

Building an Officials Program for your Club

Purpose of the Club Official Program

Having sufficient certified officials in our zone is a critical factor to ensure we can offer opportunities for our athletes to compete. Sanctioned meets require that there are a given number of officials present to ensure the meet is run in accordance to the USA-S rules. In addition to the LSC and Zone meets, many teams hold invitational meets and/or are part of leagues and require officials to support these meets above and beyond the Zone Meets.

Clubs first need to acknowledge that officiating requires a bigger commitment than the club volunteer service requirements. Becoming an official requires registering with USA-S (\$\$ involved), background check, and APT. It also requires learning the technical rules, taking tests and working as an apprentice just to start the process. Once certified, most officials find themselves working many more hours than required by their club.

Secondly, we must realize that recruiting, training and certifying officials is an ongoing process, not a destination. There is a lot of churn that takes place in the official community due to swimmers graduating and leaving, changing clubs or just quitting. Clubs that have an abundance of officials one year could end up with less than a handful in subsequent years if they do not proactively make an effort to bring in new parents. We as a zone community need to ensure we put the right processes in place to ensure that we continue to bring in new parents to make up for attrition.

This is where a club official's program comes in. Clubs that are successful building their officials base often have put programs & policies in place that communicate that they value their officials and also provide accommodation and perks to support their officials community.

Club Officials Program Requirements

Identify a Club Officials Coordinator

A key person to identify when building your Club Officials program would be an officials coordinator. This person could have multiple responsibilities

- Communicate club policies around officiating
- Help with training/certification (need to find someone well respected and knowledgeable)
- Organize officials for League/Invitational meets or other meets that require officials.
- Recruitment (new officials usually join because they have a friend who is an official or the coach asks them to help)

Perks & Accommodations

Clubs that are successful often provide perks & accommodations to their officials. This package needs to be designed by each club per their specific situation. Clubs in our zone have adopted some of the following policies (ideas):

- Paying USA-S registration
- Discounted dues and/or fundraising requirements
- Exempt from sending in service hours. Need to ensure that an official is in good standing, and works a minimum number of meets/days/sessions per year. (Pacific swimming requires officials to work 8 days a year to maintain their certification)
- Providing small gifts/recognition for officials that go above and beyond the call of duty – ideas include an official jacket (can add your team logo), hats, pens
- Social Events – dinners, BBQs, etc. for officials to build relationships with other officials on your team.

Use your creativity on ways that your club can show your appreciation for the value officials bring to your team, the Zone and the LSC.