

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 young athletes to compete. Sanctioned meets require that there is a given number of officials present to ensure they 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 their meet.

We first need to acknowledge that officiating is a more demanding volunteer job than what is required at most clubs to meet their volunteer service commitment. Becoming an official requires registering with USA-S (\$\$ involved), background, APT. It also requires learning the technical rules, taking tests and working as an apprentice just to start the process. Once certified, most officials work many more hours than required by their club.

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

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

A club official program would look something as follows

Identify a Club Official Coordinator

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

- Communicate club policies around officiating
- Organize officials for League/Invitational meets or other meets requiring official participation
- Training and Knowledge transfer
- Recruitment (new officials usually join because they have a friend who is an official or the coach asks them to help)

The official's chairs for the zone will start having meetings with the Club Official Coordinators so we can start building our community.

Perks & Accommodations

Since officiating requires more commitment than the average volunteer job, 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 adopting some of the following policies (ideas):

- Paying USA-S registration
- Discount in due and/or fundraising requirements
- Exempt from sending in service ours (make sure official is required to work a min number of sessions each year)
- Providing gifts/recognition for officials that go up and above the call of duty – maybe a jacket (where you can add club name)
- Social Events

They sky is the limit here, use your creativity on ways that your club can show your appreciation for the value they bring to your team, the zone and the LSC.

Also, remind your officials about the perks they get working at meets – parking, hospitality, small gifts. And these are also those intangible gifts where the officials get to be part of their Child's swim journey.