



Apprentice Official Mentoring Guidelines and Suggestions

Deck Referee Apprentice

On deck mentoring of “apprentice” officials is an integral part of the development and certification of swimming officials within the Iowa LSC. Objectives of the certification program include providing the volunteer with the tools, knowledge and initial experience to enable them to confidently contribute to a consistent and fair environment on the pool deck for our athlete.

Mentor Requirements.

The basic requirement for an on-deck mentor is a minimum of 12 months on-deck experience as a certified official in the position being mentored. Additionally, the final Deck Referee apprentice session requires the mentor to hold at least an N2 certification in that position.

Mentoring Approach.

Before starting a mentoring session – ensure the apprentice has the relevant apprentice sheet that you can sight so

- (a) you know what the person has completed up till now, and
- (b) you can enter in post-session comments and report immediately after the session.

The approach with Deck Referee apprentices is different to that for the Stroke and Turn official in that the apprentice will become involved with the actual management and overview of the heats. Ensure that you are monitoring the apprentice performance before, during and after races. Things that become second nature after practice and experience can be overwhelming to an apprentice and it’s one of the mentor’s responsibilities to ensure this doesn’t impact the swimmers nor start “bad habits” for the official. If during heats the apprentice Deck Referee’s performance begins to consistently devolve, due to overwhelming radio calls, paper work, etc., get them to step back and take a breather. The mentor is responsible for the conduct of both the apprentice and the performance of that position. Do not expect a Deck Referee apprentice to work most events in a 3-hour session on his or her second or third apprentice session during a Q- or novice meet. Experienced Deck Referees can find that difficult. Conversely, don’t just step them down and tell them to take a break and then bring them back in for another event. Have them take a break and then have them observe some events. Another aspect to monitor is how often, and who is giving advice to the mentor. Invite comments from other experienced officials but ensure this is managed. Don’t have two or three people speaking into an apprentice’s ear during events. Make sure you are involved in any discussion, so you know what is being said.



The following are the minimum behaviors and knowledge that must be covered during the apprentice sessions before the official can be considered for certification at the LSC level:

- Prior to a session
 - Invigilating if needed
 - Understanding the assignments and protocols
 - Verifying the radios and understanding the radio protocols (if used)
 - The protocol for reviewing and processing DQ's
 - Working with the Starter so he or she can clearly see when the heat is handed over
 - Understanding the timeline for the session and when to blow the whistle
- During a session
 - Observing the deck – officials positioning, potential calls, radio responses
 - Whistle protocols – short, long and second long for backstroke
 - When to hand the heat over to the starter
 - When to physically start the race
 - What to mark on the program
 - Responding to potential DQs
 - Processing DQs (Note – then Mentor must enter his/her name as the Referee, but the apprentice can initial to show he/she has reviewed the slip)
 - Calls for No Show, DFS, DQ, relay takeoff clearance (if radios used)
 - Timeline management
 - Event close outs
 - Working with coaches and monitoring protests (the mentor should deal with all protests)
 - Resolving ties if a prelims session
 - Consistency of decision making

Obviously, there's a lot to cover so this needs to be broken down over the sessions available. Since the apprentice should be familiar with the starting process, there is no restriction on the apprentice working events from the first session (the apprentice should work for a whole event – not a subset of heats). Ensure that the apprentice isn't overwhelmed. After the first session, make sure to review the apprentice form and discuss with the apprentice any items they want to cover before coming on deck, determine ahead of the session what events the apprentice will work, determine where you will stand to observe the starts and make sure you, the Starter and the apprentice understand how potential false starts will be handled.

After the session, make sure you talk with your apprentice and provide some feedback. Start with positive comments always and, then, if necessary, discuss areas for improvement, practice and/or concern. Make sure you fill out the apprentice's sheet so that there is a record of the apprentice session. Include any areas where you think the apprentice did well (there's not much room but still try to do this), plus any areas where you feel the apprentice would benefit with practice, so the next mentor has an idea of where to start.

Finally, make suggestions to the Officials' Committee on how to improve the program and thank you for helping make this a better experience for our athletes and volunteers.