

**USA-S Disability Swimming Committee**  
**Report to the Michigan Swimming House of Delegates**  
**Submitted by Gail M. Dummer, 4/16/09**

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I am writing this report in my capacity as chairperson of the USA-S Disability Swimming Committee. First, I will report recent committee accomplishments that may affect Michigan Swimming. Next, I wish to offer a proposal for inclusion of swimmers with a disability in Michigan Swimming meets.

### **Accomplishments**

**Article 105 revisions and interpretations.** The committee proposed changes to Article 105 of the USA-S rule book that were adopted at the 2008 convention. The most significant aspects of that legislation included (a) redefinition of referee and coach responsibilities at swim meets and (b) deletion of references to Paralympic swimming such as the use of IPC identification cards and rule exceptions. We then prepared a document titled *Article 105 Case Studies: Inclusion of Swimmers with Disabilities at USA Swimming Competitions* that was approved by the Rules/Regulations and Officials Committees and posted on the USA-S web site. Here are highlights of the legislation. The related case studies focus on specific situations that have come to the attention of USA-S headquarters over the past several years.

- The coach or the swimmer with a disability (not a parent) must approach the referee with a description of the disability and requested accommodations that affect the conduct of the competition.
- The referee determines whether the requested accommodation is fair and reasonable. In addition, the referee notifies other officials about their responsibilities with respect to implementing the approved accommodations.
- Administrative referee responsibilities include implementation of special seeding requests, as well as making certain that results are posted with the appropriate event in the swimmer's true age group.
- In addition, the coach or the swimmer with a disability (not a parent) is encouraged to contact meet management as early as practical if facility accommodations are needed, such as use of a service dog, preferred parking, or use of an auxiliary strobe light.

**Safety/risk management materials.** The committee prepared a document titled *Safety/Risk Management and the Inclusion of Swimmers with Disabilities* about methods of mitigating risks and facilitating safety when swimmers with a disability are included in USA-S program. This document was "blessed" by the Safety Education Committee. John Peterson of Risk Management Services, Inc. clarified insurance coverage for personal assistants. Personal assistants: (a) are not required to be members of USA Swimming; (b) do not have the benefit of USA Swimming general liability or excess accident insurance unless they are members of USA Swimming; (c) may not coach unless registered as coach members; and (d) must not interfere with meet operations.

**Revised disability swimming section of the USA-S web site.** With help from Jim Rusnak, the disability swimming section of the USA-S web site was completely replaced with new content, including all of the documents described earlier in this report, as well as revisions of brochures about inclusion targeted for swimmers/parents, coaches, officials, LSCs, and meet/safety personnel. One objective for this make-over was to clearly establish our turf as inclusion of swimmers with a disability in USA-S programs, and not the conduct of disability-specific programs. The new section does include links to other programs that serve swimmers with a disability, including US Paralympics, US Deaf Swimming, and Special Olympics. The disability swimming section is easier to find, with links included under the swimmers, coaches, volunteers, swim clubs, and parent tabs on the USA-S web site.

**LSC Disability Swimming workshop.** We conducted a highly successful workshop on April 3-4, attended by representatives from 31 LSCs. Topics included disability swimming opportunities, stroke technique, training and conditioning, and officiating, as well as breakout work groups on getting swimmers involved, keeping swimmers involved, responsibilities of LSC disability swimming chairs, and including swimmers at meets. Unfortunately the dates conflicted with a MI Swimming board meeting, so MI was not well represented. If the LSC or any club wants to conduct such a workshop in Michigan, I will be happy to help.

### **Proposed Inclusion Policy for Michigan Swimming**

Every LSC is encouraged to have a policy that facilitates inclusion of swimmers with a disability in LSC meets. After considering the policies described by workshop participants, I would like to propose that Michigan adopts the policy from the Southern California LSC.

- Swimmers with a disability may enter any meet in which there is no lower time standard for the events they wish to enter (e.g., a “C” meet with no lower time standards or a “Senior” meet with no time standards).
- At any meet with qualifying times, swimmers with a disability may enter and swim an intermediate distance of any event in which their entry times for the intermediate distance satisfy the qualifying times for the posted event (e.g., a swimmer with a disability may swim a 200m freestyle within a 400m freestyle if her/his 200m time satisfies the 400m qualifying time).
  - Example. Rudy Garcia-Tolson, who has bilateral leg amputations, swam several events in the Janet Evans Invitational, in each case completing an intermediate distance of the event entered.
  - Note. This proposal facilitates inclusion with no impact on the meet timeline.
  - Note. In this scenario, the swimmer’s coach is responsible for determining readiness for a particular meet.
- The referee may approve special seeding arrangements per Article 105.