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To: General Chairs
USA Swimming Officials
Board of Directors, USA Swimming
Sanction Chairs

Age Group Chairs
Senior Chairs
Technical Planning Chairs
Coaches

From: Daniel W. McAllen III, Chair, Rules & Regulations Committee

Re: Interpretation of USA Swimming Article 205.3.1F (4 hour rule)

Rule 205.3.1F, commonly referred to as the four hour rule, was adopted by the USA Swimming House of Delegates in 1989 to ensure that swimming would be competitive with other youth sports, namely baseball and soccer, insofar as time commitment for both athletes and parents was concerned. Clearly, it was not in the best interest of our sport for developmental athletes to be at a pool all day or for the entire weekend to the exclusion of other family interests, particularly when other athletic activities could be completed in a far more reasonable time. With that by way of background, it has come to my attention that rule 205.3.1F is being improperly interpreted and enforced in some LSCs. Therefore, I am issuing the following interpretations:

Meets must be planned such that events for 12&Unders can reasonably be concluded within four (4) hours. Sessions that exceed four hours are not in violation of the rule if properly planned.

The rule does NOT apply to Open events even if swimmers 12 years of age or younger are entered.

Measurement of the time duration applicable to this rule begins with the published meet start time of a session that offers 12U events and ends with the conclusion of the last 12U event of the day for the same gender.

Under NO circumstances may a meet or meet session be terminated before all individual events have been concluded as a means of complying with the rule. Relays may be eliminated only if the meet announcement clearly states the conditions under which relays will be eliminated and whether relay entry fees will be refunded.

Events that are scored multi-age are impacted by the rule if the multi-age scoring involves 12U designations, such as 11-12, 10U, 12U, etc.

Some suggested planning tools that facilitate compliance include:

- Using meet management software to monitor the timelines as entries are processed.
- Selection of a heat interval appropriate for the session.
- Being aware of the number of swimmers appropriate for the number of lanes available and distances offered.
- Adequate meet staffing such that marshals, timers and other meet personnel are properly trained and in place.
- Keeping equipment (computers, timing systems, printers, etc.) in proper working order.

Should you have any questions regarding the above, please contact me.

Daniel W. McAllen III, Chair, USA Swimming Rules & Regulations Committee