



## Apprentice Official Mentoring Guidelines and Suggestions

### Starter 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 Starter 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 Starter apprentices is slightly 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 when they are starting 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 when starting heats, the apprentice starter's performance during starts begins to consistently devolve, 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 starter apprentice to start most heats in a 3-hour session on their second or third apprentice sessions. Experienced starters can find that difficult. Conversely, don't just step them down and tell them to take a break and then bring them back in to start. 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.

An apprentice starter should have at least 120 starts during his/her apprentice sessions including at least 20 backstroke starts. These must not be crammed into the first few sessions but rather spaced out and the number per session gradually increased as the number of apprentice sessions accumulate. 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
  - Timers meeting
  - Equipment – how to operate the microphone, start the horn, recall
  - Positioning on deck to observe starts
  - Working with the DR so the Starter can clearly see when the heat is handed over
- During a session
  - Observation of the next up heat
  - The importance of patience
  - Clear and conversational Take Your Mark (TYM) Command
  - When to physically start the race
  - What is a false start?
  - What is the false start protocol?
  - Forward starts and backstroke starts
  - Hearing impaired starts
  - Starter rotation through events
  - Counting long distance freestyle
  - The bell – when, where and how (if timers have a bell each, then this needs to be included in the timers meeting)
  - Order of Finish

Obviously, there's a lot to cover so this needs to be broken down over the sessions available. It is strongly recommended that the apprentice not start a race for their first apprentice session, rather the apprentice observes the deck and the protocols and asks questions (but not during the start). 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 start, determine where you will stand to observe the starts when the apprentice is starting and make sure you, the deck referee and the apprentice understand how potential false starts will be handled. The approach to the deck referee should be by the mentor prior to any discussion with the apprentice. Talk through the process and the result with the apprentice after reviewing the potential false start with the deck referee. It's suggested that for hearing impaired starts the apprentice initially stands back (out of forward view of the swimmers in the heat) and practice the arm and hand motions while another starter starts that heat - to become comfortable with the actions prior to performing them during starts.

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.