

Hello,

My name is Char Sorensen and I am the Regional Officials Coordinator for the Western Zone. A few weeks ago, Mark Rieniets, the Disability Chair for USA Swimming sent a note to the LSC chairs regarding the position. I have taken the liberty to add this email to the LSC Chairs and the Disability Chairs and the general offices for each of the swimming clubs in the Western Zone.

As the ROC, I am a resource for your clubs: swimmers, coaches, parents and officials. I would like to help out in any way that I can to increase the awareness of what a disabled swimmer is and the opportunities the swimmers may have as they pursue the desire to swim.

I would like to ask the following:

- * Each club distribute the letter that is below to clubs, coaches, officials and parents so that a better understanding of what disability swimming is will be attained. Parents may not have information on how the disabled swimmer can be supported in swimming programs through USA Swimming.

- * Each coach to identify disabled swimmers, and after such, ask for support and ideas on how to coach and retain the swimmers.

- * Each club identify officials who would want to be trained in officiating at meets with disabled swimmers, both within USA Swimming and with Paralympic swimming. Then, please forward to me the names and email addresses of the officials so that I can contact them directly on opportunities to learn more about officiating a disabled swimmer.

So far, I have worked with coaches on helping swimmers who are deaf by getting movable strobe lights at meets, gotten coaches in touch with Queenie Nichols who is the High Performance Director for Para Swimming to help with ideas on coaching, and helped parents who have a disabled child who wants to swim but is reluctant to be identified as a disabled swimmer.

The disabled swimmers have many opportunities to compete at USA Swim meets and I would like to be the resource that helps your club/team, coaches, swimmers, parents and officials make the most of that opportunity.

Let me know the ways I can help,

Char Sorensen

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Please Distribute

What is Disability Swimming?

Disability swimming is not just for athletes who have been classified with specific impairments (physical, visual, intellectual) through US Paralympics (USP) Swimming or International Paralympic Committee (IPC). It is also for athletes who have a disability who just want to swim with a team. The athlete who exhibits physical, emotional, or behavioral issues can find and be supported in swimming through the structure, team cohesion, camaraderie and friendships that swimming offers.

The role of the Disability Committee, through partnerships with teams and coaches, is to

- Identify the disabled swimmer
- Get the disabled swimmer and their family/support system and structure involved
- Retain the disabled athlete in the program
- Coach the disabled swimmer in appropriate ways on appropriate team by considering age and ability as well as the athlete's goals in the sport
- Allow for competition on an even level based on ability

What Disability Swimming is NOT

- Diversity and Inclusion – a committee in USA Swimming – culturally oriented, celebrating the rich heritages of different ethnic groups. Includes low income groups, outreach to underserved, minority, Title IX, sex discrimination
- Special Olympics – an organization for athletic inclusion for children and adults with intellectual disabilities
- “Watered- Down” swimming/competitions
- “Feel Sorry for You” Swimming
- Swimming/competitions for “those” people

Where is USA Swimming -Disability Focus Going?

1. Programs and support for ways to identify and encourage athletes to join USA swim clubs
2. Education and guidance for coaches and clubs on how to effectively include swimmers with a disability
3. Inclusion in meets for swimmers who are not Paralympic-eligible or who do not have a designated sport class
4. Investigating time standards for athletes with disabilities to be included in higher level USA swimming competitions
5. Assisting coaches/athletes to connect with US Paralympics Swimming if they want to continue to advance and start competing in para-competitions

For more information on U.S. Paralympics Swimming

<http://www.teamusa.org/US-Paralympics/Sports/Swimming>

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Jamie

From Mark Rieniets:

In an effort to align and work closely with USA Swimming LSC Disability and Official Chairs, U.S. Paralympics has appointed four Regional Officials Coordinators (ROCs), one for each of the Zones.

Western – Char Sorensen, *Eastern* – Doug Griswold,
Southern – Glenda Orth *Central* – Susan Mechler.

The ROCs are members of USA Swimming and participate in U.S. Paralympics Swimming competitions. Roles and Responsibilities of the ROCs include assisting USA Swimming Zone and LSC Disability and Officials Chairs with education and inclusion of swimmers with a disability otherwise known as para-swimmers. Additionally, the ROCs will help recruit and retain high caliber officials to volunteer at National and U.S. Paralympics Swimming sponsored meets.

As part of the role in providing support to the each Zone of USA Swimming, the ROC's will reach out to Official Chairs and Disability Chairs in the LSC's of their Zones by phone or email over the next few weeks to see what help and resources can be provided to assist your LSC's to incorporate and expand Disability Swimming.

A short list of topics that will be introduced are:

- Inclusion and retention of para-swimmers
- Helping coaches and clubs incorporate para-swimmers in their clubs
- Assisting parents and para-swimmers find clubs and coaches who understand their athletes' abilities and adjust the athletes' workout to meet their needs
- Better education of officials in preparation of attending a meet with para-swimmers
- Officiating opportunities for officials who would like to be more involved with para-swimmers and meets using IPC Swimming rules

- Competition opportunities for para-swimmers who want to compete in higher level competitions with athletes that are similar
- Classification opportunities for athletes to determine their sport class and corresponding qualifying times for Zone and Sectional meets

The ROCs will be reaching out to the LSC Officials Chair and Disability Chairs individually in the coming weeks to start a dialogue with each of you to continue the process of inclusion of para-swimmers within USA Swimming.

Regards,

Mark Rieniets