

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PAPER
ON
YMCA COMPETITIVE SWIMMING AND DIVING PROGRAMS
YMCA OF THE USA
November 2007

This technical assistance paper describes sound practices and principles to help YMCAs effectively manage their competitive swimming and diving programs. In addition to this document, YMCAs should also review the “Rules That Govern YMCA Competitive Sports”, which all YMCA competitive sports programs must abide by, and the *Principles of YMCA Competitive Swimming and Diving* manual. (See resources on the last page).

YMCA Mission

The YMCA Mission is to put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all. It is extremely important that YMCA competitive swimming and diving programs are consistent with the YMCA mission, as well as the YMCA’s commitment to building strong kids, strong families and strong communities. This means that YMCA competitive swimming and diving programs should focus on the development of the whole person, the strengthening of the family and the inclusion of all in the community who desire to participate. These programs should use competitive swimming and diving as a means by which to build positive character and assets. The focus should be on competing with dignity and respect while striving for one’s personal best. Winning is not the primary goal in YMCA competitive sports.

YMCA Identification and Control

Teams representing local YMCAs in both closed YMCA competition and open competition should be identified with and remain under the complete control of the sponsoring YMCAs.

If a YMCA team chooses to become a member of a National Governing Body (eg. USA Swimming, USA Diving, AAU Diving) for a specific sport in order to participate in open competition in that sport, that team’s membership charter should include the **official name** of the sponsoring YMCA.

YMCA Competition

When YMCA teams participate in Open Competition (competition sponsored by National Governing Bodies involving teams from various organizations), they are governed by the rules and regulations set forth by those NGBs except where the rules and regulations of the NGBs are in conflict with YMCA safety and insurance standards.

In closed competition, YMCA teams compete against other YMCA teams only. If a team representing another organization participates, it is no longer a closed YMCA meet. When YMCA teams participate in closed YMCA competition they are governed by the “Rules That Govern YMCA Competitive Sports” and any additional rules established by the YMCA committee responsible for that competition.

To be eligible for various YMCA championships, swimmers must participate in a certain number of closed YMCA inter-association (between two or more YMCA units) meets. A closed formal YMCA meet consists of: at least two teams from different YMCAs, a minimum of six swimmers from each team, six events or more with one being a four person relay (four boys or four girls, not mixed), the presence of certified coaches for each team and the presence of at least two YMCA certified officials, one of whom should be the Referee. The meet shall be limited only to YMCAs. If a team from another organization participates in the meet, it is no longer a closed YMCA meet.

Risk Management

YMCA swimmers should never perform racing dives, in practice or in competition, in pools with less than 5' of water at the end of the pool where dive starts will be performed. If the water depth at the starting end is less than 5', races should be started with swimmers in the water, performing a push start.

When there is a difference in rules related to safety in competition, the YMCA should first follow the YMCA regulations, and then the most conservative rules. Particular attention should be given to the YMCA's 5' depth requirement for the use of starting blocks and the requirement related to having lifeguards on the deck of the pool for all practices and meets.

Certified YMCA lifeguards should be on the deck of the pool during all practices and meets. **The lifeguard's only responsibility should be guarding the pool.** A coach cannot effectively perform the duties of coaching and vigilantly perform the duties of a lifeguard at the same time. Therefore, coaches should not serve as lifeguards during meets or practices.

Coaches attending away meets should remove their teams from competition in other YMCA facilities if the appropriate safety standards are not met.

Additional information regarding risk management can be found on the YMCA Exchange website (www.ymcaexchange.org; username: ymca; password: 9622), in the *Principles of YMCA Aquatics* and *Principles of YMCA Competitive Swimming and Diving* manuals and in the YMCA Lifeguard Course text, *On the Guard II*.

Membership Requirements

All YMCA athletes must be full privilege members of the YMCA that they represent, as established by the "Rules That Govern YMCA Competitive Sports". According to these rules, a YMCA member is a person, who, after due application, is enrolled by the association, entitled to **full** privileges, activities, and services of that association. This means that the members of YMCA competitive teams must have annual full-privilege memberships that entitle them to the same activities and services as all other annual full-privilege members.

If a YMCA has established a special membership category for the participants on its

competitive teams that is different from the full privilege memberships provided for other youth and adults, those individuals are in violation of the “Rules That Govern YMCA Competitive Sports” and are ineligible for YMCA competition.

YMCA teams and members of YMCA teams that desire to participate in open competition sponsored by a National Governing Body (NGB) must register with that NGB, pay the appropriate registration fees, and adhere to the rules and regulations established by the NGB for those competitions.

Occasionally, YMCAs want to merge their competitive teams. In order for this to occur, one of the merging YMCAs must be designated as the official YMCA and all athletes (if they are planning to represent that YMCA in inter-association competition) must have full privilege memberships in that YMCA. It is not permissible for some of the athletes to have memberships in one of the merging YMCAs and the remaining members of the team to have memberships in the other merging YMCA(s). The executive directors or CEOs and the Board of Directors of each YMCA must agree on the merger and approve the process.

Service Areas

Although individuals are free to become members and/or participate in the programs of any YMCA of their choosing, each YMCA is chartered by the YMCA of the USA to operate in a designated service area. YMCAs cannot operate programs within the service area of another YMCA without that YMCA’s permission. Therefore, a swim team that is affiliated with one YMCA cannot practice or conduct meets in the service area of another YMCA without that YMCA’s permission.

Personnel

Coaches of YMCA teams should be employees or volunteers of the YMCA, hired and supervised by a member of the YMCA staff, not a parents organization or an independent club. YMCAs should follow their current hiring and screening procedures when hiring or assigning coaches. This includes conducting in-depth interviews, researching a candidate’s credentials, checking references and performing background checks and drug tests as established by the YMCA’s human resources officer or department.

Once hired, coaches are subject to either the personnel policies or volunteer policies of the YMCA. Head coaches should be treated as YMCA professionals and should be included in staff meetings and training opportunities. They should be held to the same standards and protocols as other program directors and they should be consulted on matters that affect the competitive swimming and diving program. Coaches should be encouraged to participate in both YMCA and sport-specific trainings in order to constantly improve their ability to develop the youth and children involved in the competitive swimming and diving program.

It is important to maintain a cooperative relationship and regular communication between the YMCA leadership and the competitive swimming and diving leadership. All coaches and directors share responsibility in preserving a positive and supportive environment.

When attending meets at sites other than his/her own YMCA, the head coach is the official representative of that YMCA and is ultimately responsible for the conduct and behavior of the swimmers, coaches, parents, and spectators accompanying the team.

All coaches wishing to be on the deck at the National YMCA Swimming and Diving Championships are required to have taken the Principles of YMCA Competitive Swimming and Diving course. Many district, state, and regional competitive swimming committees have similar requirements for the coaches participating in their championship competitions.

Parents Organizations

Participants in parents organizations are program volunteers who assist YMCA staff in conducting the competitive swimming and diving program. Parents organizations are advisory bodies that are accountable to the YMCA staff and should not operate as a policy making committee. All policy decisions affecting the competitive swimming and diving program should be made by the program director or head coach with the support of his/her direct YMCA supervisor and with consideration given to the input and suggestions of the parents organization.

Parents organizations should not hire and fire program coaches, raise money for projects outside the knowledge and parameters of the YMCA or control a separate bank account for the competitive swimming program. They should be reminded that they are not legally responsible and cannot make any decisions to bind or obligate the YMCA. The following are the duties and responsibilities within the local YMCA structure:

Corporate Board: The legally responsible, governing body for the YMCA that sets broad policy for the entire YMCA, hires the executive director, controls/approves all local YMCA budgets, sets guiding philosophies for the YMCA, has all legal responsibility for the local YMCA and has ultimate control of all bank accounts, income, and expense, and conducts fund-raising.

Staff: Implements policies set by the Board, supports the day-to-day administration of the activities, oversees all finances and all bank accounts of the YMCA, proposes the budget to corporate boards, supports fund-raising efforts on behalf of the YMCA, makes programmatic plans and decisions, hires and supervises all staff and program volunteers, oversees fundraising efforts, to assure that they are consistent with the YMCA's fundraising policies.

Advisory Committee or Parents Group: Supports the programs of the local YMCA, highlights accomplishments of local YMCA programs as selected by corporate board and implemented by staff; raises funds as directed by YMCA staff or the Corporate Board and sees that all funds raised, from whatever source, are given to YMCA staff for deposit into YMCA corporate bank account.

All programs operated in the YMCA name or out of YMCA facilities must be under the supervision of YMCA staff and under the control of the Corporate Chartered Board of Directors for the local YMCA.

Parent advisory committee members are valuable volunteers who can assist YMCA programs in many ways. The *Principles of YMCA Competitive Swimming and Diving* manual includes suggested volunteer duties for parents and parent advisory committees.

Financial Management and Advice on Control of Local YMCA Money and Programs

It is critical for the YMCA's maintenance of its nonprofit status and for other tax purposes that all funds raised or used for YMCA programs are channeled through the YMCA accounting system and are under the direct control of YMCA staff and the Corporate Board. Only in this way can all funds collected and used for YMCA purposes be reported on IRS form 990, as required by federal law. It will also help to prevent the misuse or inappropriate use of the funds and the YMCA's federal tax exemption. It is illegal for organizations to have funds in outside accounts using the YMCA's tax ID number.

Funds earmarked as "custodial" accounts should become the property of the YMCA if a group disbands or leaves the sponsorship of the association. Additionally, any equipment purchased in the name of, or on behalf of, the YMCA or a YMCA program, is property of the YMCA.

Fund raising by competitive teams should be organized and conducted under the direct control of the YMCA to ensure that these efforts are consistent with the association's fund raising policies and do not interfere with other solicitations being made by the YMCA in the community. Funds raised "in the name of" or utilizing the name of the YMCA are legally YMCA funds. A careful understanding should be established with the groups affected concerning how they might access funds for approved use.

Insurance

YMCAs should check with their insurance carriers to ensure that staff and volunteers involved in their competitive swimming programs are covered by liability insurance. Particular attention should be given to the coverage provided for away meets and meets not held within the YMCA facility. Consideration should also be given to coverage for those individuals (coaches, parents, swimmers) who provide transportation for swimmers to and from away meets. All coaches and volunteers should be provided with an orientation to the local YMCA's child abuse prevention policies.

Swim Officials Certification

A Swim Officials' Certification module has been incorporated into the YMCA of the USA Program Training Certification System. Each YMCA is encouraged to have a sufficient number of YMCA certified officials to officiate at its home and away dual meets. Larger YMCA teams are also encouraged to have at least one person certified as a Swim Officials' Trainer.

YMCAs are expected to have certified YMCA Swim Officials on the deck at all meets. (For a meet to be recognized as a qualifying closed competition meet, it must be

officiated by at least two YMCA Certified Officials, one of whom must be the Referee.)

The YMCA Swim Officials' Certification Program involves two basic levels of certification. Level I Certified Officials are trained to take on the roles of a stroke & turn judge, place judge, relay take-off judge, timer or scorer. Level II Certified Officials are authorized to act as referees, starters and chief judges, in addition to any of the Level I positions.

YMCA Swim Officials certifications are valid for three years.

Prerequisites for Level I and Level II certification and re-certification, and for becoming a certified YMCA Swim Officials' Trainer are listed on the YMCA competitive swimming and diving website (www.ymcaswimminganddiving.org).

Resources

The resources listed below are to assist YMCAs with the administration of their competitive swimming and diving programs. These may be found on the YMCA Competitive Swimming and Diving website, www.ymcaswimminganddiving.org, the YMCA Exchange website, www.ymcaexchange.org (username: ymca, password: 9622) or in manuals available through the YMCA Program Store (1-800-747-0089).

- YMCA Child Abuse Prevention Guidelines.
- *Principles of YMCA Aquatics.*
- *Principles of YMCA Competitive Swimming & Diving.*
- *YMCA Competitive Swimming Black Book.*
- *YMCA National Swimming and Diving Championship Meet Information.*

The following training courses are available for YMCA swimming coaches and officials.

- Principles of YMCA Competitive Swimming and Diving
- Principles of YMCA Competitive Swimming and Diving Trainer
- YMCA Swim Coach
- YMCA Swim Coach Trainer
- Swim Officials *Level I*
- *Swim Officials Level II*
- Swim Officials Trainer