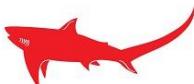


TOPS YMCA HANDBOOK

Please note that this is a living document, and is subject to change from season to season.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this handbook is to serve as a guide for new and returning families and explain what is required of the athletes, families, coaches and staff of the TOPS YMCA Swim Team. By joining TOPS, the reader agrees to adhere to each of the standards set forth in this document. It is highly advised that all parents and athletes read this document in order to familiarize themselves to the rules and regulations of our club.

OUR MISSION

Our Mission is to provide positive youth development through the sport of swimming. TOPS provides a supportive team environment, for all swimmers, of every age and ability. By striving to achieve their own personal goals and coming together as team to achieve team goals, we believe that every athlete participating can become a champion.

OUR HISTORY

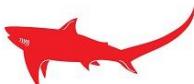
Since the 1950s, some semblance of a group called The Oak Park Swimmers has swum out of the West Cook YMCA and has established a long standing relationship with Oak Park and the surrounding areas.

When a young person becomes a member of The Oak Park Swimmers he/she learns the values of sportsmanship and team work. Swimming, through The Oak Park Swimmers, provides physical, emotional and intellectual skills that will last a lifetime.

EXPECTATIONS OF COACHING STAFF

Our Coaching staff at TOPS is required to be certified to the standards set forth by both USA Swimming and YMCA Swimming (both of which can be found online, and provided if desired). Our staff strictly adheres to the USA Swimming Safe Sport Policies. Our highest concern is with every athlete's safety. These requirements ensure that each coach is able to provide the highest quality of coaching, as well as help to create a safe environment. The coaches are here to ensure that each athlete is provided with positive environments and role models in order to facilitate their growth.

The coaches are responsible for creating workouts as well as the supervision and safety of the athletes from when they arrive to when they are picked up by a guardian. The decisions made by coaching staff should be respected and are final. Any comments or concerns about a decision should be brought to the coach's attention in a civil manner and appropriate location so the issue can be resolved. If you have any questions, we ask that you first contact your athlete's Group Parent Liaison to see if they can assist with any issues.



EXPECTATIONS OF SWIMMERS

Role Models: As a part of TOPS YMCA Swim Team each swimmer is expected to be caring, respectful, honest, and responsible. This includes the time spent in and out of the water. One of our goals is to create a group of swimmers who can serve as role models for the younger generations of TOPS.

Act as a Guest: Swimmers are expected to act as guests at each pool they visit (including the West Cook YMCA and OPRF High School). Horseplay in the shower areas, pool deck, inside the pool, and locker room areas is not allowed. Damages to any facility can result in financial liability to be covered by the swimmer's parents, as well as the possibility of the swimmer being asked to permanently leave the team.

Practice: Swimmers should arrive 15 minutes before the start of practice. This way they are prepared to swim 5 minutes before practice starts. If a swimmer arrives over 30 minutes late, without previously alerting a coach, they will not be allowed to swim and will be asked to leave practice.

Each swimmer is expected to stay the whole practice. The practices are designed with the swimmer's health in mind. Each practice includes a warm-up and cool-down period to help prevent any injuries to their bodies. These portions of practice are as important as the main swim sets.

Swim Meets: During swim meets the same rules apply. Facilities are allowing us to be guests, and TOPS Swimmers must act as such. Swimmers should arrive to swim meets at least 15 minutes before their sessions start.

Positive Check-in: Coaches are not responsible for checking swimmers in at swim meets. If a swimmer misses positive check-in, the coaching staff will try to get the swimmer entered back into the meet, but there is no guarantee they will be allowed to swim, and there will be no refund for a missed swim meet session.

No Deck Changing: The USA Swimming Safe Sport initiative has procedures to protect athletes. As such, there is absolutely NO DECK CHANGING under any circumstances. Deck changing is the putting on or removal of any swimsuit in a location other than the designated locker rooms and changing areas. You may be removed from the meet for not following safe procedures.

Swim Meet Etiquette: While on deck at swim meets there are no cell phones allowed. Part of being on a team, means acting as a team. Swimmers are expected to cheer on their teammates and be supportive throughout the season. Electronics and cell phones distract from this team spirit, and if a swimmer is seen using any electronics on deck, it will be confiscated and returned to the parent or swimmer at the end of the meet session. It is also at the swimmer's own risk that electronic devices are brought on deck. TOPS holds no responsibility for damage to personal property. Cards and group games are encouraged at swim meets over any electronic device.

Disciplinary Rules: If a swimmer is known to use alcohol, drugs, or tobacco they are subject to disciplinary action which may include mandatory hiatus or suspension from the team.

Swimmers found to be bullying are subject to disciplinary action which may include mandatory hiatus or suspension from the team (bullying policy found later in this document).



EXPECTATIONS OF PARENTS

Parent Support: At TOPS we expect the parents to provide a healthy, caring environment for the athletes. Parental support throughout the season can help keep a swimmer motivated and help them develop in and out of the water.

Parent Role Models: Parents should contribute to the success of their athlete by serving as positive role model. Parents should always demonstrate good sportsmanship towards the coaches, officials, other parents, other teams, and anyone involved with USA Swimming and The YMCA.

Communication: Communication between parents and coaches is an important component of TOPS. It is requested that parents inform the swimmer's Head Coach (via note or email) if a swimmer is going to be late or miss a practice, is injured, sick, or has conflicting commitments. Parents are also responsible for signing up their swimmer for swim meets and special events in a timely manner. Sign-ups can be found on www.topswim.org.

Practices: Parents are not permitted to remain on the pool deck during practices, but are permitted to observe practices from the balconies of the practice pools.

Swim Meets: Parents are asked to be supportive of all athletes, regardless of team, at swim meets. Parents should remain off the pool deck at all times unless they are providing volunteer help, or the spectator seating is located on the pool deck. During the swim meet there is to be no flash photography, and absolutely no photography allowed behind the swimmer on the blocks.

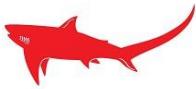
Rules: By joining TOPS parents are expected to follow the standards set forth in this document and Part Three of the USA Swimming Rulebook. Failure to do so can lead to disciplinary action. Parents found to be bullying or acting in an unsportsmanlike manner risk suspension of themselves and their swimmer from the team (bullying policy found later in this document).

TOPS Volunteer Policy

The success of the team is only possible through the dedicated efforts of all TOPS parents. Like any other non-profit organization, TOPS relies heavily on volunteers to achieve its goals. In the process of volunteering, you not only fill an essential role in developing a successful team but you have an opportunity to develop friendships, have fun, and learn first-hand about the sport your athlete is involved with.

While we encourage all parents to volunteer, there will be no requirements of first year Tiny TOPS, Red, or Yellow swimmers. For the parents of all returning Tiny TOPS, Red, and Yellow swimmers, as well as all parents of Bronze, Silver, Gold and Senior swimmers, volunteer requirements will include the following:

1. Each family will be required to work at least two (2) sessions during the large meets hosted by TOPS. These meets include The Father's Day Meet during long course season and the Claire Statton Meet during short course season. This participation is required even if your swimmer is



not competing in the meet. A volunteer other than the parent (16 or older) may satisfy volunteer obligations, as long as the substitute can competently perform the volunteer task.

2. Each family will be required to work an additional amount of sessions during a season. This requirement can be met by timing or working another volunteer position at a non-hosted meet. The requirements for a specific season will be in the registration packet of that season. It is important that all parents participate and share the responsibility of team timing at away meets.
3. In addition to timing at non-hosted meets, examples of other volunteer opportunities include becoming certified as either a YMCA or USA swimming official, assisting at the TOP\$WIM event, or serving as a member of the Parent Advisory Committee (PAC).
4. Families will be charged a \$50 work escrow fee per session for each session requirement that is not met.
5. The volunteer coordinators will make every effort to credit families for sessions worked, however, it is the responsibility of each family to be sure the correct number of sessions has been recorded. You can contact the volunteer coordinators at topsvolunteer@gmail.com
6. The mandatory All-Parent Meeting at the beginning of each season does NOT count towards volunteering.

When registering your swimmer for the season, you will be asked to check the appropriate box on the Registration Form to indicate that you have read, understand and agree to the Volunteer Requirements of this team.

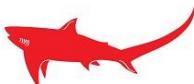
AGREEMENT IS A CONDITION OF REGISTRATION AND ACCEPTANCE TO THE TOPS SWIM TEAM.

MANDATORY PARENT MEETINGS

At the start of each season we will have a mandatory parent meeting. At least one parent from each family must attend this meeting. **If no parent attends, then the household will be billed a \$20 fine.** This will act as a welcome to new parents, and give the coaches a chance to share their expectations for the season with the entire team.

PARENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PAC)

The PAC is a group of volunteers dedicated to enhancing the TOPS program by supporting the Coaching Staff, YMCA, and TOPS. Each PAC member is assigned a specific responsibility. These responsibilities as well as the PAC Bylaws can be found on the TOPS website.



GROUP PARENT LIAISONS

Group Parent Liaisons are volunteers who help support the needs of the specific practice groups. Along with assisting returning parents, the liaisons are responsible for providing a helpful, friendly face for new members to turn to if they have any questions. If a parent has questions or concerns about their swim group they should first reach out to the Parent Liaison, as many questions can be answered by these experienced swim parents. If the question or concern cannot be resolved by the Parent Liaison, parents can then reach out to the coaching staff or a PAC member.

OFFICIATING

Swim meets require more than just coaches and swimmers. Each swim meet requires officials to run the meet and ensure that the swims are legal. Without officials, any swim would not count as a recorded time. This is where we need parents to help. Most officials at swim meets are swim parents who are interested in learning more about the sport, and helping to support their swim team.

Since our team is unique in that we are both a USA Swimming and a YMCA team, there are options to become certified as both a USA Swimming Official (information about certification can be found at www.usaswimming.org/officials) and as a YMCA Official (information about certification can be found at www.ymcacompetitiveswim.org).

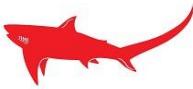
If you would like more information about officiating, or are interested, but not sure how to get started, don't hesitate to contact PAC's Official Coordinator.

BULLYING POLICY (Sections from USA Swimming)

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at TOPS and will not be tolerated. Bullying is counterproductive to team spirit and can be devastating to a victim. TOPS is committed to providing a safe, caring and friendly environment for all of our members. If bullying does occur, all athletes and parents should know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. Anyone who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell a coach, board member or athlete/mentor.

The USA Swimming Code of Conduct defines bullying in Article 304.3.7. Bullying is the severe or repeated use by one or more USA Swimming members (or parents) of oral, written, electronic or other technological expression, image, sound, data or intelligence of any nature (regardless of the method of transmission), or a physical act or gesture, or any combination thereof, directed at any other member that to a reasonably objective person has the effect of:

1. Causing physical or emotional harm to the other member or damage to the other member's property
2. Placing the other member in reasonable fear of harm to himself/herself or of damage to his/her property
3. Creating a hostile environment for the other member at any USA Swimming activity



4. Infringing on the rights of the other member at any USA Swimming activity
5. Materially and substantially disrupting the training process or the orderly operation of any USA Swimming activity (which for the purposes of this section shall include, without limitation, practices, workouts and other events of a member club or LSC).

It is important to remember that bullying is not just limited to children. TOPS is committed to creating a safe environment for not just the athletes, but the parents, coaches and general staff of the YMCA as a whole. By joining TOPS, the parents, athletes, coaches and staff are all held to the same standard.

REPORTING PROCEDURE

An athlete who feels that he or she has been bullied is asked to do one or more of the following things:

1. Talk to your parents
2. Talk to a Club Coach, or other designated individual
3. Write a letter or email to the Club Coach, Board Member, or other designated individual
4. Make a report to the USA Swimming Safe Sport staff

There is no express time limit for initiating a complaint under this procedure, but every effort should be made to bring the complaint to the attention of the appropriate club leadership as soon as possible to make sure that memories are fresh and behavior can be accurately recalled and the bullying behavior can be stopped as soon as possible.

HOW WE HANDLE BULLYING

Once all the facts have been gathered the appropriate actions will be taken. There will be a discussion between the leadership staff and the PAC to help decide what the action should be. The family of the victim and the person responsible for bullying will be involved in the decision making process. In extreme situations the person responsible for the bullying may be immediately suspended or removed from the team.

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION POLICY

PURPOSE

With the heavy reliance on electronic communication (including but not limited to: email, social media, text messaging, etc.) it is important that we at TOPS address what is expected when using these methods of communication. This includes any communication between the swimmers, staff, parents, YMCA Leadership, and any party associated with TOPS or The YMCA.

GENERAL CONTENT

All communications between a coach or other adult and an athlete must be professional in nature and for the purpose of communicating information about team activities. The content and intent of all



electronic communications must adhere to the USA Swimming Code of Conduct regarding Athlete Protection (Addressed in Articles 304, 305, and 306 in the 2014 USA Swimming Rulebook).

For example, as with any communication with an athlete, electronic communication should not contain or relate to any of the following:

1. Drugs or alcohol use
2. Sexually oriented conversation; sexually explicit language; sexual activity
3. The adult's personal life e.g. social activities, relationship or family issues, etc.
4. Inappropriate or sexually explicit pictures

* Note: Any communication concerning an athlete's personal life, social activities, relationship or family issues or personal problems must be transparent, accessible and professional. *

Whether one is an athlete, coach, board member or parent, the guiding principle to always use in communication is to ask:

1. "Is this communication something that someone else would find appropriate or acceptable in a face-to-face meeting?"
2. "Is this something you would be comfortable saying out loud to the intended recipient of your communication in front of the intended recipient's parents, the coaching staff, the board, or other athletes?"

FOCUSED CONTENT

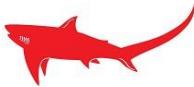
When it comes to the content of the message there are three words to remember: transparency, accessibility, and professionalism. Each is addressed in the following section.

1. **Transparency:** All electronic communication between coaches and athletes should be transparent. Your communication should not only be clear and direct, but also free of hidden meanings, innuendo and expectations.
2. **Accessibility:** All electronic communication between coaches and athletes should be considered a matter of record and part of the Club's records. Whenever possible, include another coach or parent in the communication so that there is no question regarding accessibility.
3. **Professionalism:** All electronic communication between a coach and an athlete should be conducted professionally as a representative of the Club. This includes correct spelling and grammar, remaining polite no matter the subject of the email, and answering emails in a timely fashion.

SOCIAL MEDIA

1. Facebook:

Coaches may have personal Facebook (or other social media site) pages, but they are not permitted to have any athlete member of the Club join their personal page as a "friend." A



coach should not accept any “friend” request from an athlete. In addition, the coach should remind the athlete that this is not permitted. Coaches and athletes are not permitted to “private message” each other through Facebook. Coaches and athletes are not permitted to “instant message” each other through Facebook chat or other IM method.

The Club has an official Facebook page that athletes and their parents can “friend” for information and updates on team-related matters. Coaches are encouraged to set their pages to “private” to prevent athletes from accessing the coach’s personal information.

2. Twitter

Coaches are not permitted to follow athletes on Twitter. Likewise, athletes are not permitted to follow coaches on Twitter. Coaches and athletes are not permitted to “direct message” each other through Twitter.

3. Texting

Subject to the general guidelines mentioned above, texting is allowed between coaches and athletes during the hours from 7am until 9pm. Texting only shall be used for the purpose of communicating information directly related to team activities.

4. Email

Athletes and coaches may use email to communicate between the hours of 7am and 9pm. When communicating with an athlete through email, a parent, another coach, or a board member must also be copied. If contact is initiated by an athlete, the recipient will forward or cc another member of the coaching staff.

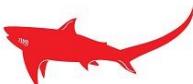
REQUEST TO DISCONTINUE ALL ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

The parents or guardians of an athlete may request in writing that their child not be contacted by coaches through any form of electronic communication or in person.

TEAMUNIFY

Our website is hosted by a company called TeamUnify. This website will have all the information you could need to know, including this handbook, a swim meet survival guide, information about PAC, and FAQ, and many educational articles and documents.

To login to topswim.org you will be provided a login ID and password. The ID will be the primary email address associated with the account, and the password will be created by you. There is currently no way to have multiple email addresses serve as a login ID for a single household. It is important to remember that all email addresses associated with the account will still receive all communications sent out, and the email used as the login ID serves as nothing more than a login. No email will receive priority over another. There is no harm in sharing the password with other members of your family who need access to the website.



This website is also where you will be responsible for registering swimmers for events, and committing to volunteer for certain events. There are a few steps to do this.

1. Log in to topswim.org using the login that will be provided to you once you register
2. Go to the Meets&Events tab
3. Click the swim meet/event you need to register for
4. To the top right of the event page you will see either “edit commitment” or “job signup,” click whichever tab you need and register for the event
 - a. **DO NOT LEAVE THE WEBPAGE BEFORE REGISTRATION IS COMPLETE, THIS WILL INVALIDATE YOUR ACTIONS**
5. If you have any trouble, feel free to contact a coach for assistance

Our practice schedules are located on this website as well. By clicking on the “Practice Times” tab, you will be directed to a calendar. From here you can select your group from a drop down menu above the calendar. If you are logged in to the webpage, you are able to subscribe to the calendar to receive updates and new postings.

This website also allows you to track your swimmers progress by going to “My Meet Results” which is an item under the “My Account” tab found on the left hand of the webpage.

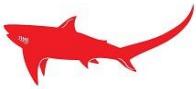
You can also access this information from your smartphone by downloading the free OnDeck Parent application from your app store. To login to this application you must use the TeamUnify login ID and password provided to you at the beginning of the season. There is also a “team alias” that you need to fill out. **The alias for TOPS is iltyst.**

We hope you explore the website and become comfortable with all the information we have provided!

USA SWIMMING SAFE SPORT

As a USA Swimming team, TOPS is dedicated to creating a safe environment for all athletes. USA Swimming Safe Sport includes the Code of Conduct found in the USA Swimming Handbook (Section 304). It is expected that all athletes, coaches, volunteers, and family members follow these guidelines including, but not limited to:

1. Reporting of all suspected sexual abuse to the USA Swimming Safe Sport Director. If you have firsthand knowledge or abuse, or have received credible information about abuse you must report that information as soon as possible.
2. There is to be absolutely no use of electronic devices of any kind in locker rooms or changing areas.
3. There are absolutely no pictures allowed behind the starting blocks, or of swimmers in torn or displaced swim suits.
4. During travel meets, no athletes are allowed to room, or be in a closed room with the coaching staff (unless staff if the athlete’s parent).
5. All meetings between coaching staff and athletes should have at least two members of the staff or a guardian present. In the case no guardian is present, the meeting should never be in a closed room.



TOP\$WIM

TOP\$WIM is our **only** fundraising event and occurs in the fall each year. The money we raise goes towards various equipment, coaches training, and other things to create a better environment for each swimmer on TOPS. The event takes place over two hours and the goal is to swim 200 lengths (or 5000 yards!).

Swimmers are asked to fundraise by gathering donations in one of two ways: donation by lengths swum, or a lump sum donation. A donation by lengths swum is where a donor pledges a certain amount of money based on the distance the athlete swims. A lump sum donation is just a single price that the donor wishes to pay. While we do not have a requirement that all families participate, we ask that each family tries their best to raise \$75 for the event.

Volunteering at this event is extremely important because we need help to keep track of the distance each swimmer has swum. Without help from volunteers it will be very difficult to keep an accurate tally of every swimmer on our own, and we want to make sure they are credited for the hard work they put in during the event.

GREEN INITIATIVE

TOPS is dedicated to creating a better future for swimmers in as many ways as possible. The TOPS Green Initiative is a pledge to be as responsible as possible when it comes to the environment. This includes actions such as: only providing digital heat sheets at swim meets, recycling as many products as possible, working together to create carpools, and doing our best to create a healthy future.

FURTHER QUESTIONS

Any other questions/concerns not found in this TOPS Handbook can be addressed to the TOPS Head Coach.