



# Parent Handbook

*HLA is dedicated to promoting swimming as a lifelong sport.*

Visit Us Online at: <http://www.heartlandaquatics.org>

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## Table of Contents

1. Purpose.....	3
2. Team History.....	3
3. General Description and Objective.....	3
4. Team Vision and Mission Statement .....	3
5. Team Philosophy .....	3
6. General Information.....	5
7. Financial Obligations and Payment Structure.....	8
8. Practice .....	11
9. Coaching.....	14
10. Parental Responsibilities and Covenants .....	15
11. Volunteer Policy.....	16
12. Disciplinary Code.....	19
13. USA Swimming.....	21
14. Electronic Communication .....	21
15. Team Travel.....	22

## Handbook History and Amendments

Date	Change Summary	Date Published
MAR 2015	New template created from original Parent Manual	15-APR-2015
OCT 2016	Section 6: added app descriptions, tech suit policy Section 7: added policy re: HLA coverage of facility/event fees for sectional level and higher meets. Section 12: removal of volunteer penalty	NOV 2016
SEPT 2017	Sections 15 and 16: Addition of Electronic Communication & Team Travel Policies	SEPT 2017
April 2018	Section 6: added language to clarify swimmers' and parents' responsibility in choosing meet events, deleted unused app descriptions, updated swim gear needs by group, revised the tech suit policy Section 7: revised HLA coverage of event fees for sectional level and higher meets Section 9: establishment of new practice group structure Section 12: reinstatement of volunteer penalty, removal of HLA Committees section Section 13: Safe Sport defined and coordinator position introduced	JUNE 2018

## 1. Purpose

The purpose of this handbook is two-fold: to explain to new members just what Heartland Aquatics (HLA) is about, and to outline various policies that affect all swimmers, year after year. Each parent and swimmer is responsible for reading and understanding its contents.

## 2. Team History

HLA was founded in 2000 through the merger of Capital City Aquatics and Great Plains Aquatic Club. Since that time, HLA has established itself as one of the strongest and most stable swimming clubs in the state.

## 3. General Description and Objective

HLA is a first-class, year-round, competitive swim program. We offer a guided age- group youth program for children age 6 and up, from the beginning swimmer to the most competitive and skilled swimmer.

When a young person becomes a member of HLA, he or she learns the values of sportsmanship and teamwork. Swimming as a member of HLA provides physical, emotional and intellectual skills that will last a lifetime.

## 4. Team Vision and Mission Statement

HLA's vision for all swimmers is to foster a team environment where swimmers strive to meet or exceed personal goals and to continually improve themselves as athletes and individuals. We do this through:

- Stroke development and refinement
- Conditioning and athletic education
- Goal-setting and self-discipline
- Offering multiple practice opportunities
- Competing in local, regional, and national meets
- Promoting swimming as a lifelong sport

HLA's mission is to develop swimmers to their fullest capabilities, and in the process, teach life balance, citizenship, and dedication to the rewarding sport of competitive swimming.

## 5. Team Philosophy

### **Good People**

Our job as a youth swim team is to teach our swimmers how to become quality individuals of character; to be respectful, kind, generous, caring, supportive, encouraging, disciplined, and passionate.

Our philosophy, outlined in our team and parent covenants, is different than many teams whose main purpose is to produce athletes who simply win the race. Our swimmers will win just as many races (Local Swimming Committees (LSCs), State, Zones, Regionals, Nationals, etc.), but we emphasize that our swimming champions will be champion citizens as well.

## **Well-Rounded Individuals**

Swimming can often be one-sided: yards, Yards, YARDS. But HLA has a diverse focus: spirit of athletics, technique, goals, teamwork, as well as addressing important issues out of the pool. Young athletes have many demands on their lives, varying from schoolwork to family obligations. HLA coaches encourage hard work in all areas of life, and do their best to help athletes succeed in them. Balance in the water is important; balance in life is crucial.

## **Spirit**

Team spirit goes beyond "cheers," and can be felt on the deck and in the water at a good practice. Helping young athletes understand why they are training is just as important as the training itself. The spirit of athletics includes motivation, discipline, enthusiasm, fitness, teamwork, precision, and FUN. Athletes patting each other on the back or trying to encourage each other during practice are examples. Cheers are only a part of team spirit; in fact, team spirit needs to be at its strongest *between* cheers to ensure the success of the organization.

## **Technique**

We've always used the analogy, "Would you rather take your Mack truck and stomp on the gas until the engine blows up, or would you like to spend some time, build a Ferrari, then go racing?" Technique in swimming is every bit as important as building an aerobic base. It's the piece of the puzzle that makes runners-up into champions; it's what takes kids who lack confidence in the water and puts them in charge of their own swimming. The thrill of stroke refinement is what makes swimming a lifelong sport. Teaching athletes how to best achieve this is the mission of all HLA coaches.

## **Fun**

If you ask any athlete who has been swimming for five years or more why they stayed with it, the #1 response - BY FAR - is, "Because it's fun!" Swimming is the hardest sport on the planet; it needs to be fun. Being fun doesn't mean that we play games all day long; rather, it means that we maintain a positive attitude, talk with people, encourage teamwork, and teach all swimmers how to appreciate the most beautiful sport on earth!

## **Hard Work**

Swimming isn't unlike any other sport or activity; to succeed at it, you need to work hard. Swimming, however, places athletes into a new medium - water. This requires the athletes to focus more intensely, push themselves harder, and to unlearn what their body has learned over years of "land living." Swimming is tough. That's why we love it so much. This sport allows for a terrific sense of accomplishment when we achieve our goals. We appreciate the demands of swimming, and encourage the athletes to do the same.

## **Family**

HLA encourages a strong sense of family. Athletes often spend more time with each other at the pool than they do with any other individual each day. It's important that the team and the entire HLA family act as a cohesive unit of caring people who can listen well, give guidance, and unconditionally support the kids involved. The old statement that "it takes a village to raise a child" applies to swimming as well, and with the help of parents, coaches, and athletes all working together, HLA can be a significantly positive addition to any family.

## 6. General Information

### Coaching Staff

The sport of competitive swimming is one of the few sports that employs professional, trained coaches for all ages and levels of athletes. Each coach of a USA Swimming club must be certified by this national organization in the latest stroke techniques, training methods, and knowledge of current swimming competition rules and regulations. All of our coaches are required to undergo a professional background check and to maintain current CPR, first aid, and safety training certifications.

To see coach bios and learn more about our coaching staff, please visit the HLA website, [www.heartlandaquatics.org](http://www.heartlandaquatics.org).

### Club Structure and Board of Directors

HLA is incorporated as a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. A ten member board of volunteer directors manages the club, as outlined below. Board members serve staggered three year terms, with officers elected annually. Meetings are generally held once a month and are open to the membership. In addition to the board members, other parent volunteers serve vital roles in the business administration of the swim team. For a listing of the current board members and club representatives, please see the HLA website, [www.heartlandaquatics.org](http://www.heartlandaquatics.org).

<i>Position</i>	<i>Volunteers Needed</i>
President	1
Vice President	1
Treasurer	1
Secretary	1
Non-officer board members	5
Team Athlete Representative	1

### Communication Methods and Team Website Information

#### Practice Hotline

The hotline number, 402-441-0599, should be called **daily** before coming to practice. It will have the latest update on practice and team announcements.

#### Team Website

The website, [www.heartlandaquatics.org](http://www.heartlandaquatics.org), has current team news, coach and board contact information, meet information and sign-up capability, links to a swimmer database of times, team records, and a host of other helpful information.

As a member, it is critical that you visit the team website and establish an account with TeamUnify. The head coach will provide all new members with website login credentials.

It is here that parents and swimmers may:

- Enter email addresses and cell phone numbers if they would like to receive email messages and group text messages from their coaches.

- Sign up for:
  - Competing in swim meets-you indicate if your swimmer is attending and what events you and your swimmer believe to be the best in which to participate. The coach will work with swimmers and parents to ensure that appropriate events are chosen.
  - Volunteer positions at HLA hosted swim meets
  - Volunteer timer positions at Midwest (MW) hosted swim meets
  - Participation in team functions
  - Donating funds, food and other needed items for HLA hosted swim meets or other team functions (social events, banquets, etc.)

Meet information, meet entries, news, and announcements are periodically posted to the website, distributed via e-mail and also via text messaging. To ensure that you receive this information, HLA must have at least one current, valid e-mail address on file for you.

Some information is occasionally posted in the viewing area at the practice pool, and at times it may be necessary for the coaches to send home printed materials following practice.

### **HLA Social Media and Swimming Related Apps**

There are many other ways swimmers and parents can receive news and information about the team using social media. Feel free to subscribe to the following for fun updates, photos, news, videos and more:

- Facebook

The following smartphone apps are also great resources which will allow you to follow swim meet results in real time, view coach videos of your swimmer at practice, track your swimmer's best and overall times and much more:

- OnDeck Parent (free)- has multiple on-board tools, tracks best times, meet event entries, attendance, time standards
- DeckPass (free)- great for tracking best times, setting goals, swimmers earn digital "badges" for accomplishment
- Meet Mobile (annual fee to see meet results)- tracks meet results for individual swimmers and teams in real time.

### **Swimmer Gear**

HLA requires that all swimmers have the following items for practice and meets, as outlined below:

#### **Boys:**

- 2 or more jammers or briefs

#### **Girls:**

- 2 or more one-piece suits

#### **Boys and Girls:**

- 2 or more practice caps
- **2 or more HLA swim meet caps** (White latex caps with our logo-these are different from practice caps and worn only at competition)
- One kickboard

- 2 sets of goggles
- 1-2 beach or bath towels
- Water bottle

Additional equipment needed by group:

***Age Group Team***

- Pull Buoy

***Bronze/Silver/Navy/Gold Teams***

- Pull Buoy
- Finis Hand Paddles

You may wish to purchase a mesh bag or backpack for your swimmer to carry their gear. If you have questions about which gear to purchase for your swimmer, just ask a coach!

HLA logo kickboards, swim meet caps and other necessities can be purchased online through our sponsor vendor, Elsmore Aquatic (<http://www.elsmoreswim.com>) or at team apparel sales that occur twice per year in the Fall and Spring.

**Team Suits and Apparel**

Team suits are strongly recommended, but not required. Currently, the team suits are Speedo Endurance suits in navy blue with gold/white trim and our team logo, which can also be purchased online through Elsmore Aquatic (<http://www.elsmoreswim.com>) or at team apparel sales that occur twice per year in the Fall and Spring.

As denoted in the list above, HLA white swim caps are required at all meets.

**HLA Technical Racing Suit Guidelines**

“Technical suits”, are made from special fabric blends designed to minimize drag in the water. These suits are extremely expensive and have a very limited useful life. Technical/racing swim suits allowed under these criteria:

- Athletes that are 11 years and older are allowed to wear FINA approved racing, “Technical Suits” only at championship style meets. These include Prelim/Final meets such as the Midwestern Qualifier and D1 Championship meets.

As swimmers progress to more advanced practice groups, swimmers should consult HLA coaches, in cooperation with their parents, regarding their readiness for these suits prior to purchase.

If you have any questions regarding these guidelines, please contact your primary coach **prior to any purchases** for further information.

Note: HLA is a Speedo sponsored team and therefore the coaching staff requests that any technical suit purchases be Speedo (through Elsmore!).

During the course of the regular season, athletes are encouraged to wear their HLA team suits at timed final meets.

## 7. Financial Obligations and Payment Structure

### Annual, Seasonal, and Monthly Fees

The swimming calendar runs from September through August. Annual fees are required for both membership in USA Swimming and HLA.

In addition to these annual membership fees, seasonal and/ or monthly practice fees apply. All of these fees are subject to change from year to year. For the current fee schedule, refer to our website, [www.heartlandaquatics.org](http://www.heartlandaquatics.org).

### Trial Period

New swimmers to HLA may participate in practice for a maximum of two weeks prior to actual registration and payment of the USA Swimming fee.

However, regardless of your ultimate decision, registration paperwork must be completed, and a check written, before the swimmer enters the water for the two-week, no obligation, trial. At the end of the trial period, registration will be completed if the athlete wishes to continue. If not, the check will be returned to you, or destroyed upon request.

### USA Swimming Registration Fee

All swimmers must be registered members of USA Swimming. This requires completion of registration forms and payment of the annual fee (as noted above) upon joining the club. Returning swimmers will be billed each Fall.

### HLA Annual Membership

Each family must pay an annual club membership fee. The HLA annual fee may be prorated for swimmers that join later in the year.

### Monthly Fees

In addition to the annual fees, a monthly practice fee is due for any month in which the swimmer attends at least one practice. If the swimmer is in the water at any time during the month, the monthly practice fee is due in full and cannot be prorated regardless of the number of times the swimmer attends practice. Please inform the coach and the club treasurer if the swimmer will not be in the water for the entire month. When this occurs, there is no charge for the monthly practice fee.

The amount of the monthly fee is based on the swimmer's assigned practice group. See the HLA website ([www.heartlandaquatics.org](http://www.heartlandaquatics.org)) for current rates. If a swimmer is moved from one group to another, he or she must pay the monthly fee for the highest group in which he or she participates.

Monthly fees are billed in arrears and statements will be sent via email by the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month. The accepted form of payment for all accounts is ACH (aka "autopay") and your outstanding balance will be automatically deducted from your account on the last day of the month in which you receive your statement. You must notify the treasurer ([treasurer@heartlandaquatics.org](mailto:treasurer@heartlandaquatics.org)) if your email address changes to receive monthly statements.



Note that those who do not wish to participate in the ACH program will be charged an annual service fee according to the current fee schedule. The service fee will be waived for non-ACH families if the short course season is paid in full in advance.

Any checks returned to HLA for insufficient funds will be subject to a \$25 handling fee.

Swimmer accounts must be kept current in order to preserve the right of each swimmer to attend practices and meets. Non-payment of swimmer accounts will result in non-participation for the swimmer until payment is made.

Should a swimmer decide to discontinue membership in HLA, the monthly dues for the month in which he/she swims any portion thereof, and any outstanding entry fees, are considered an obligation to HLA, and are payable upon termination of participation.

Neither the HLA club membership fee nor the USA Swimming annual registration fees are refundable.

### **Club Mailing Address:**

Payments (for non-ACH families) and all business correspondence should be mailed to:

HLA  
P.O. Box 67206  
Lincoln NE 68506

### **Swim Meet Fees**

Swim meet entry fees are in addition to monthly dues. In general, the following fees will apply, all of which will be billed on your monthly statement:

- Midwestern Swimming/Local Swim Club surcharge/facility use fee
- Individual event fees
- Relay event fees, if applicable

The cost of a swim meet depends on the team that hosts the meet. Entry fees for one swimmer to attend an average meet normally range from \$25 - \$50.

The fees for every swim meet can be found on the meet information sheet posted under the meet listing on the club website and it is generally advisable to calculate the total entry fee for each meet before signing up.

Please note that once the meet sign-up deadline has passed, fees are not refundable, even if a swimmer scratches an event or has to miss a meet due to illness or another obligation.

For Sectional level meets and meets above that level, HLA will cover the cost of facility fees and fees for qualified events, relays, time trials, and bonus swims.

## Discounts

HLA offers the following discounts to our membership:

<b>Multiple-child discount:</b>	Each swimmer in addition to the first swimmer in a family paying the regular monthly fee will receive a discount per the current fee schedule.  The HLA annual fee for additional swimmers is also prorated to ease the financial burden on families with multiple swimmers.
<b>Referral discount:</b>	Swimmers that refer a friend to HLA receive a discount, per the current fee schedule, off their next month's practice fees once the new swimmer joins the club.  This only applies to swimmers new to USA Swimming; we don't encourage recruitment of current members of other swim clubs.
<b>Financial Assistance:</b>	Opportunities available for qualifying members, please inquire for details

The complete fee schedule for the year is posted on the club website under *Join Our Team* → *Membership Info*.

Specific questions regarding any of the above club fees and discounts can be directed to the club treasurer via email at [treasurer@heartlandaquatics.org](mailto:treasurer@heartlandaquatics.org).

## Fundraising

The club participates in fundraising activities as its needs require. Examples of some of these activities include, but are not limited to, hosting swim meets, participating in the USA Swimming Swim- A-Thon<sup>®</sup>, merchandise sales, and restaurant dining opportunities. Proceeds from these activities go directly toward offsetting the costs of operating our swim club.

Each swimmer is required to raise a minimum dollar amount for our annual Swim-A-Thon per the current fee schedule posted on the website. The difference between the amount raised and the required amount per the fee schedule will be billed on the swimmer's monthly statement.

The club is, of course, always appreciative of tax-deductible donations made directly by its members.

## Meet Schedule and Entries

The current season's meet schedule is posted on our website. Competition and swimming in meets is not mandatory; however, it is strongly encouraged. The schedule is such that each level of swimmer will have an opportunity to attend a meet every three or four weeks.

Meet information is available on the team website, and the Midwest Swimming website. We strongly encourage signing up for meets using the HLA website; however, you can also have a coach assist you in this process. Coaches makes the final decision concerning event registration.

Please note the meet entry deadline for each meet. Late entries will not be accepted.

## Travel

Parents are responsible for arranging transportation and lodging for out-of-town meets.

Parents are responsible for supervising their swimmers or making arrangements with another parent or adult to provide supervision. A coach has too many responsibilities to the entire team to accept responsibility for an individual swimmer. Please do not ask a coach to provide transportation or to serve as a chaperone.

If a team travel event is planned, the club may reserve blocks of hotel rooms and organize team dinners and activities.

## 8. Practice

### **Times and Locations**

Practice times and locations vary throughout the year and are posted on the HLA website. There are times, however, when facility conflicts, pool problems, coach availability and/ or inclement weather may require practice to be cancelled, rescheduled, or changed to an alternate location. Swimmers and parents should **ALWAYS** check the hotline (**402-441-0599**) each day before coming to practice.

### **Short Course season (September - March)**

Team practices are offered Monday-Friday afternoons and evenings at Lincoln Public Schools (LPS) high school pools, with the particular pool locations set at the beginning of each season. HLA rents this space from LPS at considerable expense to the team. We are fortunate to have practice facilities like this available to accommodate the large size of the team. The high schools have priority in scheduling of the facilities, so occasionally practice times and locations may change.

### **Long Course season (April - August)**

In the summer, the team trains in the 50-meter Woods Pool located at 33rd and L Streets, unless otherwise notified due to inclement weather or other circumstances. Additionally, evening practices are often offered to certain practice groups at LPS high school pools in the afternoon or evening.

### **Practice Policies**

The following guidelines are to inform parents and swimmers of club and coaches' policies regarding practice. These policies help ensure a safe and productive swimming environment for all of our swimmers.

Each training group has specific attendance recommendations appropriate for the objectives of that group. As a general rule, the least possible interruption in the training schedule will produce the greatest amount of success. The club does, however, encourage younger swimmers to participate in other activities in addition to swimming. HLA coaches will expect more frequent practice attendance as swimmers move to higher groups.

For the swimmers' protection, they should arrive on the school grounds no earlier than 15 minutes prior to their workout time. They should also be picked up no later than 15 minutes after their practice is over. We strongly recommend that parents escort their children to and from the pool rather than simply dropping off and picking up curbside. HLA is one of many groups using the high school facilities and our swimmers are not supervised until they reach the pool itself.

Swimmers are to enter the building through the doors nearest the pool and go directly to the pool area. A swimmer found in any other part of the building could negatively affect our relationship with the high school.

Upon arrival at practice, swimmers are to get their swimming gear on and wait in the stretching area prior to the start of practice or dry-land activities. They may use this time to stretch and talk with teammates.

All swimmers are expected to enter the water and participate in dry-land as a group on the coach's instruction. If you happen to show up late, please make sure you are making your best effort to enter the water or begin dry-land in a timely manner.

Swimmers should plan to stay for the entire practice whenever possible. The last part of practice is very often the most important.

Occasionally, most of a practice group may be attending a meet, in which case the HLA website and the hotline will have information regarding cancellation or changes to the practice schedule.

The club has an obligation to act as guests while in the high school (both swimmers and parents). Every member of the club needs to do everything possible to respect this privilege. Any damages to school property may result in financial liability for the responsible swimmers' parents, and/or could result in the swimmer being asked to leave the team permanently.

Parents are not allowed on the pool deck during practice unless it is an emergency. The presence of a non-USA registered coach member or club representative on deck invalidates the club's USA Swimming insurance liability coverage. To speak with a coach, please make arrangements via phone or email.

Parents are allowed and encouraged to observe practice from the swimming bleachers/stands. Please be considerate and keep conversations at a low volume level. Do not try to communicate with any swimmer from the observation area. This is not only distracting to the swimmer, but to the entire team as well as the coaches.

## **Practice Levels**

HLA uses a progressive age group program designed to develop the child physically, mentally and emotionally in a systematic fashion. A well-defined, long-term approach of gradually increasing degrees of commitment is essential to reach peak performance levels during a swimmer's physiological prime. Emphasis in the early stages of participation must be placed on developing technical skills and a love for the sport. In the later years, a more demanding physical and psychological challenge must be introduced to the training program. In this respect, "too much too soon" is more often the cause of failure to achieve maximum potential in senior swimming rather than the reverse situation.

In addition to emphasizing long-term rather than short-term results, it is also important that we establish training groups of swimmers who are compatible with respect to their abilities, commitment levels and goals. At each level, the goals and objectives are specific and directed toward meeting the needs of the swimmer. The long-term goal of total excellence is always in mind. Each child will progress at his or her own rate. The coaching staff recognizes this fact by making team assignments based on a swimmer's physical, mental, and emotional development.

Please note that the specific make-up and various requirements for each practice group are determined by the coaching staff. Coaches reserve the right to make changes in order to balance the groups based on swimmer numbers and skill levels within each group, or based on other circumstances that are in the best interest of the swimmer and group as a whole.

In all practice groups, the most important requirement is a positive attitude and work ethic that is conducive to consistent and productive training for the future.

**Gold Group:** High school-age swimmers and beyond that are competing at the regional and national level, including meets such as Midwest Sectionals, All-Stars, Grand Prix Meets, US Open, Junior & Senior Nationals Championships, and Olympic Trials.

Expectations for this group begin with a 90% water and dry-land practice attendance requirement (essentially 6 workouts per week), participation in a minimum of one meet per month, and travel to one regional or national meet per season.

**Navy Group:** High school age or older swimmers who are not yet at the national level, but are training year-round, with goals to reach Midwest Championship cut times as well as high-level Regional and National Team meets.

Practice expectations are 4-5 workouts per week. Participation in at least one meet per month is suggested but not mandatory.

**Silver Group:** Ages 11-14 and under swimmers who are focused on swimming and looking to move on towards our Gold Level Team. Swimmers will already have a grasp of watching the pace clock, swimming language and drills. Goals of making Midwest Championship cut times, the All-Star Team, Zones, MW Sectionals and beyond are expected, but secondary to overall swimming ability. Athletes in Silver Group are required to journal their weeks' worth of workouts and turn journals into coach before the start of the new week.

Practice expectation is 4-5 practices per week. Expected meet schedule is communicated at the beginning of each season with specific meets being required.

**Bronze Group:** 14-and-under swimmers who are advancing in their career, but still need more time to develop an aerobic base and solid technique before they move up in the groups. There is an increased amount of kicking work, more race specific training and education of the sport. Bronze group participates in two-three dryland workouts per week where the focus is on core stability, explosive speed, agility and flexibility.

Practice expectation is 4-5 practices per week. Participation in one meet per month is suggested but not required.

**Age Group Team:** 14-and-under swimmers who are early in their career and need more time to develop an aerobic base and solid technique before they move up in the groups. They will begin to learn the basics of watching the clock for repeat sendoffs, swimming practice language and drills. They will be developing an aerobic base and an understanding for hard work. AGT participates in two-three dryland workouts per week with a focus on core stability, explosive speed, agility and flexibility.

Practice expectation is minimally 3 practices per week. Participation in one meet per month is suggested but not required.

**Developmental (Thunder Sharks):** Ages 6 and over swimmers who have just begun their competitive swimming careers with a focus on having fun and learning technique. This group is getting ready for the next levels with basic technique development in all four strokes. Hope for group advancement before age 13.

Practice expectation is minimally 2-3 practices per week, but to receive the most benefit of the technique work, 3 or more practices per week would be ideal.

## 9. Coaching

Nothing has a greater influence on the quality of children's sports than the excellence of the coach. HLA's staff consists of professionally trained coaches. Our coaching staff provides the assurance that the time your children spend in swimming will be quality time. HLA strives to maintain positive coach-to-swimmer ratios in order to provide instruction, coaching and attention to ALL of our swimmers.

### **Coaches' Responsibilities**

The coach's job is to supervise the entire competitive swim program. The HLA coaching staff is dedicated to providing a program for youngsters that will enable them to learn the value of striving to improve oneself. Therefore, the coaches must be in total control in matters affecting training and competition.

The coaches are responsible for placing swimmers in practice groups. This is based on the age and skill level of each individual. When it is in the best interest of a swimmer, he/she will be placed in a more challenging training group by the coach.

Sole responsibility for stroke instruction and the training regimen rests with HLA coaching staff. Each group's practices are based on sound scientific principles and are geared to the specific goals of that group.

The coaching staff will make the final decision concerning which meets HLA swimmers may attend. The coaching staff also makes the final decision concerning event registration for each swimmer.

At meets, the coaching staff will conduct and supervise warm-up procedures for the team. Before and after each race, the coaches will offer encouragement and advice regarding the upcoming event and constructive criticism following the swimmer's performance.

The building of a relay team is the sole responsibility of the coaching staff.

### **Coach/ Parent Communication**

The development of a solid swimmer/coach relationship is essential for swimmers to meet their goals. Parents are expected to play a supportive role and display a positive attitude.

Listed below are some helpful parent-coach communication guidelines:

- Try to keep foremost in your mind that you and the coach have the best interests of your child at heart. If you trust that the coach's goals match yours, even though his or her approach may be different, you are more likely to enjoy good rapport and a constructive dialogue.
- Keep in mind that the coach must balance your perspective regarding what is best for your child with the needs of the team or a training group that can range in size from 20-40 members. On occasion, an individual child's interest may need to be subordinate to the interests of the group, but in the long run the benefits of membership in the group compensate for occasional short-term inconvenience.
- If your child swims for an assistant coach, always discuss the matter first with that coach. If the assistant coach cannot satisfactorily resolve your concern, then ask that the assistant head coach or head coach join the dialogue as a third party. Similarly, if your child swims for the head coach, and he or she cannot satisfactorily resolve your concern, then ask that another coach or club representative join the dialogue as a third party.
- If another parent uses you as a sounding board for complaints about the coach's performance or policies, listen empathetically, but encourage the other parent to speak directly to the coach. He or she is the only one who can resolve the problem.

HLA discourages parents from discussing disagreements regarding coaching philosophies, styles, etc. with other team parents. This phenomena often results in the creation of new problems. Direct contact with the coach or club representative is always the best avenue for resolution.

### **Private Lessons**

Swimmers may benefit from additional time spent on stroke-specific work outside of a large practice environment. In these cases, it is critical to the swimmer/coach relationship that the desire for private lessons be communicated to the swimmer's primary coach. A primary coach may recommend more practice attendance prior to recommending individual sessions, if they believe it is possible to achieve results with better attendance.

We expect primary coaches to be consulted for private lessons first. If they are unavailable, please visit with the head coach who may have another staff member available and/or have recommendations for the swimmer. HLA requires that HLA coaching staff members take part in the conversation with any outside help, to ensure stroke work is consistent with our technique progression.

## **10. Parental Responsibilities and Covenants**

A successful program incorporates understanding and cooperation among parents, swimmers, and coaches. The progress your child makes depends to a great extent on this triangular relationship. In addition, HLA's success depends upon the commitment of our "team" of parents to support HLA by volunteering at various events throughout the year, especially our hosted swim meets.

### **Parent Guidelines**

The following guidelines will help you keep your child's development in the proper perspective and help your child reach his or her full potential as an athlete.

### **Parental Role**

The coach's job is to motivate and constructively criticize the swimmer's performance. It is the parent's

responsibility to supply love, recognition, and encouragement regardless of the level of performance achieved. It is also important for a parent to stress the value of hard work in practice, and to foster an environment of respect for, and trust in, the coaching staff.

## **Young Swimmers**

Young swimmers are the most inconsistent swimmers, and this can be frustrating for parents, coaches, and the swimmer alike! Parents and coaches must be patient and permit these youngsters to learn to love the sport. When a young swimmer first joins HLA, there may be a brief period in which he/ she appears to slow down. This is a result of the added concentration on stroke technique, but this will soon lead to much faster swims for the individual.

## **Advanced Swimmers**

Even the very best swimmers will have meets where they do not achieve their best times. These "plateaus" are a normal part of swimming. Over the course of a season, times should improve. Please be supportive of these "off" performances and meets. The older swimmers may have only two or three meets a year for which they will be rested and tapered.

## **Coach/ Swimmer Relationship**

The coach is the coach! A good relationship between coach and swimmer produces the best results. When parents interfere with opinions as to how the swimmer should swim or train, it causes considerable, and oftentimes insurmountable, confusion as to whom the swimmer should listen. If you have a problem, concern, question, or complaint, please contact the coach to arrange a time to meet privately.

## **Parent Covenants**

HLA has developed parent covenants that outline three major expectations of all parents: Service, Solidarity, and Support. Please read and adhere to the parent covenants that are posted on the HLA website ([www.heartlandaquatics.org](http://www.heartlandaquatics.org)).

## **11. Volunteer Policy**

HLA is a non-profit, member-governed organization. Our efforts, as much as those of our kids and our wonderful coaching staff, help determine the success of HLA. More important than advancing the success of the organization is what parent volunteerism does for our children. By participating in something that our children think is important we show by our actions that we truly care for them.

HLA enjoys an outstanding reputation for hosting smooth-running, unique, and fun swim meets. Volunteers are the backbone of that reputation. In line with our parent covenants referenced above, we owe it to each other to do all that we can to distribute the effort equitably among our members so that a few do not feel overburdened.

### **HLA Volunteer Policy:**

- At least one parent/guardian of each HLA swimmer is expected to contribute to the club by volunteering their time at all HLA-hosted swim meets. Failure to provide a volunteer will result in penalties:
  - First offense: A penalty of \$50 will be charged to your HLA account.
  - Subsequent offenses within the same season: Swimmer(s) will be disqualified from the meet in which there is no volunteer or no pre-approved arrangements. Splash/event fees and



- other associated costs associated with that meet will be assessed to the swimmer's account.
- If extenuating circumstances prevent a swimmer's family member from volunteering, that family member should contact either the head coach or the board president to make alternative arrangements prior to the start of the meet.
- Additionally, all parents are required to time at least once during the short or long course seasons for NON HLA-hosted meets (e.g. Midwest Qualifiers, Midwest Championships), as needed. This applies to parents of swimmers participating in these meets.

## **Why Volunteer?**

### We owe it to our kids.

Meets provide an opportunity for our athletes to see the results of their rigorous training. When the club hosts a swim meet it is an opportunity for the parents to get involved and be part of the action. Without volunteers, the meets would not happen. Hosting a smooth-running meet, so that the swimmers are able to demonstrate their skill and training, is very important to them and to all of us collectively.

### We owe it to our guests.

Member participation is not unique to HLA. Every swim club nationwide relies on volunteers for successful swim meets. When we go to out-of-town meets, we get to sit and watch the events. The parents of the sponsoring club provide all the volunteer effort, so that we may relax and watch the events. When teams come to Lincoln meets sponsored by HLA, it is our responsibility to return the courtesy to our guests.

### We run the organization.

Without volunteers to run the day to day activities of the organization, there would be no swim club. There must be people that want to attend board meetings, hold board office positions, and people that want to participate in committees to discuss ideas/issues and be part of the decision-making process.

### We control membership costs.

HLA is a private, non-profit, member-governed, swim club. The club is funded exclusively by membership fees and by profits generated from hosting swim meets and other activities. Hosting meets is a way to keep membership fees as low as possible.

### It's Fun!

Meets are a blast! Being a part of the experience creates bonds with teammates, families, and coaches. In addition, being involved and showing your team spirit at meets just might earn HLA the coveted Team Spirit Award!

## **What can you do as a volunteer?**

There are many areas where you can get involved. Most tasks take very little time and are not open ended commitments. Everyone has a unique talent they bring to the table, so selecting a volunteer position can be done according to your skills, talents, or interests. The three general categories that you can get involved with are:

- Swim club board membership (see section 6 above)
- Swim meet hosting activities
- Swim club committees

Volunteers **will not be asked to do anything beyond their capabilities.** In fact, most tasks are quite easy to perform. No one will be “thrown” into a task alone and left to flounder. More-than-adequate training will be provided and most volunteers work in teams.

By providing details of these activities in the next section we hope to show how easy the activities are and to encourage members and volunteers to participate in organizational and fundraising activities.

## Meet Activities

Position	Volunteers Needed	Activity Description
Meet Manager	1	Coordinates all meets and officials. Responsible for receiving all the meet entries from the participating swim teams. Manages the "meet in progress". <i>(Should have been an understudy for several meets before signing up)</i>
Meet Announcer	1	Makes all meet announcements and announces each event's winners etc.
Programs	1-2/session	Works a table to distribute/sell programs to parents.
Officials	4+	<i>(PMSL or USS training class required.)</i> Must be familiar with the USS rules governing turns and touches for Freestyle, Breast, Back & Butterfly strokes. Report all DQs to the Referee.
Watcher of Finishes	2	Observes each race and records the order of finish in the event there are discrepancies with the timing system or times recorded by volunteers.
Starter	1	After referee's signal, explains distance, stroke, and # of laps, announces heat number and asks swimmers to take their mark and starts race. Calls back competitors in event of a false start.
Safety Marshall	4 per session	Provides swimmers or parents at entrances to the pool deck area with information. Keeps pool deck area clear of parents.
Meet Set-up & Clean-up	At least 4 for setup & cleanup	Set-up concession, Clerk of Course, and public audience areas, install lane lines, flags, and timing pads, take down the same after the meet.

Position	Volunteers Needed	Activity Description
Awards	2-3 per session	Responsible for managing ribbon stock, organizing blank ribbons per meet and event, organizing awarded ribbons per swimmer for distribution by the swim coach.  At awards table receives individual event results from the administration area and prepares meet ribbons based on that information.
Administration Computer	3-4 per session	Records all the times, notes all DQs for all events. Compiles team scores. Directs information to awards table. Prints and displays the event results. (Familiarity with Meet Manager software is a must. It is also recommended that you have been an understudy for a meet or two.)
Scoreboard	1 per session	Operate the scoring system which updates the score board.
Runners	2-3 per session	Retrieves backup times from the pool deck area to the administration area. Any other misc. errands. This is a good job for our youth that want to get involved!
Timers	16 per session  1 head timer  2 Backups per session	One of the easiest jobs with the best seat in the house. Brief instruction is provided prior to the start of the meet. The primary time is recorded automatically by the Colorado scoring system. The 2 times per lane are there for backup in case of a system failure or if a swimmer does not touch the Colorado touch pads. Some people think they will mess things up by doing this for the first time without experience but it is virtually impossible if you know how to push a button and operate a stop watch. <i>(Required to be 14 years of age or older)</i>

## 12. Disciplinary Code

### Safe Sport

In 2010 USA Swimming implemented the Safe Sport program to ensure that athletes are provided a safe and healthy environment in which to practice and compete. HLA appoints a Safe Sport Coordinator who is either a member of the coaching staff or a parent volunteer to work in collaboration with USA Swimming officials to “respond to and prevent instances of abuse and misconduct within the sport of swimming,”

<http://www.usaswimming.org> (Home/Member Resources/Programs & Services/SafeSport). The coordinator's responsibilities include education of staff and athletes about personal safety-related topics such as bullying (see below).

## **Code of Conduct**

In addition to our participation in the Safe Sport program, HLA follows the USA Swimming Code of Conduct which includes provisions regarding sexual misconduct and bullying. The code can be viewed at <http://www.usaswimming.org> (*Home / Member Resources / Programs & Services / Safe Sport / Policies & Guidelines*).

HLA coaches, athletes and parents are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that reflects the highest standards of sportsmanship, in line with our parent and team covenants referred to in sections above, and that is in compliance with the USA Swimming Code of Conduct.

Violations of these policies, including incidents of sexual misconduct and bullying (discussed below) may result in removal of the swimmer (and their parent(s) from competition and/or expulsion from the club, at the discretion of the Board of Directors.

## **Bullying**

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable in HLA and will not be tolerated. Bullying is counterproductive to team spirit and can be devastating to a victim. The Club 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 prohibits bullying. Generally, bullying is the use of aggression, whether intentional or not, which hurts another person and may result in pain and distress. The USA Swimming Code of Conduct further defines bullying in section 304.3.7.

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

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

As with other violations of the USA Swimming Code of Conduct, incidents of bullying may result in removal of the swimmer (and their parent(s) from competition and/or expulsion from the club, at the discretion of the Board of Directors.

## **Caffeine/Stimulant Use**

HLA supports healthy lifestyle choices among all of its young athletes, especially as they pertain to diet. Pursuant to this, consumption of caffeinated and stimulant-containing "energy drinks" (e.g. Monster, 5-Hour Energy, Red Bull, etc.) or food products (energy "beans", caffeinated "shot blox", and similar items) with the intent of aiding performance in competition is inconsistent with team values and is therefore prohibited.

Swimmers who are found to be in violation of this policy will be removed from competition for the day or

the remainder of the meet, at the discretion of the coaching staff. All such decisions are final.

## 13. USA Swimming

### **General Information** *(Parts reprinted from "A Tradition of Excellence" by USA Swimming)*

USA Swimming, America's largest program of guided fitness activity for children, is the National Governing Body for amateur competitive swimming in the United States. USA Swimming staff interact with 59 Local Swimming Committees (LSCs), athletes, coaches and volunteers at all levels to provide a variety of services to 220,000 registered athletes, 20,000 non-athletes and 2,500 swim clubs.

USA Swimming is the ruling body of sanctioned swimming meets in the United States. USA Swimming meets are designed to protect the swimmer, provide fair and equitable conditions of competition, and promote uniformity in the sport so that no swimmer shall obtain an unfair advantage over another.

As the national governing body for the sport, USA Swimming is charged with the responsibility to formulate rules, conduct national championships, disseminate safety and sports medicine information, select competitors to represent this country in international competition, and insure the development of its member clubs and age group swimmers.

### **USA Swimming Insurance**

Clubs such as HLA and our athletes and non-athlete members that join the USA Swimming organization not only reap the benefits of USA Swimming's world-class training and leadership opportunities, but they also are provided with excess accident medical protection for members who may suffer injuries while participating in insured activities, and general liability insurance to allow our club to show evidence of financial responsibility at club-sponsored and insured activities all while protecting athletes, non-athletes, and the club. Full details can be viewed at [USA\\_Swimming.org/tools & resources/risk management/insurance/insurance documents &forms](http://USA_Swimming.org/tools&resources/riskmanagement/insurance/insurance_documents&forms).

## 14. Electronic Communication

### **Purpose**

HLA recognizes the prevalence of electronic communication and social media in today's world. HLA uses social media extensively to communicate with our families and swimmers, and to follow current events in swimming. While HLA acknowledges the value of these methods of communication, it also realizes that there are associated risks that must be considered when adults use these methods to communicate with minors.

### **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. With respect to electronic communications, a simple test that can be used in most cases is whether the electronic communication with swimmers is **Transparent**, **Accessible** and **Professional**.

*Transparent:* All electronic communication between coaches and athletes should be transparent.

Communication should not only be clear and direct, but also free from hidden meanings, innuendo and expectations.

*Accessible:* All electronic communication between coaches and athletes should be considered a matter of record and part of HLA's records. Whenever possible, one should include another coach or parent or board member in the communication so that there is no question regarding accessibility.

*Professional:* All electronic communication between a coach and an athlete should be a professional representation of HLA. This includes word choices, tone, grammar, and subject matter that model the standards and integrity of a 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.

## **15. Team Travel**

### **Purpose**

Team Travel is defined as overnight travel to a swim meet or other team activity that is planned and supervised by HLA. During travel, athletes are often away from their families and support networks, and the setting is less structured and less familiar. The purpose of this policy is to create expectations and requirements for team travel in order to ensure the safety of our athletes and facilitate ease in the planning of the itinerary and travel itself.

### **General**

Team travel will begin and end at the times designated by the Head Coach. A team travel itinerary will be communicated to the swimmers and their families at least five days prior to departure, or as quickly as it can reasonably be arranged. It is expected that all swimmers competing or participating in the team travel event will travel with the team and will follow the itinerary established by the Head Coach. If exceptions to the itinerary are needed, a request must be made to the Head Coach prior to departure and the Head Coach may, with approval from a member of the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors, grant such an exception.

Team managers and chaperones must be members of USA Swimming and have successfully passed a USA Swimming-administered criminal background check. Regardless of gender, a coach shall not share a hotel room or other sleeping arrangement with an athlete (unless the coach is the parent, guardian, sibling, or spouse of that particular athlete). When only one athlete and one coach travel to a competition, the athlete must have his/her parent's (or legal guardian's) written permission in advance to travel alone with the coach.

## **Code of Conduct & Release Forms**

All team members, team staff, and parents of minors must be apprised in writing of HLA's Code of Conduct, contained in the Team Travel Policy Agreement. A signature on the Agreement constitutes unconditional agreement to comply with the stipulations stated in the document, and is required prior to participation in team travel. HLA must also obtain a signed Liability Release and/or Indemnification Form (also contained in the Team Travel Policy Agreement) for each athlete participating in team travel.