swimmers to get introduced into competitive swimming. As a member of the Suburban Swim League, swimmers will get an opportunity to participate in multiple dual meets, mini meets, and a Championship meet at the end of the season. Long course practices and meets are also available during the season and will be announced with the rest of the practice/meet schedules. Experienced swimmers 9 years and older are encouraged to sign up for long course meets.

**Clinics:** During the down time in August and beginning of September, each stroke will have three 50 minute sessions focusing on body position, technique and efficiency. Stroke clinic schedules will be announced at the beginning of the summer season.

The Wahoo coaching staff respects family time together, including vacation time. However parents of older swimmers should be aware that extended time away from practice and competition *in the middle of a season* will affect a swimmer's performance. The effect becomes greater the older and more competitive a swimmer becomes. If you are taking a vacation during the season one option is to take a list practices with you which you can get from your lead coach. To discuss time away from practice and meets and/or the effects it will have, please contact the lead coach of your child's group or the Competitive Aquatics Director.

# Practices

At all levels, practice sessions develop important athletic, personal and social skills. Regular, consistent attendance is necessary to build the abilities of the swimmer, enhance the coach-swimmer relationship, and strengthen the unity of the team as a whole.

## Schedule

Practice schedules are distributed to all families prior to the start of each season and are available at anytime at [www.westernwahoos.org](http://www.westernwahoos.org). Some updates and revisions may be necessary, especially during holidays. Every effort will be made to notify families of changes in the practice schedule. Please be attentive to all updates and announcements that are sent out electronically via e-mail by checking your e-mail daily.

## Facilities

The Wahoo Swim Team currently only uses the Western YMCA pool during the winter season. In the summer, long course practices will be held off YMCA property at a location that will be announced.

## What to Bring to Practice

Practice equipment may be purchased at The Swim Shop, located in the Fairfax Shopping Center on Concord Pike or online at many websites, [www.swimoutlet.com](http://www.swimoutlet.com) tends to be fairly inexpensive.

**Introduction** – suit, goggles, cap, towel

**Bronze** – suit, goggles, cap, towel

**Silver** – suit, water bottle, goggles, cap, towel, hand paddles, pull buoy, zoomers,

**Gold** - suit, water bottle, goggles, cap, towel, hand paddles, pull buoy, zoomers,

**Advanced** - suit, water bottle, goggles, cap, towel, snorkel, hand paddles, pull buoy, zoomers,

**National** - suit, water bottle, goggles, cap, towel, snorkel, hand paddles, pull buoy, zoomers,

These are the necessities. We recommend that all swimmers carry an extra cap, suit, and pair of goggles just in case. Coaches do not carry extra items to loan swimmers for practice and the facilities do not regularly have extras to loan. **CLEARLY LABEL ALL ITEMS THAT ARE TAKEN TO PRACTICE.**

Swimmers should bring their bags, clothes, etc. onto the pool deck with them or lock them in a locker during practice. Locks should be temporary and removed each day at the end of practice.

## Punctuality and Practice Time

Please be on time to all practices. Practices begin with stretching and a warm up period to prevent injury. Instructions and important information are also given to swimmers at the beginning of practice. When swimmers are late, they miss this important preparation and information. Likewise, please avoid bringing swimmers to practice excessively early (more than 15 min.) and pick up swimmers promptly after practice (no later than 15 min. after the conclusion of the practice). Coaches are responsible for swimmers during specified practice times only. When swimmers arrive at their practice site, they are to wait on deck, away from the pool, until practice begins. Swimmers are expected to participate in the full practice in order to gain the complete physical, mental, psychological and social benefit. Please do not schedule

doctor's appointments, babysitting, social events, etc. that require swimmers to leave practice early.

## **Parents at Practice**

Practice is time for swimmers and coaches to concentrate on improving the swimmers' technique, increasing speed and endurance, developing a strong coach-swimmer relationship, and fostering cooperation and unity within the group. It is important that parents allow this development to occur without interruption. Parents are welcome to observe practice by sitting at the edge of the deck, far enough away to not be a distraction for the swimmers or coaches. Please do not talk to or give signals to your child during his/her practice. If you have questions you would like a coach to answer, please wait until practice is over to ask. Changes to this policy will be made if necessary.

## **Inclement Weather**

Practice (indoor and outdoor) continues when it is raining. If there is thunder and/or lightning, practice will be suspended for a minimum of 30 minutes, but not necessarily canceled. Coaches will make a determination whether or not to cancel practice based on the storm prediction and how much practice is left. In the event of snow or ice, practice may be canceled depending upon storm prediction and road conditions. If practice is canceled the coaching staff will make every attempt to inform parents promptly by updating the swim team hotline (224-5562), swim team website, and sending out an e-mail.

Keep in mind that weather conditions in one location may not be the same somewhere else in the area. If there is a question, call ahead. If parents are experiencing hazardous conditions (snow, ice, thunderstorm) while their children are at practice, they should come to the pool in case practice is ended early. **Be on the safe side. Don't take chances if you have doubts.**

## **Swim Meets**

Swim meets are a fun and exciting opportunity for swimmers to measure progress, experience the thrill of competition, and strive for individual and team accomplishments. They provide a break in the practice routine, as well as focal points for practice efforts during the season. Wahoo swimmers are strongly encouraged to compete in the all dual meets throughout each season and championship meets at the conclusion of each season. Invitational meets are optional but strongly recommended for some practice groups. If you have questions on whether your child should swim at a certain meet, ask the Competitive Aquatics Director or your lead group coach.

## **Leagues**

**YMCA:** The Western YMCA is a part of the Chesapeake & Potomac Swim League and the East South Field District during the winter season. This league is comprised of a total of 17 teams from Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia. YMCA competitions include dual meets, invitationals, and championship meets. Swimmers must compete in at least three YMCA meets during a season to be eligible for the league, district and national championship meets. Swimmers with YMCA National cuts must attend 75% of practices during the season to be eligible to compete in the meet with the Wahoo Team.

**USA Swimming:** USA Swimming is the national governing body for amateur competitive swimming. It sets rules for competitions, implements policies, conducts national championship meets and selects athletes to represent the United States in international competitions. USA Swimming is divided into Local Swimming Committees (LSCs) which administer USA Swimming activities in smaller geographical areas. Our LSC is “*Middle Atlantic Swimming.*” Silver, Gold, Advanced, and National practice groups are all given USA Swimming Membership as part of the program fee during the winter season and are encouraged to participate at USA meets on the schedule including Long Course meets during the spring/summer.

**SSL:** During the summer season the Wahoos participate in the Suburban Swim League comprised of 24 teams in the surrounding Northern Delaware and Eastern Pennsylvania area. To be eligible to participate in Time Trials at the end of the season swimmers must participate in 4 dual meets during the season.

**Age-up Dates:** When competing in most YMCA meets (except YMCA Nationals) swimmers will compete in the age group as of their age on December 1<sup>st</sup> of that season. For example, a 12 year old who turns 13 December 9<sup>th</sup>, will compete as a 12 year old for the rest of the season. During the summer in the SSL the age up date is May 31<sup>st</sup>. USA Swimming does not have an Age-up date and swimmers will compete as of their age the day of the meet.

### **Time Standards**

USA Swimming establishes national motivational standards by which its meets are classified (BB, B, A, AA, etc.). These standards are based on a national average of performances with the goal of allowing swimmers to be grouped in competition with swimmers of the same general skill level. Many YMCA meets, including all dual meets, do not have time standards for participation. Some meets that the Wahoos will participate in will have qualifying times base on age groups that swimmers will need to achieve in order to participate.

### **Awards Banquet**

Each spring and summer the team has an awards dinner honoring the team’s achievements during the season. All swimmers who participate in at least the minimum required dual meets (3 meets during winter, 4 during summer) will receive an award. Swimmers 8 & under will receive a trophy and those 9 and older will receive a plaque and/or year plates. Various special awards are also given out the banquet including honoring our graduating seniors.

### **Entering Meets**

**Dual Meets:** There will be sign up sheets posted for swimmers to check in if they wish to participate in upcoming dual meets. Typically the sign up deadline will be a few days prior to the meet, all deadlines will be well communicated to the team and is up to the swimmers/families to make sure they sign up on time. If a swimmer signs up for a dual meet but does not show up without notifying either the Competitive Aquatics Director or Head Coach, that swimmer will participate only in exhibition events the next meet. Please do not send e-mails to sign up.

**Invitationals and Championships:** Meet information is available to families electronically on the team website and is also sent to families via e-mail. This information includes the name, location, dates, times, eligibility requirements, and event order of the meet. Every effort is made to distribute meet information at least two weeks before it is due. Sometimes, however, this is not possible and the turn-around time is shorter. Please pay careful attention to the deadlines for entering each meet. Sign ups for invitationals and championships will be online through the

YMCA of Delaware's website. You will be able to sign up for the meet just like you would for any youth sports, dance, or swim lessons program. Directions can be found on the Wahoos website [www.westernwahoos.org](http://www.westernwahoos.org).

## What to Bring to Meets

team suit	team cap
goggles	multiple towels
team shirt, sweats, warm-ups	money (for heat sheet, healthy snacks)
shoes & socks	healthy snacks (if facility permits)

**\*\* CLEARLY LABEL ALL ITEMS THAT ARE TAKEN TO A MEET\*\***

## Punctuality

Please arrive at the meet location at least 15 minutes before the designated warm-up time unless otherwise specified by coaches. Swimmers need to fully stretch and warm up before competing. In addition, coaches must make relay decisions before the start of competition and they will be unable to include a swimmer who is not present for warm-ups. Directions will be available on the team website and/or sent out via e-mail.

## Team Area

Swimmers should sit in the designated team area. This promotes team support and unity, which in turn contributes to swimming success and fun. Depending on the facility, there may or may not be a separate spectator area for family members. When there is such an area, parents who are not volunteering are asked to sit in the stands, not with their children. Younger swimmers may choose to sit with their parents if the child prefers but they are encouraged to sit with the team. At many invitational meets, parents who are not volunteering in the meet are not permitted on the pool deck. This is because deck space is limited and parental interruptions are distracting to swimmers and coaches. In addition, swimmers develop responsibility and camaraderie when working together as a team. Just as swimmers are asked to sit together as a team, parents are invited to do the same. This creates team spirit and support for the swimmers from the spectator stands and is highly encouraging.

## Behavior

Swim meets are an opportunity to display not only athletic ability but also team pride and sportsmanship. All swimmers should shake hands with those competing in the lanes next to them after the race is over. Parents and swimmers should always be mindful that they are representing the Wahoo swim team, the Western YMCA and the YMCA of Delaware and should act accordingly (even when other swimmers and parents do not). Swimmers are encouraged to cheer for their teammates and to stay until the end of the meet if possible. If a swimmer, at any level, must leave before the end of a meet, he or she should notify one of the coaches *before* the start of the meet.

## Checking with Coaches

Swimmers should talk to their coaches *before and after* each swim. Coaches give final reminders and encouragement before the event, and they offer praise and a constructive review afterward. Parents, PLEASE do not coach your swimmers. It is confusing and disruptive to the work that the coaches and swimmers are doing. Offer them love and support for their effort, regardless of the result of the swim.

## **Results and Awards**

Results are posted on a wall at each meet. Parents and swimmers may copy official times and places from these results. The kind of awards (medals, ribbons, plaques) and the number of awards given at each meet are determined by the host team, or by league by-laws. Team trophies are given primarily at championship meets. All awards are given to coaches at the end of the meet and are distributed in the swimmers folders at practice. Coaches also receive the official results from the meet. These will be uploaded into the team database and posted on the Wahoos website.

## **Team Apparel**

Swimmers are to wear Wahoo attire, especially the team suit, cap and t-shirt, at all meets. Wearing team apparel promotes team pride and unity. It also helps coaches, parents and other swimmers locate Wahoo team members.

## **Accommodations for Travel Meets**

Whenever possible, the team will reserve a block of rooms for multiple-day meets 1 1/2 or more hours away from Newark. The hotel information will be distributed via e-mail to families well in advanced of the meet. Participants are not required to stay at that particular hotel, or stay at all, but group planning promotes camaraderie among parents and swimmers.

## **Parent Volunteers**

Swim meets are completely run by parent volunteers. There are numerous jobs to be filled at meets and volunteering is a great way to stay busy between your child's events. It also gets parents involved in the achievements of all team members and builds relationships with other parents in the swimming community. All Wahoo parents are expected to help at meets, both at home and away. It sets a positive example of volunteerism and participation for the swimmers.

### **All meets need:**

**Timers:** Timing each heat in a specific lane using stopwatches that are provided by the host team. This job is very easy and keeps you right next to the action. No prior experience is necessary.

**Officials:** These include the starter, referee, and stroke and turn judges. They conduct the meet and address rule infractions; training is necessary (through USA Swimming and/or YMCA, depending on the meet). There is always a demand for these volunteers. Training is technical but not lengthy or difficult.

### **Home meets also require:**

**Awards:** Place computer-generated labels on ribbons and other awards for swimmers. No prior experience necessary.

**Runners:** After each heat, this person takes cards from timers to the computer operator. No prior experience necessary.

**Hospitality:** This is usually reserved for invitational and championship meets. These volunteers provide drinks to other meet workers, act as host/hostess in the hospitality room where coaches and officials go to relax and have a snack. No prior experience needed.

**Computer Operator:** This person inputs data during meets (times, relay names, etc.) and generates results from the system. Training on specific meet manager software is needed.

**Timing System Operator:** This person operates the Colorado Timing System console that times each event electronically. He or she coordinates with the Computer Operator and Referee to keep the meet running efficiently.

**Clerk of Course:** The clerk organizes swimmers into proper heats, gives them cards if necessary, and sends them to starting area behind blocks. Not all meets have a clerk of course.

**Head Timer:** Organizes the timers and acts as a backup timer in case a timer's watch malfunctions.

**Concessions/Snack Bar:** Sell snack items to swimmers and family members attending the meet.

## Financial

### Program Fees

There are many costs involved in operating the swim team. Much, but not all of the cost is covered by program fees. Below is a list of what is and is not covered by your program fees.

***Covered:***

coaches' salaries  
pool rental fees  
general operating costs  
league fees  
USA registration (some groups)

***Not Covered:***

meet fees      travel costs  
suit, goggles      training equipment  
team clothing      swim bag  
invitational and championship meet costs

### Payment Options

**Pay in Full:** Upon registration families have the option of paying the season fees in full.

**EFT:** If you are not paying in full then when registering you will fill out an Electronic Fund Transfer form depending on the season length may be three to four months.

**Open Doors:** The swim team does recognize scholarships that are awarded through the YMCA of Delaware's Open Doors Policy. Contact the front desk (302) 709-9622 to find out more information.

**Cancellations:** All cancellations must go through the front desk before the Competitive Aquatics Director can sign off on any reimbursements. Reimbursements *may* be given depending upon the length of participation within the program and amount already paid by the family.

### Fundraising

The only fundraiser during the year will be in October and is our Wahoo-A-Thon. A couple times throughout the year we may organize team socials at a local restaurant where the Wahoos swim team will receive a portion of the restaurant's total checks. The main source of fundraising comes from our snack bar operated at dual meets, Pumpkin Plunge Mini Meet and the Suburban Swim League Championships which we host.

**Wahoo-A-Thon:** During one Saturday of the year, usually to be held in October all winter swim team members are expected to participate in this fundraiser. For groups Silver and above, swimmers will have to swim 200 laps or for 2 hours. Introduction and Bronze groups will swim for 1 hour or 100 laps. Food and beverages will be provided to the swimmers after they complete these requirements. Prizes and incentives will be awarded for individuals and groups

who exceed certain amounts of money raised and participation. Money raised will help cover cost of new equipment for the team, socials throughout the year, and relay entries at invitational's to name a few. 10% of all money raised will also be donated to the YMCA Strong Kids Campaign.

### **YMCA Strong Kids Campaign**

Each year, the Western YMCA conducts its annual support campaign. This raises money to help youth and families in need to participate in YMCA programs who otherwise would not have been able to participate. The swim team is proud of the contributions its families make yearly to the campaign and you are encouraged to continue to help make a difference through your generosity. The swim team parent's board donates 10% of our account balance as of August 31<sup>st</sup> of each year and an additional 10% of the total raised for the Wahoo-A-Thon is also donated. Volunteers in several capacities are needed and Wahoo families are encouraged to get involved in the campaign.

## **Communication**

Communication is vital to any organization and it must be a two-way street. Coaches will make every effort to convey information to swimmers and their parents. Likewise, team members and their parents need to communicate with coaches in order to avoid misunderstandings and to inform them of things that may affect a swimmer's training and competition. The responsibility for maintaining effective communication rests with everyone.

### **Information for swimmers and their families:**

**E-Mail:** Reminders and last-minute information is sent to families via e-mail. This is a primary means of communication and is most useful when there is a limited amount of time to send out information or when a quick reminder is needed. Please update the Head Coach and Competitive Aquatics Director with any changes or additions for the e-mail list.

**Team Website:** The Wahoo website is part of the YMCA of Delaware website, visit us at [www.westernwahoos.org](http://www.westernwahoos.org) . Please bookmark this site and make a habit of checking it for meet information, newsletters, updates and changes.

**Newsletters:** About once a month a team newsletter will be published and sent out via e-mail as well as posted on the website. The newsletters will include important upcoming dates, dead lines for meets, summary of previous meets, and any other relevant team information.

**Verbal:** Sometimes swimmers are given information verbally by coaches. This is most common at the National level. Regularly ask your swimmer about information given verbally.

**Hotline:** Practice cancelations, deadlines and other updates are left at our answer machine swim team hotline (302) 224-5562. To ask a question or leave a message, call the Competitive Aquatics Director.

## **Communicating with coaches:**

**Contacting coaches by phone** – The Competitive Aquatics Director may be reached by phone during the general office hours of 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. The Swim Team office phone is **(302) 709-9622 x.1133**. The director’s cell number is **(302) 753-0995**.

NOTE: Please respect the coaches personal and family time and avoid calling them at home unless it is an emergency. Please address issues during office hours, before and/or after practice.

**E-mail** - Parents are welcome to e-mail coaches with questions, information and ideas. Please address large issues or concerns in person with the appropriate staff member(s).

**Meeting (formal or informal) with coaches** - Coaches are usually available before or after practice time to answer quick questions. If you would like to address issues that require more time, please schedule an appointment with your child’s coach or the Competitive Aquatics Director. *Do not interrupt coaches or swimmers on deck during practice time.* Coaches are more than happy to answer questions or address issues at a more appropriate time and place.

## **Grievances**

Most problems are rooted in simple misunderstandings or miscommunication and can be resolved quickly and easily. If allowed to fester, however, problems grow out of proportion and can be harmful to swimmers, parents, coaches, and the program. This can be prevented by addressing grievances immediately and with the appropriate person. If a team member or parent has a grievance concerning any aspect of the program, he or she should go directly to the source.

### **Contact:**

**Head / Group Coach**

### **When:**

An issue is group-specific, site-specific or swimmer-specific.

**Competitive Aquatics Director**

An issue concerns the overall swim team, financial or administrative concerns.

## **Swimmer, Parent, and Coach**

The relationship between swimmer, coach and parent is an important aspect of swimming. Usually it is a mutually supportive partnership, but if it becomes strained it can be harmful to a swimmer’s experience in the sport. Regular and open communication is necessary to avoid misunderstandings. The swimmer, the coach, and the parent must each understand and respect his or her role so that conflicting or negative messages are not sent. Swimmers, parents and coaches may not always agree but respectful and open communication will help maintain a positive relationship.

## **Parents**

Parents are a vital part of every child’s life. They are central figures in the growth and development of their children. Parents are the primary example after which children pattern their own behavior and beliefs. For athletes, especially teenagers, the role of parents may change as coaches and others assume a stronger role not only in their physical achievements but also in their mental and emotional development. Because coaches and teammates have such a strong impact on a swimmer, parents should fully investigate the philosophy and conduct of the

program before registering their child. When a child begins swimming on a team, the parents put their faith in the program and its coaches to make the child's experience positive, rewarding, and enjoyable. There are ways in which parents can also aid the experience.

### **Unconditional Love**

In swimming, the primary duty for parents is to love and support their swimmer(s) regardless of performance and achievement level. A child needs to know that no matter what happens, he or she is loved. Swimmers should be praised for their own personal achievements and should never be compared with other swimmers or with the past achievements of a parent or other relative. Whatever a swimmer does or doesn't achieve is a result of many factors and is not a reflection on his or her parents. *Please do not try to live vicariously through your child's swimming experience.*

### **Set a Good Example**

Children tend to pattern their attitudes and behavior after the example set by their parents. Please be aware of your attitudes and behavior, especially in the team setting. Exemplify good sportsmanship and the positive values of the YMCA. The Wahoo program encourages swimmers to be honest, caring, respectful and responsible, to ask questions and address concerns directly and to serve others. Observing these habits in parents further enforces the lessons taught at the YMCA. After all, parents represent the team and the YMCA as much as the swimmers and coaches do.

### **Positive Problem Solving**

We ask that parents reserve concerns and disagreements about the program for discussion with a coach or the Competitive Aquatics Director. Questioning or criticizing a coach, team member, or the program in front of a swimmer seriously damages the swimmer's trust and confidence in the coach and the team. If your swimmer has a problem, try to gather as much information as possible and address it with the coach or appropriate person directly. Avoid passing judgment, jumping to conclusions or discussing it with others. Gossip is never constructive.

### **Get Involved**

We invite parents to become involved in the swim team in a constructive way. There are numerous volunteer opportunities that allow parents to be more involved in swimming and in the Wahoo team. Swim meets (all meets, but especially those hosted by Western) require extensive volunteer efforts to run. Team social events bring parents, swimmers and coaches together in an informal and fun setting. Help is always needed with meets, socials, and other areas, if you are not sure where you could help but want to JUST ASK!

### **...But not *too* involved**

Please respect the time your swimmer spends with his or her coach and teammates by not interrupting a coach or swimmer during practice or team activities. During practice times and meets please do not come on deck. It is distracting to both swimmers and coaches. Furthermore, please refrain from offering swimming-related instruction to swimmers. This is confusing for swimmers and frustrating for coaches. If you have a question or concern, contact your child's coach.

## **Swimmers - Roles and Responsibilities**

Wahoo Swimmers strive to be positive team members in and out of the pool. Most importantly, swimmers should always remember that they represent the YMCA and the Wahoo Swim Team. Their words and actions reflect not only on themselves but on their teammates, parents, coaches, and the YMCA. With the guidance of coaches and parents, swimmers are expected to demonstrate the YMCA's character development traits of caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility.

**Focus on Team:** Individual achievements are important but supporting others and working together toward a common goal raises everyone's performance level. Furthermore, shared experiences are more fun and exciting than individual ones. *Together Everyone Achieves More.*

**Act, Think, Look, and Talk Positively:** Attitudes are contagious so make sure that yours is worth catching. Every member of a team contributes to the overall team experience. Help make ours AWESOME!

**Take responsibility** for your belongings, words, actions, and swimming. Attend practice regularly. Be on time and remember all equipment (cap, goggles, suit, towel, etc.) Don't blame others when things don't go your way. Excuses satisfy only the person who makes them.

**Demonstrate good sportsmanship** at all times. Athletes with good sportsmanship habits earn the respect of their competitors and gain pride and confidence in themselves. Loud, emotional, or rude displays are inappropriate, regardless of the reason. Always think before you speak or act. Remember that you represent the YMCA - at the pool and away from it.

**Show respect:** The best way to gain respect is to show respect. Allow others to share their opinions and ideas freely. Follow rules set forth by coaches and officials. Do not talk while others are talking, and don't talk back to coaches or officials. Refrain from speaking or acting negatively toward other swimmers, teams, coaches, or officials. Do not misuse or abuse property in YMCAs, at meets, in restaurants, etc.

**Take Pride:** Give an effort that you can be proud of. Maintain an attitude that you can be proud of. Develop team pride by encouraging teammates to do the same. Don't cut corners or take shortcuts.

**Be honest:** Do not lie. Refrain from gossip (which often involves more lies than truth). Do what you think is right, not just what is popular. Give an honest effort toward achieving your stated goals. Communicate with coaches regarding anything that might affect your performance, or the team as a whole.

## Code of Conduct

As representatives of the Wahoo Swim Team and the Western YMCA, swimmers are expected to speak and behave in a manner that is respectful, responsible, honest, and caring. If each swimmer is mindful of these traits, appropriate conduct should never be an issue. These guidelines are to be followed by Wahoo swimmers at all practices, meets, and other team functions.

### **The following behaviors are not acceptable and may result in discipline/suspension from the team:**

- Unsportsmanlike conduct - taunting, teasing, or speaking negatively about teammates, competitors, officials, or coaches.
- Use of inappropriate, strong, or vulgar language or gestures.
- Lying, deceit, dishonesty.
- Littering, abuse, or misuse of equipment, furniture, or other items of property.

### **The following discipline model will be followed if any swimmer is found behaving in a manner outside of the YMCA Character Values or any of the above behaviors:**

- The first violation will receive a verbal warning
- The second will result in a written warning
- The third will result in dismissal from the practice, meet, or team function where the violation occurred.
- The fourth violation will result in suspension from the team for a period of time determined by the Competitive Aquatics Director and Head Coach.
- A fifth violation will result in an immediate review regarding the swimmers conduct by the Western Family YMCA Executive and Director Staff and may result in removal of the swimmer from the program.

Parents will be requested to meet with an age group coach any time a swimmer violates the Wahoo Code of Conduct and will be notified by the Wahoo Coaching Staff of the necessary discipline measures that may result. ***Refunds for the program and/or swim meet fees will not be given due to a suspension or removal from the program. All future payments will be cancelled in the event of removal being necessary.***

### **The following actions will not be tolerated and may result in removal from the team:**

- Verbal or physical abuse toward others.
- Theft of any kind.
- Vandalism or any destruction of property, public or private.
- Use of tobacco products or other illegal substances.
- Consumption of alcoholic beverages or other illegal substances.
- Sexual activity at practice, meets, or team functions.

## Dress Code

Swimmers are expected to dress with dignity and appropriate taste whenever representing the team. This includes going into and out of practices, meets and team activities. Swimmers should not show any part of their undergarments (boxer shorts, bra straps, etc.) outside of their clothes. Skirts and shorts must be of an appropriate length. Swimmers should monitor the condition of their suits so that they are not worn when they no longer provide adequate coverage and support. Team caps are to be worn at all meets where the individual is competing as a member of the Wahoos.

## **Coaches**

Coaches occupy a unique place in a swimmer's life - part parent, part teacher, part friend. Wahoo coaches take these roles seriously and strive to be good role models, leaders and listeners.

### **Coaches:**

- Instruct swimmers in all aspects of the sport: technique, training methods, mental preparation, competitive strategy, etc.
- Offer encouragement, constructive criticism, and honest assessments with suggestions for improvement.
- Demonstrate and encourage values and behaviors consistent with the principles of the YMCA
- Lead the team at competitions.
- Make decisions about group placement, meet opportunities, and events for swimmers (based on a number of factors and with the interest of the swimmer and the team in mind).
- Communicate with swimmers and parents about plans, issues, and philosophy within the program.

### **Points to Keep in Mind:**

- Individual swimmers develop at different rates. This fact alone may cause stress for swimmers and external pressure cannot quicken or slow the pace of natural development. Excessive pressure can, however, contribute to burnout.
- Coaches, swimmers, and parents are human. Mistakes are inevitable. The most productive response is to admit them, excuse them, and move on. Grudges help no one.
- Let the coaches coach, let the swimmers swim, let the parents parent.
- The *process*, not the awards, is the most valuable part of competitive swimming. The friendships, lessons, skills, and memories gained from participating in the sport and the team last forever. They help create a healthy, happy and strong person.
- As stated before, parents, swimmers and coaches may not always agree but honest and open communication maintains mutual respect and a positive relationship.

## **Health and Nutrition**

Swimming is an ideal sport to promote total health and fitness. Here is some basic information on health and nutrition to prevent injury and to help ensure improved performance in practice and meets.

### **Health**

All pools have safety rules posted. Please read and follow them. These standard pool safety rules always apply:

1. Don't run.
2. Never swim alone.
3. Look before you dive.
4. Never bring glass containers on a pool deck.
5. No horseplay on pool deck or in locker rooms.

Some other safety guidelines pertaining to swim practices and meets:

1. Inform coaches of medical conditions and prescription drugs.
2. Swimmers with asthma should always bring an inhaler and have it ready for use.
3. Swimmers should always bring and use a water bottle for practice and meets.
4. Wear proper shoes and clothing for outdoor activities.

Swim coaches are required to be trained in First Aid, CPR, and either Lifeguarding or Safety Training for Swim Coaches.

## **Injuries**

Injuries incurred during practice, meets, or team activities will be treated immediately and parents will be notified. Sometimes swimmers experience pain that is not the result of a particular wound or accident. Muscle pain is common, especially as swimmers mature and their muscles develop further. Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish between soreness and injury. If pain restricts movement or lasts more than 3-4 days, swimmers should seek medical attention. If your swimmer is having pain, remember to ice for 20 minutes immediately following practice. Coaches are not doctors and can only give advice, not diagnosis or treatment. It is, however, important to keep coaches informed of injuries, treatments, and rehabilitation.

## **Illness**

In case of illness, swimmers should let their bodies heal by restricting activity. It is also better to miss a practice or two than to expose many other team members and coaches to the same illness. Once recovered, swimmers can return to practice and work to regain their strength in the water.

## **Swimmer's Ear**

Otitis Externa, commonly known as "swimmer's ear," is an infection of the skin in the ear canal. The dark, warm, wet environment of a swimmer's ear canal is a breeding ground for such an infection. To prevent swimmer's ear, dry the ear well after each time in the water. Use a towel, Q-tip (carefully), or gently shake the head on its side. Commercial products aid in the prevention and treatment of swimmer's ear. A couple of drops in each ear will help kill some of the normal bacteria and will help dry out the ear. If your child has tubes in his/her ear, check with your doctor before putting any drops in.

## **Nutrition**

Food is the body's fuel, and the body's performance can be helped or hindered by the quality of food that is consumed. In terms of quantity, young swimmers must strike a delicate balance between consuming enough calories and nutrients to promote growth and skeleto-muscular development on the one hand, and not eating so much that they are sluggish due to excess food storage. As for quality of food, carbohydrates should make up the highest percentage of a swimmer's diet. Carbohydrates provide the greatest source of energy during physical exertion. Because calorie needs vary from person to person depending on age, size, amount of training, etc., swimmers should concentrate on the *kinds* of foods that make up their diet. **In general, a swimmer's diet should contain 55-65% carbohydrates, 15-25% protein, and 20-30% fat.**

Swimmers may need a boost of "fuel" before and after practice, so eating smaller meals plus snacks during the day can be helpful in sustaining a swimmer's energy. Furthermore, the body more quickly and efficiently digests smaller amounts eaten throughout the day than it does large meals eaten three times a day. This is particularly important during meets that can last several

hours per session. Snacks at meets should be small, easily digestible, and able to be quickly converted to energy (foods high in carbohydrates and low in fat). Try to leave at least 20-30 minutes between the time you eat a snack and the time you swim your next event.

Perhaps the most forgotten element of good nutrition is water. Swimmers need to drink a large amount of water to aid in digestion, keep the body cool and replace fluids lost during workout. (Yes, you do sweat in the pool.) The best indicator of adequate hydration is the color of your urine. Pale urine indicates good hydration. Dark urine means you need to drink more! A good rule of thumb is to drink before you are thirsty. Sports drinks can help replace some nutrients and electrolytes during intense exercise but some may have high amounts of sugar and sodium. As a general rule, if an athlete is exercising continuously for 90 minutes or longer then he/she would benefit from a sports drink with carbohydrates. Diluting sports drinks with water can help replace carbohydrates without consuming as much sugar and can help those athletes whose stomachs are upset by the strong taste of such drinks.

Refueling the body after a workout is as important as fueling it beforehand. Within 30 minutes after the completion of a rigorous workout, athletes should start replacing the energy (carbohydrates, fluids and a small amount of protein) that they depleted. Having a small, easily digestible snack on the way home can help the recovery process significantly. Sports drinks, water, energy bars, crackers, bagels, etc. are good choices for replenishment following a workout.

The best diet for swimmers is one that is well-balanced, includes a variety of foods, and is accompanied by a large amount of water. Some swimmers like to take multivitamins to ensure that they are receiving recommended amounts of vitamins and minerals.

***Good sources of carbohydrates:***

- Breads, bagels, cereal, pasta, fruit, green vegetables, corn, beans, milk, potatoes, rice, granola bars, crackers

***Good sources of protein:***

- Lean meat & poultry, fish, low fat yogurt and milk, soups with lean meat, peanut butter, beans, eggs

***Foods to limit:***

- Sugary foods, fatty foods, greasy foods - i.e. candy, chocolate, potato chips, french fries, fried anything, butter, mayonnaise, creamy sauces, ice cream, cookies, cake, cupcakes

Each person has different likes, dislikes, and preferences. Swimmers should be conscious of their food choices and listen to their bodies. Variety is the spice of life; but enjoy everything in moderation.

An excellent source for nutritional information pertaining to young athletes is *Nancy Clark's Sports Nutrition Guidebook*. USA Swimming also has a nutrition section on their web site.