



# **Parent and Swimmer Handbook**

## **2021-2022**

## Welcome

Welcome to the Louisville Blue Dolphins YMCA swim team and the great sport of competitive swimming! We are excited about the upcoming season! In addition, we are glad that you have chosen our team for your swimmer!

Through competitive swimming, many qualities will be developed such as the following: self-confidence, goal setting, responsibility, sportsmanship, character building and self-discipline. Our goal is to build each swimmer's character values through hard work and dedication.

This handbook's purpose is to set forth the expectations and give parents and caregivers a guide for the upcoming season. If any questions arise, please contact the head coach:

Jason Taylor  
Aquatic Director  
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330.875.1611 ext.203

## YMCA Philosophy

The primary purpose of the YMCA of Stark County is to promote the spiritual, mental, and physical well-being of all persons. Our Y mission statement is to put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all. Our three areas of focus are: youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. The YMCA's involvement in sports has been one means of teaching Christian ideas, values, and behavior based on this purpose. Sports in the YMCA have never been an end in itself, but rather a vehicle for achieving a much more global purpose, promoting character development through: Trustworthiness, Responsibility, Respect, Fairness, Caring and Citizenship.

## Values

Louisville Blue Dolphins YMCA Swim Team will help each swimmer develop the following values at all team activities:

- **TRUSTWORTHINESS** in all their actions by being honest, reliable, and loyal.
- **RESPECT** for themselves, their teammates, their coaches, and their opponents by treating others the way you would like to be treated.
- Taking **RESPONSIBILITY** for their own actions, and learning the responsibilities they have to the team.
- Showing **FAIRNESS** to themselves and to others, especially their teammates by playing by the rules, sharing, and being open-minded.
- A **CARING** attitude for others around them by being kind and compassionate.
- **CITIZENSHIP** at all YMCA swimming activities.

## **Team Philosophy**

The coaches of the Louisville YMCA swim team will focus on an individual's improvement. A swimmer's achievement is not measured by their finishing place at meets, but by an overall improvement of times, attitude, behavior, goal achievement, and sportsmanship. In joining the Louisville YMCA Blue Dolphins, each swimmer will be embarking on a journey of self-improvement that will translate into future goals in life.

## **Eligibility**

All swimmers must be a member of one of the Y's of Central Stark County. All swim team members are required to maintain either a family or a youth membership in order to practice and compete with the team. Each swimmer must pay a program fee to participate with the Louisville YMCA Blue Dolphins. Multiple swimmer families may receive a discount on this fee for additional swimmers.

In order to participate in a YMCA meet, you must be a member of the YMCA that you represent for 30 days prior to swimming these meets. In order to compete in League Championships, you must participate in three (3) intra-league meets. In order to compete in Nationals, you must be a member of the YMCA that you represent for 90 days and participate in three intra-league meets and in a league or zone championship meet. High school swimmers can make the zone and national meet with times they swim in high school meets, as long as they swim in 3 YMCA meets before they swim a high school meet.

What age group a swimmer will compete in is determined by date of birth:

- A swimmer that turns 11 on **December 1** will swim with the 11-12 age group through the winter season.
- A swimmer that turns 11 on December 2 will swim with the 9-10 age group through the winter season.
- A swimmer that turns 11 on **June 1** will swim with the 11-12 age group through the summer season.
- A swimmer that turns 11 on June 2 will swim with the 9-10 age group through the summer season.

## **What to bring to practice:**

- Practice suit
- Swim Cap
- Goggles
- Water Bottle (with water, no sports drinks)
- Positive attitude

## **Coaches' Duties**

- Setting policies and regulations
- Establishing practice and meet schedules
- Running practice and promoting the team
- Writing line-ups for all meets
- Effective communication between each section of the swim team

### **Head Coach**

The Head Coach oversees the day-to-day practices and meet-day specific responsibilities. The Head Coach is responsible for determining dual meet line-ups, championship meet line-ups, and submitting invitational entries. She works closely with the Executive Director and Aquatics Director to set and enforce program goals and group expectations.

### **Assistant Coaches**

Assistant coaches will work with the swimmers to ensure proper stroke development and assistance to help swimmers reach their potential. Assistant coaches help prepare meet line-ups and practices. Assistant coaches report to the head coach.

## **Team Goals**

Have fun! This is probably the most important goal that all swimmers, parents, volunteers, and coaches should have. Swimmers will be challenged at each practice. The words "I can't" will not be a part of their vocabulary but the words "I will try and do my best" will be. Each swimmer will learn to challenge themselves. Goal setting is as much a part of swimming as it is a part of life. Everyone's hard work will pay off with personal and team improvements, and that is the fun part of swimming!

- Every swimmer will learn the correct technique of the four competitive strokes, turns, and starts
- Every swimmer will improve meet performance
- Every swimmer will improve practice performance
- Every swimmer will improve their knowledge of competitive swimming
- Every swimmer will learn goal setting
- Every swimmer will learn sportsmanship
- Every parent will support the team through volunteering
- Swimming has no bench sitters
- Swimming is healthy
- Swimming provides self-discipline
- Swimming teaches the relationship between team and the individual
- Swimming teaches organization

## **Swimmers Responsibilities**

- Attend practice regularly
- Communicate effectively with the coaches
- Show support for your teammates – show good sportsmanship always!
- Show appreciation to your parents
- Behave in a manner to positively represent the YMCA
- Attend and participate in all meets and events in which you have been entered
- Attend the championship meets for which you qualify
- Participate in fund raisers
- Take home information to your parents
- Always show respect for coaches, teammates, YMCA staff, officials, etc.

## **Practice Groups**

The main goal of practice is preparing swimmers for competition, teaching age appropriate skills and training the necessary distances and intensities for maximum improvement.

Practices shall be held at times designated by the YMCA staff. Swimmers shall attend practices according to their age group.

### **Beginner Group**

This group is an introduction to competitive swimming and will focus on the basic understanding of Butterfly, Backstroke, Breaststroke, Freestyle, as well as starts and turns. These swimmers will be introduced to swim meet etiquette and expectations. The estimated age level for this group is 6 through 9. Practices for this group will be 3 days per week.

### **Intermediate Group**

This group is for swimmers that have a firm understanding of the 4 competitive strokes as well as starts and turns. These swimmers will be introduced to the pace clock and team work with other members of the group. Swimmers will be expected to swim laps consistently in a more challenging structured practice set. An introduction will be made to reading a heat sheet, scoreboard, and proper race expectations. The estimated age range for this level is 8 through 12. Practices for this group will be 4 days per week.

### **Advanced Group**

This group is for swimmers with a complete understanding of the 4 competitive strokes with the ability to effectively compete in all events. Swimmers should have reached a maturity level where they can listen and take direction from the coaches. This group will be refining technique, advancing skills in all strokes, and working on increasing endurance training. This group is expected to operate under an expanded spectrum of meet event participation. Swimmers in this group will be expected to attempt and compete in all available events during the dual meet season. The estimated age range for this level is ages 10 through 15. Practices for this group will be 5 days per week.

### **High School Group**

This group is for swimmers with a firm high school level focus. The focus of this group is to prepare swimmers for high school and advanced championship competition. This group trains until the first part of November when the High School season and resumes at the conclusion of the high school season for those swimmers wishing to participate in YMCA championship competitions. Practices will use advanced training techniques and equipment. The estimated age range for this group is 13 through 18 and in the 8th grade or higher. Practices will be 5 days a week.

## **Practice Guidelines**

### **Before Entering the Pool**

- All swimmers must take a shower before entering the pool.
- Use lavatory, prior to entering the pool.
- Follow all Louisville Area YMCA pool rules
- No cell phones are allowed on the pool deck
- No jewelry (watches, rings, earrings, etc.) during practice or meets. Leave them at home.
- Good behavior at all times, especially in the locker rooms (the locker rooms are a privilege, not a right). Always remember – Caring, Honesty, Respect and Responsibility.
- Swimmers should not leave the pool area without the coaches' permission

### **Pool Etiquette**

- Practices will start and end on time. Swimmers who are over 10 minutes late will be required to wait and/or perform a modified warm-up.
- No hanging on the lane markers.
- Do not throw kickboards, pull buoys, or other equipment
- The deck should be clear of kickboards, pull buoys, fins, etc. Use it, yours to put away!
- Starting blocks are to be used only when directed by a coach
- Every start, turn, and finish should be used as an opportunity to improve your skill

### **Etiquette for Coaching Staff**

- If a swimmer requires an early dismissal, has an injury, etc. you are required to let a coach know before practice starts!
- When the coach asks for your attention, give it.
- If there is a problem with another swimmer, please alert a coach immediately.
- Swimmers misbehaving may be excused from practice. If a swimmer is excused from practice, the coach will have the swimmer sit on a bench inside the pool area until practice is over. Parents will be notified.
- Swimmers should listen for announcements during practice, and report those announcements to their parents.
- When using the starting blocks, get onto the block only when a coach gives the "OK"

### **Etiquette for Fellow Swimmers and Other Facilities**

- No degrading, abusive, or profane language will be tolerated
- Support your teammates, do not belittle or degrade them
- Allow other swimmers to practice without distraction
- Swimmers are expected to remember that we are guests at all facilities we travel to. Treat the David YMCA and any other facility that we may travel to with respect.

## Parents

Parents are the backbone of any organization. They drive the swimmers to practices and meets; they work at home meets and are a constant source of encouragement and support at away meets. Your responsibilities as the parents are as essential a role to the team as the coaches and the swimmers.

### **Parents Responsibilities: Volunteer, Volunteer, Volunteer, and Volunteer!!!!**

1. Have fun
2. Support the team through volunteer time
3. Encourage swimmers to attend all practices and meets
4. Be supportive and loving towards your swimmers at all times while encouraging them to do their best!
5. Let the coach's coach. Your job is demanding enough without taking additional responsibilities.
6. Keep communication with the coaches open and positive

### **Parent – Swimmer – Coach Relationship**

To have a successful program there must be complete understanding and cooperation among parents, swimmers, and coaches. The progress each swimmer makes depends on this triangular relationship. Consider this and read this section carefully, so that your swimmers can get the most out of their experience with our team.

Parent's guidelines: You have accomplished much to raise your child. You have created the environment in which they are growing up. Your child is a product of your values, the structure you have provided and the model you have been. Human nature, however, is such that a person loses some of his ability to remain detached and objective in matters concerning his/her children. The following guidelines will help you keep your child's development in the proper perspective.

- Every individual learns at a different rate and responds differently to various methods of presenting skills. Since the slower learner takes more time to master some skills, swimmers, parents and coaches must be a little more patient. Swimmers with lower learning skills have just as much potential as other swimmers on the team.
- Plateaus can occur at one time or another in every swimmers career. Plateaus can be both in competition and at practices. A plateau signifies the swimmer has mastered lower-order skills, but they are not yet sufficiently ready to put all of the skills together in order to produce improvement. It is important that swimmers and parents understand that plateaus occur in work and all fields of physical learning. The more successful athletes are those who work through this momentary delay in improvement, and go on to achieve greater performance and approach their personal potential.
- Ten and under swimmers are the most inconsistent swimmers which can be frustrating for swimmers, parents, and coaches. Times at meets will often go up and down as they try to put together all of the elements of each stroke.
- Slow development of a competitive drive at an early age is normal, and perhaps more desirable than forced development of a competitive spirit. It is also important for young swimmers to learn to adapt to reasonable levels of emotional stress. Small disappointments they must learn to handle as youngsters prepares them for the larger ones they are certain to experience as adults.
- The coach's job is to offer constructive criticism of a swimmer's performance. It is the parent's job to supply love, recognition, and encouragement necessary to help the young athletes feel good about themselves. Make sure your swimmers know that you will love them just as much when they disqualify, as you do when they get first place.
- Parents' attitudes and models often indicate those of their children. A child might not be consciously aware of what is taking place, while subconsciously absorbing powerful messages about their parents' desires. For example, be enthusiastic about taking you swimmers to practice and meets, fund raising projects, meetings, etc. do not look at these functions as chores.

- Criticizing the coach in front of the swimmers undermines the coach's authority and breaks the swimmer – coach relationship. Children model their parents' behavior.
- No parent should behave in such a way as to bring discredit to the child, the team, or competitive swimming. Any disagreement with a meet official should be brought to the attention of a coach, and handled by the coach.
- Be sure that youngsters swim because they want to. People tend to resist anything they "have to do." Self-motivation is the stimulus of all successful swimmers.
- Avoid playing your child against their nearest competitors, thereby creating vendettas within the team and the swimming community.
- The communication between the coach and swimmer is very important. A two-way relationship must exist daily at practice and at meets. It is imperative that the coach have the swimmers full attention at practices. For this reason, parents are asked not to be on the pool deck during practices.

Remember, particularly with young swimmers, the attitude and behavior of the parents in regard to their outlook on the sport has an important effect on the child.

In swimming, as in life, nobody can win or succeed all of the time. There will always be some disappointments. Every child can gain something from every experience whether or not he/she ever wins a single race. The important thing is to keep on striving to do better next time.

### What to bring to a Meet

- Suit, cap, goggle and extra towels (sweats, many pools are cold, even in the summer)
- Healthy snacks & full water bottle
- Cards, book, or quiet game – lock for locker room
- Cash - most meets have a concession stand (optional).
- A Sharpie to write down meet events
- Please make sure that all personal possessions are labeled with swimmer's name.
- Swimmers are required to stay on the pool deck or designated area with the team at all times unless excused by the coach.

### Meet Entries

- The coaches are responsible for each swimmer's individual assignments at all meets.
- Swimmers are expected to swim all events in which they have been entered. **No changes will be made after meet entries are posted.**
- Swimmers will not be assigned to events which they are not physically ready to do. (Each swimmer will be challenged!!)
- Coaches are also responsible for assigning swimmers to relays. Relays will be determined based on past times. As the saying goes, times do not lie!
- **For invitationals**, coaches will share meet information, and parents are responsible for signing their athletes up after getting events approved by the coach. Checks for meet dues can be dropped off at the front desk of the YMCA.



## Other Swim Meet Information

- Arrive at least half an hour before warm-up starts
- Swimmers should check in with their coach when they arrive at the pool
- Swimmers should remain in the designated areas
- Swimmers must warm up with the team
- If you leave before the meet is over, please let a coach know.
- Swimmers should always be aware of the event which is “in the water”
- Questions regarding an official’s call or conduct of the meet should be referred to a coach. Coaches will then pursue the matter through proper channels.
- Transportation to and from meets is the responsibility of the swimmer and his/her family.
- Swimmers must see their coach immediately after they swim for critique and advice for next race
- Swimmer should rest and stay warm between events

## Parents Help at Home Meets

Parent volunteers run the home meets. We need 100% participation from all parents to make everything run smoothly. For each home meet, we need volunteers to time, score, officiate, and run the concession stand.

**Parents are REQUIRED to volunteer at a minimum of 2 meets.** Please volunteer to help your swimmers and our team. The following positions will need to be filled at home meets:

- Officials (Starter, Stroke Judge, & Meet Referee – must have gone to the Officials’ Training in order to volunteer for these positions.)
- Timers (One per lane plus one backup – uses the stopwatch/timing system plunger and records times on the clipboards/lane sheet for each event. This can be easily taught at beginning of the meet.)
- Scorers (Runs the Colorado Timing System and scoreboard as well as inputs the data into the computer. This is a position that cannot be changed for the entire meet and it calls for a commitment to stay and tally results. Can be gradually trained.)
- Concessions (Located in the hallway leading into the pool. Keeps items in stock and make sales of drinks and simple food. You will be given a replacement to go in to watch your child’s events.)
- Parent Coordinators

## Who to Call for Help

A question that goes unasked will never get an answer. The best way to get information is to check BAND, the website, bulletin boards, team handbook, email, and notices that will be sent home with swimmers. Please refrain from asking questions of the coaching staff during practice. **Save questions for before or after practice.** Parents can also email questions to Jason Taylor Aquatic Director [jtaylor@ymcastark.org](mailto:jtaylor@ymcastark.org) or calling 330.875.1611 ext.203.

## Helpful Information

### Rest & Nutrition

All swimmers should get at least eight hours of sleep every night. Swimmers should be fully hydrated before practice. Hydration before, during and after practice is the key. Swimmers should drink 2 quarts of water per day. Avoid drinks with caffeine. Make sure swimmers replace carbohydrates within 30 minutes of practice. The night before a meet, make sure all swimmers have a meal with protein and carbohydrates. The morning of a meet, have a healthy breakfast, like bananas, toast and juice. Avoid high sugar foods!

#### **Remember, eat junk, and swim like junk!**

Carbohydrates are found in:

- Grains
- Fruits
- Vegetables

Healthy snacks:

- Fruit
- Yogurt
- Bagels, Muffins, Crackers
- Popcorn
- Pretzels
- Juice

### Suits & Gear

- A new team suit will typically be ordered at the beginning of each fall/winter season.
- Team swim caps will be given to swimmers at the first meet of each season. If it breaks, we can offer a replacement, but please take care of them throughout the season and bring to each meet.
- A great goggle for beginner swimmers – Dolfin with adjustable bungee strap
- Good places to purchase gear – Aquatic Outfitters on Whipple Ave in Canton or online at SwimOutlet.com

### The Language of Swimming

The following are some of the most common and important terms that go along with competitive swimming:

**Anchor** - The final swimmer in a relay and the point in the stroke pattern where the hand feels the most resistance and begins effective propulsive movement.

**Bell Lap** - The part of a freestyle distance race (400 meters or longer) when the swimmer has 2 lengths plus 5 yards to go. The starter fires a gun shot over the lane of the lead swimmer when swimmer is at the backstroke flags.

**Bullpen** – a staging area on or near the pool deck reserved as a gathering place for (usually young) swimmers before their swim event. By lining up children in the bullpen area according to heat and lane assignments, volunteer parents help minimize confusion and stress as the kids' transition to the starting blocks.

**Bulkhead** – a barrier wall fitted near the middle of a long course pool (or any pool longer than 25 yards) to convert one side into to a short course. Serves as a cat-walk for stroke & turn officials.

**Circle Swim** - When there are more than two swimmers in a lane during practice, swimmers swim up on the right hand side, staying close to the lane line, and return on the other side ensuring that there is 5 seconds apart between the swimmer in front. This eliminates the risk of swimmers crashing into each other

**Circle Seeding** - A method of seeding swimmers when they are participating in a prelims/finals event. The fastest 18 to 24 swimmers are seeded in the last three heats, with the fastest swimmers being in the inside lanes. (I.e.) Lane 4 in the final 3 heats. See rule book for exact method for seeding depending on the lanes in the pool.

**Clinic** - A scheduled meeting for the purpose of instruction. (I.e.) Official's clinic, Coaches clinic.

**Cool-down** - A slower, longer swim as an essential injury prevention technique, used by the swimmer after a race to rid the body of excess lactic acid

**Course** - Designated distance (length of pool) for swimming competition. (I.e.) Long Course = 50 meters / Short Course = 25 yards or 25 meters.

**Cut** - A qualifying time for a competitive event

**DQ** – disqualification

**Drill** - broken stroke to work on a specific aspect of the stroke; SWIM SLOWLY

**Dry land** - The exercises and various strength programs swimmers do out of the water.

**False start**- leaving the block early

**Flutter Kick** - The alternating kick used in backstroke and front crawl, usually 6 kicks per cycle

**Heat** - A division of an event used to cut the number of participants, when a single race to determine the winner would mean too many swimmers competing at the same time.

**Heat Sheets** – the pre-meet printed listings of swimmers' heat and lane assignments and seed times in the various events at a swim meet. These sheets vary in accuracy, since the coaches submit swimmers times many weeks before the meet. Heat sheets are sold at the admissions table and are used mainly to make sure the swimmer has been properly entered in all the events they signed up for. Parents enjoy looking at the seeding's prior to the race plus swimmers can tell the order the events will be conducted and get a rough idea how long the meet sessions will last

**High Elbow** - Refers to the recovery phase of the front crawl, where keeping a high elbow encourages better balance and body roll. Also refers to the pull stage of the stroke, where the elbow remains in a higher position over the hand, giving the sensation of reaching over a barrel when pulling through the water

**Illegal** - Doing something against the rules that is cause for disqualification.

**Individual Medley** - A combination of the four competitive swimming strokes swum in the following order; Butterfly, Backstroke, Breaststroke, Freestyle (usually front crawl)

**Interval** - A specific elapsed time for swimming or rest used during swim practice.

**Lap**- one length of the pool

**Lap Counter**- The large numbered cards (or the person turning the cards) used during the freestyle events 500 yards or longer. Counting is done from the end opposite the starting end. The numbers on the cards are "odd numbers" only with the final lap being designated by a bright orange card.

**Lead-off** - The swimmer to execute the first leg of the relay.

**Leg** - The part of a relay event swam by a single team member. A single stroke in the IM.

**Length** - A completed lap either up or down the pool. This may be a distance of 25y or 50m depending upon the size of the pool.

**Medley**- a race in which all four strokes are performed

**Negative Split** - When the second half of the race is swum faster than the first half

**Pace** - The speed that corresponds with a race distance, e.g. 1:20 (1 minute 20 seconds) per 100y.

**Qualifying Time (QT)** - A specified time that must be achieved for the swimmer to enter a competitive event.

**Relay** – a race with teams consisting of four swimmers, each of whom swims a different leg

**Scratch** - To withdraw from an event after having declared an intention to participate. Some meets have scratch deadlines and specific scratch rules, and if not followed, swimmer can be disqualified from remaining events.

**Seed** - To assign a swimmer to a heat or lane according to their qualifying time.

**Split** - A portion of an event, shorter than the total distance, which is timed. (I.e.) A swimmer's first 50 time is taken as the swimmer swims the 100 race. It is common to take multiple splits for the longer distances.

**Split times** - The times taken for each individual section of a race.

**Start Position** - The position taken by the swimmer at the beginning of the race. The swimmer is required to have at least one foot at the front of the starting block and remain motionless until the start signal sounds. The most common position has the swimmer bent over, knees bent and feet shoulder width apart. Some swimmers prefer a track start with one foot forward and one foot back.

**Starter** – The official in charge of signaling the beginning of a race and ensuring that all swimmers have a fair takeoff.

**Starting Blocks** – the starting platforms located behind each lane. Pools normally have blocks installed at the deeper end of the pool, and some pools have blocks at both ends. Blocks have a variety of designs and can be permanent or removable. Most have bars near the base on the water side that swimmers use during backstroke starts.

**Stations** - Separate portions of a dry land or weight circuit

**Taper** - Reducing the intensity of training just before a race so that the swimmer may be fresh and in peak condition for the event.

**Touchpad** – an electronically stimulated pad that hangs on the end of the pool

**Turnover** - The number of times a swimmer completes one cycle of a stroke during a race.

**Yardage** - The distance a swimmer races or swims during the totality of their practice

## **Swimming Events:**

Eight-and-under:

- 25-yard freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly
- 50-yard freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly
- 100-yard individual medley or "IM" (25 yards of butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, and freestyle, in that order)
- 100-yard freestyle

9-10 year olds:

- 50-yard freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly
- 100-yard freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly
- 100-yard IM, and sometimes the 200-yard IM
- 200-yard freestyle, and sometimes the 500-yard freestyle

11-12 year olds:

- 50-yard freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly
- 100-yard freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly
- 100-yard IM, 200-yard IM, and sometimes the 400-yard IM
- 200-yard freestyle, 500-yard freestyle, and sometimes the 1000-yard freestyle and 1650-yard freestyle

13 and over:

- 50-yard freestyle
- 100-yard freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly
- 200-yard IM, 400-yard IM
- 200-yard freestyle, 500-yard freestyle, 1000-yard freestyle, and 1650-yard freestyle



## Louisville YMCA Blue Dolphins Swim Team Swimmer's Agreement

I, \_\_\_\_\_ have read the Louisville YMCA Blue Dolphins handbook. By signing, I agree to abide by the handbook. I understand that violations of this handbook may jeopardize my team status and/or my participation in swim meets.

Swimmer Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_