**Level I Parent Handbook**

**Welcome to Rockford Riptide Level I!**

Our Riptide coaching staff welcomes your family and your swimmer to t**he Level I program! Level I is the first of several swimming groups that comprise our USA Swimming competitive program at Rockford Riptide. Below, is some information that is critical for the next step in your swimmer’s journey with our program.**

**What is Rockford Riptide?**

**Rockford Riptide is a competitive swimming program for age-group (2-24+) athletes as part of the greater Rockford Aquatics program which includes both our men’s and women’s swim/dive teams, a USA Diving program and the men’s and women’s water polo teams.  Levels are used as names for our various competitive swimming groups. Along with Level I, are Levels II-IV.**

**Rockford Riptide is a club member of USA Swimming, Inc. (USAS). USA Swimming is the national governing body (NGB) in the United States and abroad for competitive swimming - novice to Olympic level. As part of the USAS system, Rockford Riptide is also a member of Michigan Swimming, our Local Swim Committee (LSC) within USA Swimming, Inc. Michigan Swimming is part of Central Zones, a group of several states creating swimming regions or “zones” within the United States. At the state level, Michigan Swimming is divided into several “districts” and Rockford Riptide swimmers compete at meets at the end of our short course USAS season representing these various districts.**

**Rockford Riptide is also a club member of the West Michigan Swim League (WMSL) and participates in meets offered by this competitive swim league. Novice and age-group events are offered during swim meets for athletes in this league**

**Level I Group Focus**

**Level I is the first of several swimming groups that comprise our USA Swimming competitive program at Rockford Riptide. In this group, young swimmers are exposed to the four competitive stokes to refine their technique, strengthen starts and turns, learn new motor skills and race strategy. In this group swimmers are introduced to skill drills, swimming terms, and attend both USA Swimming and West Michigan Swim League (WMSL) meets. Swimmers learn sportsmanship, lane etiquette, time management, and team building skills. Swimmers learn to manage themselves socially by interacting with other swimmers and coaching staff. Stroke proficiency, confidence, sportsmanship, and fun are priorities within this group.**

**Level I Practices & Meets**

As part of Level I your swimmer will be offered 3-4 practices/week (includes and occasional Saturday depending upon weekend meets). M/W practices are 90 minutes, Friday practices are 90-120 minutes, and Saturday practices are 120 minutes. All include 30 minutes of dryland activities. Almost all practices in Fall, Winter and Spring are held at North Rockford Middle School.

Practices usually include all the following: attendance and quick team meeting, warm up, kick set, drills, swim set, pull set, turns, finishes or starts. Swimmers complete 1000 -2000 yards during practices.

Fall session (late August – November) practices times are typically:

* M/W 5-6:30p
* Fri 5-6:30/7p
* Sat 11a-1p (occasional)

Winter session (December – February/March) practice times are typically:

* M/W 6:30-8p
* Fri 5p or 5:30p-7p
* Sat 11a-1p (occasional)

Spring session (April – early June) practice times are typically:

* M/W 6:30-8p
* Fri 5:30p-7p
* Sat 11a-1p (occasional)

Summer session (June – July/August) practice times are typically

* M/W/F 5:30-7p
* T/T 6:30-8p
* Sat 11a-1p (occasional)
* Swimmers participating in Long Course meets are invited to attend LC practices on Tuesday at Calvin College

Practices times are posted on our webpage under [Practice & Meet Calendars](https://www.teamunify.com/Calendar.jsp?_tabid_=85916&team=mirr). Rockford Public Schools provides our team with pool availability. We work with RPS to post our group schedules as far out in the season as possible, however changes do occur. Please watch your email for updates to the schedule – we try to get notice on schedule changes out as soon as possible. Since Riptide is schedule around high school and middle school water sports, please check the schedule carefully in late October/early November when MS and HS sports change. Their programming will affect our schedule.

Winter breaks practice schedules are posted once we have verified holiday pool availability with RPS. Typically, more practices are offered over the December break to improve stamina and focus on stroke mechanics. Spring break is a down time for pools and swimmers. There are no practices scheduled during this time.

Winter and Summer sessions include Championship meets. Your swimmer’s winter or summer session will conclude with that meet or a few days following that meet (Summer). Traditionally, a banquet or picnic is held to celebrate our Short Course (Fall/Summer) and Long Course (Spring/Summer) seasons respectively.

**Equipment Needs**

We recommend that swimmers obtain the following equipment to use during practices:

* Adult kick board
* Youth pull buoy
* Fins
* Yoga mat
* Snorkel (optional, but needed for TSU)
* Water bottle
* Mesh bag to carry equipment
* 1-piece swim suit
* Goggles
* Cap

Swimmers may use RPS equipment (kick board, pull buoy, fins) if they are unable to obtain their own, however we cannot guarantee availability or condition.

**Practice Cancellations**

Rockford Riptide follows the RPS district process for cancellations. When RPS cancels schools for inclement weather, this will include Rockford Riptide. Please watch your local channel and RPS school notifications. Rockford Riptide will also send out an e-blast to members following RPS closings by 2:30p of the day of the closing with any pool/practice updates.

For all other closings (programming changes, water chemistry, etc) we are sometimes able to use Calvin College when RPS closes facilities. Rockford Riptide will send out an e-blast to members on the day of the closing with any pool/practice updates.

**Swim Meets**

Level I swimmers compete in USA Swimming (USAS) and West Michigan Swim League (WMSL) meets. Your swimmer will become a registered USA Swimming Athlete member. USA Swimming membership is required to attend USAS. Meets are conducted throughout the year in seasons that we call Short Course (measured in yards) and Long Course (measured in meters). Meets regular season meets will have a specified format such as Age-Group where swimmers competed by like age (8 & Under, 9-10, 11-12, 13 & Over) or Senior (where a qualifying time is required). Each season culminates with championship meets. Meets are offered to swimmers for sign up through our webpage. See Events Tab. Emails announcing these meets also go out with directions for sign up. Some meets require a qualification time.

We ask swimmers and families to participate in our home USA meets. We have a Fall Fiesta USA meet in November and a Super Splash USA meet in January. USA meets offer 1-3 sessions (4-5 swims) each day over 1-3 days. You do not have to attend all sessions, but will find that athletes will swim different events on different sessions. Attendance at USA meets not offered by Riptide is highly encouraged. Talk with your group coach or our Riptide parent reps about which swim meets your swimmer should attend.

As part of the West Michigan Swim League (WMSL) our swimmers can participate in meets offered by our league. USAS registration is not required. Times earned at WMSL invitational and championship meets can count towards USAS swims. Rockford will host one winter dual meet and compete against other area clubs in 2-3 other meets. We repeat this process within our league in the summer. To compete in a WMSL championship meet at the end of either season (winter/summer) your swimmer must compete in one dual meet. WMSL Invitationals are also available for swimmers.

We ask that once you confirm your meet attendance via meet sign up, and that you notify coaching staff immediately if your availability should change. Swimmer and meet information is resent prior to a meet to use to help remind your swimmer of his/her events and have the meet info at your fingertips. In this meet information coach phone numbers will be released in the event of a last-minute emergency or illness.

**Championship Meets**

Each season (not session) culminates with championship meets (both WMSL and USAS). These meets are built upon qualifying times. Please watch your emails and speak with our Riptide parent reps to learn about which meets your swimmer can attend. Meets are offered to swimmers for sign up through our webpage. See Events Tab. Emails announcing these meets also go out with specific directions for sign up. Some meets require a qualification time. Your coaching staff will work with you and your swimmer to sign up your swimmer at championship meets such as Junior Olympics, States, Sectionals, Zones, Futures, Michigan Open, and Jr Nationals as they progress through the program.

Qualifying times get progressively tighter and the field of athletes narrow as the Championship season progresses. Your swimmer’s season traditionally ends after his or her final championship meet or shortly thereafter. Please watch our team newsletter and emails to mark your calendar for those meets and season end dates.

**Riptide Parent Reps & Coaching Staff**

**When you join Rockford Riptide you become part of a family. We understand that there are a lot of moving parts to competitive swimming, least of which are the terms we use. We want to make this journey as comfortable as possible.**

**Your coaching staff is available to answer your questions. You may email us through** [Team Unify](https://www.teamunify.com/ContactMe.do?act=new&team=mirr) **(our webpage). All coaches will receive your incoming email. If you have a question of a specific coach, please direct your question or comment to that coach. You may also contact each of us before or after a practice with prior arrangement (sometimes we move from our first group practice to a subsequent practice). We can arrange a mutually agreeable time to discuss your questions without distraction from other activities. We can also communicate by email. If you wish to do so but do not have our email address, please use the Team Unify inbound email to request a contact from a specific coach. We will respond within 24-48 hours (depending upon meets) if not sooner. Due to athlete protection standards, we appreciate your help in doing so as many of us use a personal email to communicate and, as part of our USAS coaching membership, we sign a code of conduct to abide by electronic communication protocol. If an issue is urgent, our personal contact information is located on the home page in the very top left corner under Coaches (see whistle icon) or under** [Club Info/Coaches](https://www.teamunify.com/Contact.jsp?team=mirr)**. You may also connect with us at practice before or after workout starts.**

**Our Parent Representatives are also present at your Level I practices. There are several reps for you to connect with questions. These people are usually identified at your Jr Riptide and new Level I parent meetings. They can also be identified at when attending practices wearing a red “Ask Me” button. They have taken several swimmers through our program and know that swimming can be confusing at time. They are here to welcome you to our program and to make the transition to the next level easier. If you cannot locate your parent rep, please contact any of our coaching staff and we will provide an introduction or connect you.**

**Riptide.org**

**Our Rockford Riptide team page** [www.Riptide.org](http://www.Riptide.org) **is a great starting place to obtain information and get your swimmer into meets and team events. Our webpage is set up to assist parents and swimmers to sign up for meets, get the latest team news, register for swim sessions, manage your swim account, read about team accomplishments, and find documents and links to Michigan and United States Swimming.**

**Fees & Dues**

**Membership**

**As part of our Level I group your swimmer moves into a USA Swimming commitment. This group requires USAS membership for insurance and liability compliance with USA Swimming. Their season is also longer with Fall being approximately 12 -weeks, Winter 13-18 weeks (depending upon final championship meet), Spring 8 – weeks, and Summer 8-10 weeks (depending upon final championship meet). Dues for USAS membership are set by USA Swimming, Inc. and are assessed annually ($76 in 2018) and usually around the end of the year for the subsequent calendar year. Fees for practice are built on a program budget and are Board Approved and are assessed during the online registration period. Late registrations are assessed a “late fee”. By setting up your account within our team website you can manage your account and view itemized invoicing information.**

**Meet entry fees**

**Swimmers are charged entry fees for competing in meets. Using our webpage, swimmers are asked to declare their intent to swim or not swim in a meet. We ask that you always declare your intent even if not swimming. When a swimmer declares his/her intention to swim a meet (commits), he/she or the coaches (with validation from account holder) can select events to swim at a meet. A few days will be provided to modify the entry based on other meet performances or family schedules. However, once the meet closes, the entries are processed to a meet report and imported to the host club. Once meet entries go live, fees are assigned to the team. Meet entry fees are usually $6 per individual event). A per swimmer meet surcharge ($1) is collected by Michigan Swimming with an administrative fee included for processing. A meet entry report with all swimmer events is generated from that meet and that report will be used to bill the swimmer’s account.** There are no fees for dual meets and our club does not charge swimmers fees for relays at Invites or regular season USA meets.

Once meet entries for USA and WMSL Invitational meets have been submitted and confirmed by a host team, fees are non-refundable. Those fees will be charged to your account and can be paid by check or automated payment.

Please note that if your swimmer cannot swim at a meet after the entry for the meet has closed (i.e., they must “scratch” from the meet), those fees are still applied and the responsibility of the account holder.

Although our club does not charge swimmers to participate in relays, however it is important to communicate with your coach about meet attendance as quickly as possible should your meet attendance change. Declaring swimmers for relays is required by the meet host prior to the start of a meet where relays are included. Missing swimmers will delay that process extensively.

**Championship meets**

**For swimmers competing in certain USAS Championship meets, a per athlete fee is assessed by the team to cover these meets. A reminder will be sent out to attendees.**

**Fee assessment**

**Fees notifications are sent monthly (in arrears). Fees can be paid at any time by accessing your Team Unify account at** [www.Riptide.org](http://www.Riptide.org) **Fees for USA membership are typically assessed in December and will hit in January. With most of our meets occurring between November and mid February during the fall/winter sessions and June to July in the Summer session it is important to know that your account will see a higher amount activity. Please check your account regularly and if you have questions, please contact our treasurer Dana Kraus by email at** Kraus.danaj@gmail.com **at your earliest convenience.**

**Level I and Riptide Group Expectations**

**Our kids are the center of our program. With a program vision executed by our coaching staff, our kids experience the benefits of wonderful instruction and guidance while they explore and develop their swimming talents. As part of this handbook we think it is important to conclude with a review of our team Code of Conduct Agreement.**

**As part of Rockford Riptide we expect that swimmers will conduct themselves according to the athlete code of conduct agreement which is signed upon group registration. The purpose of adopting a code of conduct is to provide a safe, fair and enjoyable environment for the sport of swimming and to support the mission of the Rockford Riptide Swim Club (USAS Safe Sport). According to the code of conduct swimmers agree that:**

1. Possession or use of drugs and other illegal substances of any kind are prohibited. The use of alcohol or tobacco is prohibited throughout the swimming venue.
2. Willful damage to the equipment and facility of the swimming venue is prohibited.
3. Inappropriate language, verbal threats or threatening gestures or insubordinate conduct to meet personnel, coaches, or in the presence of other swimmers is prohibited.
4. Unsportsmanlike or unsafe conduct at the swimming venue is prohibited.
5. I will remain silent and make an honest effort to listen and look when the coaches are speaking.
6. I will commit myself to give my best effort at every practice and meet and will be respectful towards the coaches.

As part of the team, parents and swimmers agree also to treat all swimmers, coaches, officials, parents and spectators with dignity and respect. In doing so, parents and swimmers will:

1. Report to practice with enough time to begin practice as scheduled.
2. Be responsible to learn how to correctly complete meet entries, assume responsiblility for meet fees, including those fees assessed when I scratch my swimmer from a meet after the entry date has passed, to learn best times, and other important information, and remit fees in a timely manner.
3. Abide by the following Riptide policies: Travel, Electronic Communication & Bullying,

Additionally, parents agree:

1. To promote the emotional and physical well-being of the athletes in spite of any personal desire to win in competition. My role is to be positive and supportive in all situations. I will not willfully undermine the relationship between the swimmer and the coaches.
2. That no one will be permitted on the pool deck during practice, including parents or siblings, without the approval of a Riptide employee.
3. Will remember that my child/children swim for their enjoyment, not mine.

The above code of conduct is in effect throughout the year. Additionally, anyone who, in the opinion of the head coach or coaches, acts in a manner that would interfere with the objectives listed above will be subject to immediate discipline and other censorship including barring from competition, suspension from practice, or dismissal from the team.

Riptide team members/parents should be respectful of their peers, coaches, and officials. Any Riptide team member/parent not acting in such a manner will be asked to change or stop that behavior. If that team member/parent fails to comply, they will be asked to leave and disciplinary procedures will follow.

The coaching staff holds the final word on any rules, regulations, coaching decisions, or disciplinary action. In the case a resolution cannot be made between the coaching staff and the affected party, additional resources will become involved and the board of directors will resolve the situation.

**Board of Directors & Committees**

**Rockford Riptide is a 501c3, a non-profit organization, operated according to the IRS, and is governed by a Parent Board. Board members are elected and serve a designated term. Offices are President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer and Member-at-large. Elections take place in the Spring of each year.**

**Committees operate with the intent to maximize swimmer and family experience. Committees include special events, meet management, finance, parent group liaison, merchandise and apparel, and publicity/recognition & communications. If you are interested in committee or Board activities, please contact your coaching staff or a serving** [Board member](https://www.teamunify.com/SubTabGeneric.jsp?team=mirr&_stabid_=183060) **and they can put you in touch with the correct person who can answer questions.**

**Questions**

We know you may have any questions or concerns. Our coaching staff, parent reps and Board of Directors want to let you know that we are here for you! Your swimmer’s experience is very important to us. We want to support you and your swimmer on their journey and to achieve his or her potential. We hope to see them emerge from Rockford Riptide as confident, positive young people who will be tomorrow’s leaders.

We have found that that the mantra “It Takes a Village” is essential in our approach to see each athlete succeed. Therefore, we welcome you to our family and thank you for becoming a part of Rockford Riptide.

**Your Riptide Coaching Staff & Board of Directors**