



# USA Swimming National Disability Committee



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## Motivational Times Standards

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To:	LSC General Chairs	LSC Offices
	LSC Disability Chair	LSC Championship Coordinators
	LSC Diversity Chair	Zone Officials Chairs
	LSC Officials Chair	

### Re: Disability Committee Motivational Time Standards

This letter is to explain the purpose and intended use of the USA Swimming Disability Motivational Time Standards recently released by the USA Swimming National Disability Committee.

These time standards are the accumulation of over 3 years work and are intended to foster and promote the inclusion of athletes with a disability within USA Swimming LSC Championships. The motivational times are designed to provide a fair, equitable and structured approach by using a combination of three groupings of similar disabilities for athletes, along with qualifying/motivational times tailored to different levels of competition.

These motivational times will supplement existing initiatives for inclusion within USA Swimming. The primary focus and intended use for the motivational times are:

1. Provide a simple and easy to implement grouping of athletes with a disability for competition that complies with the USA Swimming rules and regulations.
2. Provide a consistent national level benchmark for athletes with a disability to work towards. These motivational times are similar in their purpose to the existing C, B, A, time standards issued by USA Swimming today.
3. Provide fair and consistent qualifying times at a national level for championship meets ranging from LSC Championships through Zones and up to Sectional Level meets. Prior to these motivational times, there was inconsistency between LSC's within USA Swimming for qualifying times at championship meets for athletes with a disability.
4. Foster and promote a fair and equitable framework for the inclusion of athletes with a disability within USA Swimming.

The Motivational Times standards are posted on the USA Swimming web site on both the Disability page and the time standards page.

Included below are a range of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) regarding both these motivational times and their implementation. If you have any questions or concerns about these motivational times, please do not hesitate to contact Randy Julian (Disability Committee Staff Liaison) at USA Swimming by email at:

rjulian@usaswimming.org or by phone at: 719-866-3578

Yours faithfully

Mark Rieniets  
USA Swimming National Disability Committee (Chair)



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### Frequently Asked Questions

**1. Can our LSC use these times as qualifying times for entry into LSC championships?**

Yes. These times are intended to provide a structured and consistent basis for qualifying times for athletes with a disability in the different LSC championships.

**2. If our meet is not an LSC championship, can we modify these entry times?**

Yes. Similar to the way you would adjust the qualifying times for a meet which is not a championship level, you can do the same to the motivational times and use those as your qualifying standard for athletes with a disability. Just be precise and do not label the adjusted times as the USA Swimming Motivational time standards.

**3. What are the P1, P2 & P3 groupings included in the motivation times?**

The three “P” groups place athletes with similar disabilities into the same time groupings. The three groups are a simple and easy to determine means of ensuring athletes with similar (not identical) disabilities have the same motivational times.

**4. What athletes are included in P1, P2 & P3 groupings included in the motivation times?**

The three groups include athletes who have the following disabilities:

- **P1** - non-ambulatory (wheelchair bound) – limited use of all four extremities
- **P2** – dwarfism, multiple limb deficiencies, ambulatory with assistance, can be wheel chair bound with high functioning upper body
- **P3** – single limb deficiencies, visual impairment, intellectual impairment, ambulatory without significant assistance

**5. How do I know that the P1, P2 or P3 group that the athletes say they belong to is correct?**

If the athlete or the coach states they belong to a particular group, then that is the correct group for them. This is consistent with age group swimming where we accept birthdates without requiring a birth certificate. The aim of these motivational times is to foster inclusion, not to embarrass athletes and coaches on the pool deck.

**6. What if what I am observing does not line up with the P1, P2 or P3 description of the grouping the athletes or coach states they belong to.**

You must remember that many disabilities will manifest themselves differently as the athlete competes, or even how they are feeling/coping on a particular day. Just accept what the athletes or the coach says on face value.

**7. How do officials judge the athletes with a disability?**

All the athletes competing should be judged the same manner and according to the USA Swimming rulebook. As part of the process, the athlete or the coach will notify the referee regarding what accommodation is needed for the athlete during the competition. The referee can then instruct the officials accordingly, or may choose just to discard the DQ's that do not take into consideration the accommodation requested. This is up to the referee to decide how to handle each situation.



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### **8. What type of accommodations is the referee likely to be asked for?**

A list of typical considerations which may be asked for are listed below. This list is an example and must not be viewed as either comprehensive nor complete:

1. Athlete cannot turn their feet out in the breaststroke.
2. Athlete cannot keep their arms and/or their legs on the same horizontal plane during the breaststroke.
3. Athlete cannot use their legs to push off the wall, and need to take a non-asymmetrical stroke to get their body positioned on the breast
4. Due to shoulder issues, athletes cannot bring their arms forward over the surface of the water and will drag their arms through the water during the butterfly
5. Visually and/or hearing impaired athletes may ask for a lane near the starter to assist in seeing the starting signal or hand signals from the starter.
6. Swimmers may request to swim a shorter distance so they can compete with their age group. E.g., Swim 50m in a 100m race.
7. Due to intellectual impairment, the coach or parent may need to accompany the athlete to the starting blocks and may need to instruct/remind them while they are on the starting blocks of the stroke, distance, etc. they are swimming.

### **9. What if an athlete with a disability asks for multiple accommodations, should I put a limit on the number?**

There is no limit to what accommodation an athlete may need in order to compete. As complex as the human body is, the athlete may require a single or multiple accommodations in order to compete. This may also change between competitions and even days within the competitions. All athletes' requests should be accommodated whenever they are reasonable and possible to cater for.

### **10. Do officials need to attend special or additional training if there are athletes with a disability competing?**

Article 105 of the USA Swimming Rule book states "The USA Swimming Rules and Regulations grant the Referee the authority to modify the rules for a swimmer with a disability". Because of this rule, the Referee will instruct the officials on how to judge the athletes with a disability, based on the accommodations requested by the athlete or the coach. No special training or knowledge is required beyond this.

### **11. If we have officials who are certified with World Para Swimming (IPC), should we ensure they are assigned to judge the athletes with a disability**

This is a decision that the referee will make based on the officials' assignment on the deck and experience with USA Swimming rules. USA Swimming uses its own rules, so swimmers **must not** be judged under WPS rules. This is an identical situation to officials certified with NCAA or High School swimming, this knowledge and rules are not applicable to USA Swimming competitions.

### **12. What if an official is unsure how to correctly judge an athlete with a disability**

This scenario is no different from any official unsure of a stroke rule. They should approach the referee and ask them to explain the rules and any special accommodations made for the athlete concerned.



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**13. Are there any additional resources available for officials to help explain Article 105 of the USA Swimming rulebook?**

Yes. A simple to follow tri-fold was developed by the USA Swimming Disability committee for officials to carry in their pocket. This is available on the USA Swimming web site on the Disability web page.

**14. Can a coach challenge the grouping which an athlete has declared they belong to within the motivational times**

No, although the declaration by the athlete or the coach is on the honor system, people outside of the family and attending medical professional have no access to any information regarding changes or symptoms of the athlete's disability, and should not try and put themselves in the position of a substitute medical professional.

**15. How do the groupings with the Motivational Times align to the classes assigned to athletes within World Para Swimming (WPS)**

Since the USA Swimming rulebook has no provision for classification or classes, care was taken to develop the P1, P2 and P3 grouping. These do not rely on medical records or a classification panel to establish the athlete's ability or impairments. If the athlete has a class under the WPS classification system, it has no relevance to them competing in a competition governed by USA Swimming rules.

**16. If a coach or official is aware of the WPS class of an athlete and believes they have declared themselves in the incorrect P grouping for the motivational/qualifying times, should they report it to the Meet referee?**

This situation is identical to an athlete who appears older or younger than the age group they have entered into. Classification is not included in the USA Swimming rulebook, so the athlete or their coach will notify the referee of which group they belong in.

**17. If an athlete with a disability qualified for a meet using the motivational times and does not obtain the qualifying time, what are the consequences**

This must be dealt with in the same manner as any other athlete who does not obtain the meet qualifying time during the competition. Refer to the meet information for this process.

**18. How do I foster inclusion of athletes with a disability within my LSC**

Ensure that the officials and the meet organizers within your LSC are familiar with both this document and the Motivational time standards, and promote their inclusion for the LSC championships.

**19. Are the motivational time standards intended to replace the U.S. Paralympics Swimming Emerging Team and CanAm qualifying times?**

No, those qualifying times belong to U.S. Paralympics Swimming and will continue to be used by that organization for the purpose that they are intended for. Similar to NCAA qualifying times, they were not intended for USA Swimming hosted competitions.

**20. How do I know if I have the latest version of the motivational times standards?**

The times will be updated each quadrennial, in line with other time standards by USA Swimming. If you are not certain, always obtain the latest version of the times from the USA Swimming web site.



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**21. After observing the athletes in competition, what do I do if I believe any of the time standards are incorrect?**

Document your case, including specific examples of athletes and competitions, and submit them to the USA Swimming Disability Committee for consideration. Like all time standards, these are a best guess, and will be updated each quadrennial based on data collected from competitions around the country.

**22. How far does a meet referee need to go to accommodate an athlete with a disability? For example: Swimmer has circulation issues in their feet and asked to wear woolen socks during competition – is this allowed?**

Article 105.1.2.B(3) of the USA Swimming rule book states “Aids to buoyancy or speed are not allowed..”. Woolen sock do not aid speed or buoyancy and they are being worn for health and safety reasons. Because of these reasons is it permissible for the referee to allow this type of modification.

**23. If a swimmer is able to meet the criteria of being wheel chair bound while they are recovering from an operation or injury, are they permitted to enter a meet using the new motivational times?**

No. Article 105 of the USA Swimming rulebook states “Disability is defined as a permanent physical or cognitive disability that substantially limits one or more major life activities”. Injuries, surgery, etc. which cause a temporary loss of ability do not constitute a permanent disability.